

Office for International Studies

Annual Activity Report 2002

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In the second year of its existence, the Office for International Studies became an independent unit for accounting purposes, which gave it more flexibility in developing its activities.

The Office was active in basically five areas: international cooperation, foreign language programmes, presentations abroad, activities in international networks, and miscellaneous.

1. INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

ERASMUS

Student as well as teacher mobility at MU is mostly enhanced under the ERASMUS programme. After a marked increase in the number of both students and teachers participating in the programme in the academic year 2000/2001, the increase in 2001/2002 was slower. In 2001/2002, a total of 298 MU students and 59 teachers travelled abroad under the programme, an increase of 22% and 20% compared with 2000/2001, respectively. The number of ERASMUS programme students coming to Brno, however, remained almost the same in 2001/2002 (60) as in 2000/2001 (56). A substantial improvement in the situation can be expected only when MU offers a sufficient number of courses in foreign languages, particularly in English. This is what should happen in the future on the basis of the new strategy of MU internationalization (see 5).

Compared with the year 2001/2002, a slight increase in the number of students participating in the ERASMUS programme (about 30%) is expected this academic year. Teachers are in a different situation: because of insufficient funding, the number of participating teachers is expected to remain practically unchanged.

Under the ERASMUS programme, MU also developed an intensive environmental programme (at the FoS) and the project for the introduction of the European Credit System (ECTS). The Office also initiated a number of preparatory meetings of MU teachers abroad whose aim was to increase the number of faculties and departments participating in the SOCRATES/ERASMUS programme. For interested faculties and departments, the Office compiled information brochures in foreign languages to better inform students in other countries about MU degree programmes taught in foreign language.

At the request of the national SOCRATES / ERASMUS programme coordinator, her MU counterpart participated as the Czech representative in the Vilnius conference organized in May by the Lithuanian Ministry of Education in Vilnius on student and teacher mobility under the SOCRATES / ERASMUS programme. The conference was attended by representatives of national SOCRATES / ERASMUS agencies and coordinators from many European countries. At the conference, the MU coordinator read a paper on the organisation of the programme at MU and on the steps taken to increase the number of international students at MU.

The Office accepted an offer from the national SOCRATES / ERASMUS coordinator to host a national meeting of SOCRATES / ERASMUS programme institutional coordinators at MU in September. On behalf of directors and vice-rectors for international studies in the CR, the director of the MU Office for International Studies delivered a paper on international contacts in the CR at the national conference in November held in Prague on the occasion of the ERASMUS WEEK attended also by an EU representative.

LEONARDO

In order to broaden the possibilities for MU students who would like to participate in the programme in the future, the Office applied for membership in the international LeoNet. The network, founded in 1999, is an association of over 100 organisations (including universities) in many European countries. Every member is included in the so-called server list, which gives updated information on scholarships and placements offered by organisations in different countries for both undergraduates and graduates. LeoNet can also be used to look for partners for new Leonardo projects, and it organizes regular meetings of its members, and annual workshops and seminars.

Masaryk University is currently actively involved in several Leonardo projects. They include the pilot project of the Community vocational training action programme at the FoS, the pilot project MULTI – MATCH, key skills of transnational placement operators (FoS), the pilot programme T&LEMA – Teaching and Learning in European Multiple Approach (FoS) and a mobility project GIP, placements of graduates at the FoS. In the academic year 2001/2002, Masaryk University participated in the mobility project “Integrating Networks for Czech Opportunities 2002–2004”, and agreed to cooperate with the Ca’Foscari University (Venice) in the Nemanstec 2 project.

JEAN MONNET

The new Jean Monnet Chair (SoSS) was approved in the academic year 2002/2003.

CEEPUS

In 2002/2003, cooperation with foreign universities under the CEEPUS programme unfortunately showed a downward trend (the situation deteriorated not only at MU but also at other Czech schools of higher education, and the number of approved projects dropped compared with previous years). At present, a total of 7 projects are underway at MU.

Cooperation with twinned universities

Exchanges of teachers with twinned universities (Wroclaw, Szeged, Katowice, Poznan, Regensburg, Vienna, Greifswald, Bratislava) continued. During the visits of the Office staff at universities in Szeged and Bratislava, concrete proposals for enhancing teacher mobility under twinning agreements were negotiated.

Bilateral agreements

In 2002, MU executed several new bilateral agreements, namely with the Illinois University, Antioquia University (Medellin, Colombia), Hankuk University of International Studies (Korea) and the University in Rennes.

Other European scholarships

In the context of special agreements, students received scholarships to Dresden, Regensburg, Warsaw, Bologna and Utrecht.

Ministry of Education’s Student Mobility Support Programme

For two years, this programme has offered funds for student mobility. In 2002, it provided scholarships for 85 students to travel universities in Europe, the USA and Asia.

Study stays under governmental agreements

Every year, several dozen students and teachers travel abroad to various types of stays (summer courses, study, research or lecture stays) organized by the Academic Information Agency on the basis

of agreements between the Czech government and governments of other countries. In 2002, 9 teachers and 38 students from MU participated in the programme.

