

# Tackling administrative complexities of mobility of (non)European students in Erasmus+

## The experience of Sofia University

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## Credit Mobility Project within Erasmus+ How we do it?

Start of the Programme – January 2015

### The process of the Project Development and Submission:

Initiator and main responsible body – IRO

Presentation of the new opportunities before all Faculties – eligible countries, eligible degrees (in/out), eligible staff mobility – for teaching/training, budget, number and duration of the mobilities...

Discussion on the required documents and information to be included in the Project Proposal

- Signed Inter-institutional Agreements – mandatory (only for one academic year)
- Information regarding the quality of the Project – from the interested Faculty and the partner HEI
- Deadline for submission of the requested documents – 1 week before the deadline for submission of the Project
- Intensive communication with the partners – IRO (administrative issues) and Faculties (academic issues)
- Final preparation of the Project proposal + budget - IRO
- Submission of the Project to the NA – end of February (NOT at the last moment) - IRO



# Scope of our Project for Credit Mobility

We applied for:

- 15 countries - ALBANIA, BRAZIL, CHINA, INDIA, INDONESIA, ISRAEL, KAZAHSTAN, KOREA, NEPAL, SERBIA, RUSSIA, UKRAINE, USA, VIETNAM, MEXICO
- 21 Partner Universities
- 9 Faculties from Sofia University included

# The results

Total budget approved: **489 570 EUR**

Individual support	145 participants (staff/students/in/out)	350 980 EUR
Transport grants	145 participants (staff/students/in/out)	94 590 EUR

We’ve got an approval for:

- 14 countries - ALBANIA, BRAZIL, CHINA, INDIA, INDONESIA, ISRAEL, KAZAHSTAN, KOREA, NEPAL, SERBIA, UKRAINE, USA, VIETNAM, MEXICO
- 19 Partner Universities

The project for credit mobility with HEI’s from Russia – on the reserve list (limited budget for Bulgaria)

Conclusion:

- ✓ Sofia University won the largest amount of the budget for Bulgaria
- ✓ None unapproved project



# Project implementation

Too late contract signing with the National Agency – **15<sup>th</sup> October 2015**

We've "lost" the first/winter semester!

Kick-off meeting with the Faculty coordinators – detailed information about the approved budget, number and types of the mobilities...

Division of the roles - who, when, how

Administrative issues:	IRO 2 colleagues responsible for staff mobility 4 colleagues responsible for student mobility
Academic issues:	Faculty coordinators
Financial management:	IRO + Financial Dept.

Contact with the partners – preparation of a detailed letter, approved budget, list of contact persons at SU, protocols for selection of the students and staff, criteria for selection, deadlines...

Same procedure for selection as for the mobilities with the Programme countries



# Criteria for selection

## Staff

### Eligibility and selection criteria for applicants:

- The applicant have to be a teacher/staff member of the sending institution;
- The level of the language proficiency have to correspond to the level specified in the Inter-institutional Agreement;
- Priority approval may be given to teachers/staff members who actively contribute to the organization of outgoing student mobility and to the organization of the study process and stay of incoming Erasmus students and teachers;
- For teaching mobility priority is given to teachers:
  - when the mobility is an essential part of the curriculum of the host institution;
  - who have developed courses in a foreign language and have expressed willingness to teach Erasmus students;

## Students

### Eligibility and selection criteria for applicants:

- should have high academic achievements
- The level of the language proficiency have to correspond to the level specified in the Inter-institutional Agreement;
- should have graduated at least 2 semesters from their education at the home institution before applying (valid only for BA students);



## Protocol for selection

Staff

Students



Same criteria for all partners – according to the rules stated by the EU and the practices of Sofia University for selection of students and staff for mobility to the Programme countries



## Services for incoming students

- Pick-up at the airport and accommodation in the Student's Residence (ESN)
- Welcome meeting in the IRO's office
- Bulgarian language course
- Weekly seminars (every Thursday) – lectures and presentations given by professors and students on various topics:
  - **Europe as Culture - for and against, Prof. Ivaylo Ditchev (Sofia University)**
  - **Divided Pasts, Divided Futures? History Textbooks on the Balkans, Prof. Dubravka Stoyanovic (Belgrade University)**
  - **Same-sex families in Bulgaria: practices and imagination, Vladislav Petkov (Sofia University)**
  - .....
- Summer graduate school which will be organized by Sofia University (Faculty of Philosophy), end of June 2016

*All participants will obtain ECTS*





# Challenges (1)

## 1. Visa issuance

More problems for students due to the longer period of stay

We've discussed this issues with the NA

Our suggestion – to shorten the required period of stay at the host HEI, because if the period + travel is less than 90 days – no visa required

High cost for visa issuance for Bulgaria - 200 EUR

Long period of approval - 30, 40 days

No Embassy/Consulate of some countries – ex. Mexico is served by its Embassy in Hungary, in Nepal Bulgaria is served by its Embassy in India

Various documents required for visa issuance

## 2. Different academic calendars

ex. the semesters/terms in Bulgaria and Brazil/India don't coincide



## Challenges (2)

### **3. Lack of experience to implement similar projects**

Constant change of the contact/responsible persons

Specific internal administrative regulations

Lack of flexibility

### **4. Approved degrees**

Restriction for some degrees

Problems occurred in sending participants who meet this requirement

Official approval by the NA to make changes based on a motivated letter/justification

### **5. Very short period for the Project implementation**

Only one semester (winter semester 2015/16)

Interim report – we have implemented only 50 % of the approved mobilities

Extension of the contract period - by 31<sup>st</sup> May 2017

# Thank you!

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