Miscellaneous projects

There are a large number of other mobility projects (semester, short-term, year-long, summer school, etc. projects), mostly organized by faculties and individual workplaces, that enable exchanges to dozens of students and teachers every year. These projects, however, are not registered centrally.

2. FOREIGN LANGUAGE PROGRAMMES

Semester programmes

In 2002, the Office continued in the preparation and coordination of two programmes for foreign students with lectures and seminars in the English language.

The one-semester **Central European Studies Programme (CESP)** is offered each semester. The seminars of the programme are taught in English by teachers of three faculties (FoA, SoSS and FoEA) and cover economics, political studies, sociology and Czech culture. The participants in the programme include tuition-paying students from the U.S.A., and students from the former socialist block who are charged reduced tuition fees. The courses are also attended by students coming to MU under the SOCRATES programme, for whom the CESP seminars represent nearly the only chance to attend lectures in a foreign language at MU. In 2002, 51 students attended CESP, which is slightly more than in 2001.

The one-semester programme **TESOL TE** focusing on the training of English teachers for foreigners can obtain "CELTA", the internationally acknowledged certificate for the teaching of English issued by the Cambridge University. MU is one of a few continental universities holding accreditation for the programme. The programme is attended by both foreign and Czech students (the latter paying minimum extra tuition fees). Until 2001, the programme was led by two experienced teachers from Krakow. In 2002, two Czech teachers were accredited and in autumn 2002 took over the responsibility for the TESOL TE programme.

Master's degree programmes

This academic year the Faculty of Economics and Administration launched a bilingual French and Czech two-year Master's degree programme in European public administration. This programme organized in cooperation with the university in Rennes remains one of two accredited study programmes at MU (the other being the five-year study programme at the Faculty of Medicine) where at least part of the programme is presented in a language other than Czech.

3. PRESENTATIONS ABROAD

It is the responsibility of the Office for International Studies to represent Masaryk University at some of the most important international educational exhibitions. This year, Office representatives participated in two such events, one in San Antonio (NAFSA: Association of International Educators), the other in Porto (EAIE – European Association for International Education).

NAFSA: at the San Antonio exhibition in May 2002, the office representatives established contacts with several US universities and coordinated the reception where a number of Central and eastern European universities were presented.

EAIE: the Office staff represented MU at the annual EAIE conference in Porto (Portugal). Director of the Office participated at one of the workshops where he delivered a paper on the evolution of quality at universities in Central and Eastern Europe.

4. ACTIVITIES IN INTERNATIONAL NETWORKS

Utrecht Network

Cooperation between universities in the Utrecht Network consists mainly in student exchanges. In addition to many exchanges drawing on SOCRATES / ERASMUS programme agreements that are frequently made between member universities of the network, students from Bern attend the CESP programme as tuition-paying students, and the first two students are preparing for a study stay in Australia under an agreement between the Utrecht Network and a consortium of Australian universities.

Summer schools organized in the Utrecht Network are gaining in importance. As in previous years, MU received five scholarships for the “Dutch society and culture” summer school in Utrecht. In 2002, the first Utrecht Network summer school in Bologna was held on human rights. At this very successful event, which will continue in the next year, MU was represented by three students and two teachers.

MU was one of the founding members of the Utrecht Network working group dealing with the issue of the concept for joint bachelor’s and master’s degree programmes among Utrecht Network member universities.

Compostela Group of Universities

With the untimely demise of its vice-rector for international affairs Professor Jiří Fukač in November 2002, MU ceased to be represented in the executive board of the Compostela Group of Universities, although we hope that MU’s absence there is only temporary. The Office, however, continues to be very much involved in the Group’s activities, e.g., it became a member of a new working group on exchanges for the non-academic staff of member universities that will give them opportunities to gain hands-on experience at various workplaces at Compostela Group universities.

A representative of the Office attended the annual general meeting of the CG in Lisbon, where planned activities for the coming year were discussed and new working groups and their proposals for cooperation presented (mobility of non-academic staff, research cooperation in women studies, new joint publishing activities, etc.).

5. OTHER ACTIVITIES

Perhaps the most important initiative of the Office for International Relations in 2002 was the establishment of the MU Internationalization Committee. The reasons for the establishment of the committee were presented to the rector’s advisory board in February. After the advisory board’s approval, a committee of faculty, university Senate and other university institution representatives was set up. The committee has met 8 times to systematically discuss internationalization issues and the necessary steps towards MU internationalization. A request for funding from the 2003 budget was presented to the university management. In the spring of 2003, the university management will receive a comprehensive report complete with conclusions made at the meetings and recommendations based on them.

After the closing down of the Academic Information Centre at the end of 2002 there was concern that one of the most important services provided by the Centre, namely the provision of information to MU students on study opportunities abroad and scholarship possibilities, might be completely discontinued. To prevent that, the Office suggested that one of the Centre’s employees be transferred to its team where she might continue providing the student consultancy services. The proposal was accepted, and

at present the Academic Information Service continues to provide its services, albeit on a reduced scale, from its original office at the FoM MU.