

**TEMA T5.2: INTERNACIONALIZACIJA UNIVERZITETA (Erasmus+,
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PROFESSIONAL LANGUAGES AND LABOUR MARKET COMPETITIVENESS
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Abstract: Our primary motivation is to directly and efficiently make a contribution towards the accession of Western Balkan Countries, emphasizing of course, Serbia, into the European Union by providing the educational means for communication of science and professional expertise as a crucial way of reaching the required professional standards of the EU. There is an urgent requirement to address proper and adequate presentation and dissemination of the expertise performed in WBC towards the EU. There is much evidence that lot of quality work done in WBC is poorly and improperly presented in EU, and much of cutting edge EU expertise is not conveyed fully among the professionals of WBC, all due to the lack of linguistic knowledge of the specific professional academic discourses. It is either that WBC specialist do not have the linguistic skills relating to a professional domain to communicate their expertise, or for the same reason, are unable to fully comprehend expert literature coming from the EU. There is a need towards the overall paradigm shift in language teaching at tertiary education and lifelong learning from general to professional foreign language, or to put in practical terms, to workplace or specific domain professional languages, with the aim to include in the future other major languages of the EU, namely German, French, Spanish, etc.

Key Words: professional languages, labor market, communication, knowledge transfer, internationalization

1. INTRODUCTION

One of the leading principles of the University of Nis is to become a part of the European higher education area and to adjust its plans and programs against this aim, in the context of the reform of higher education system within the EU projects and other programs. By subscribing the Declaration of commitment to the principles of the recommendation of the European Commission on the "European Charter for Researchers" and "The Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers" the University of Nis reaffirms its intention to contribute to the advancement of the European Research Area and demonstrates a lasting policy of the University of Nis to be part of the European academic map. The University of Nis was awarded with a special award - Logo for excellence in the area of improving the working conditions of researchers (HR Excellence in Research). In compliance with Article 40 of the Statute of the University of Niš ("Official Gazette of the University of Niš" number 8/2014), the Senate of the University of Niš adopted the Strategy for the Internationalization of the University of Niš on March 9th, 2015. Several actions are envisaged but we cite only ones concerning languages.

Action 2.1: Improving teaching in foreign languages

Mode of realization:

Establish a list of study programs accredited for teaching in English or other foreign languages;

Identify a list of study program parts where the organization and implementation of a teaching process involving the taking of exams, preparation and defense of final paper, master or specialist paper and doctoral dissertation can be conducted in a foreign language;

Regularly publish updated lists of study programs, or parts of study programs on the University website;

Prepare a special informative publication for international marketing.

Expected result: more foreign students due to increasing number of study programs in a foreign language

Assigned to: University, faculties

Time frame: 2018

Action 2.2: Training of teachers and associates for teaching in a foreign language

Mode of realization: Organizing foreign language courses for specific areas of science

Expected result: high level of language proficiency and better realization of study programs in a foreign language

Assigned to: University, faculties

Time frame: 2018-2020

Action 2.3: Increase in the number of study programs in English and other foreign languages, with the ultimate goal to spread this to all study programs

Mode of realization: accredit new and re-accredit the existing study programs in foreign languages

Expected result: a larger number of study programs taught in foreign languages

Assigned to: University, faculties

Time frame: 2018-2020 (Source: University of Niš Internationalization Action Plan 2018-2020)³⁰

Fostering international dialogue and exchange in teaching and research is vital for the internationalization of higher education institutions (HEIs). The HEIs set out to provide their prosperous students as well as engineers employed in the business sector with the best possible education thus making them more relevant to the globalized international labor market. Universities insist on the partnership between the academia and industry and should therefore get an insight into the needs of industry for professionals in different fields. In particular, they should be able to analyze permanently the needs of the economy for adequate knowledge, skills, and competences of the professionals to be employed. Such knowledge constitute a solid ground and starting point for decision-making in higher education institutions (HEIs) regarding the adjustment of their study programs to the industry needs, with the ultimate aim of enhancing a better employability of their graduates. In parallel to the abolishment of borders between the nations, we are witnessing the abolishment of borders between scientific disciplines. Multidisciplinarity is exactly the reason why we should expect the combination of scientific and entrepreneurial skills in the new graduates in the Western Balkan. The whole region would thus produce higher level of employability and increase the general level and diversification of the industrial activity in the region and worldwide. Universities can make a special contribution to the practical training of master students in jobs transfer of technologies and dissemination of project results to small and medium enterprises.

Universities provide extensive scientific know-how in the area of (professional) languages, technical capabilities and sound management structures and experience. Department of Applied Linguistics usually provide its expertise in teaching and researching in the field of languages for specific purposes and the integration of educational technologies to promote innovative teaching methodologies. Hopefully, Chamber of Commerce would do Analysis of needs for ESP skills on the job market in EU and WBC and the report on needs for ESP skills on the job market in EU and WBC which would provide reliable data on how much professional English skills are needed for employment in EU and WBC. Based on that info, it would assist in creating ETBP courses with the aim of professional carrier advancement. It would organize info days for successful dissemination of the potentials and the results of the possible professional languages utilization and prospects projects.

2. TEACHING STAFF, CURRICULA, INTERNALIZATION POLICY

Teacher adaptation to the European higher education area is another challenge posed by the process of European convergence. It means that the university lectures must undergo a thorough adaptation. The Bologna Process requires (language) teachers to program the entire course, prepare teaching materials in advance, and act as a tutor to students. In the area of planning this implies the effective use of teaching time and planning in detail how to make best use of the time available for each group and subject. Thus, one avoids creating programs which are too "ambitious" and impossible to complete in the time allotted (usually 2-4 periods per week load). The contents of the programs and each learning activity should be assigned a certain duration. Moreover, the teacher should reflect a time scale for contents and activities in terms of dates. Establishing what to do in the time available, and when to do it constitute the essence of programming (needs analyses, course design, proficient teaching material availability, final assessment, employers quality assessment feedback).

In order to support the importance of the internalization policy we shall hereby mention but a few of the international EU projects and National documents that clearly state education in this direction is part of crucial developmental policies. We cite SIPUS project (Strengthening of Internationalization Policies at Universities in Serbia) 544538-2013 (SIPUS, 544538-TEMPUS-1-2013--1-RS-TEMPUS-SMGR)³¹, whose main objectives were enabling national higher education bodies and higher education institutions to strategically manage internationalization in the provision of education, research, mobility and services, thus underpinning Serbia's accountable and complementary role in the European Higher Education and Research Area. The main outcomes included: 1. Creating and implementing national legislative that has been lacking to date: Accreditation Standards for Joint and Double degrees, National Strategy of Internationalization of Higher Education and Research and National Strategy of Academic Mobility and Recognition of Degrees (in line with the Serbian Strategy of Educational Development by 2020); 2. Creating and implementing individual university strategies on internationalization and academic mobility along with coherent institutional measures capable of steering internationalization, improving institutional capacities for the growing participation in international projects and strengthening the process of internal integration of Serbian universities. To

³⁰ https://www.ni.ac.rs/en/images/medjunarodna_saradnja/Internationalization-Action_Plan2018-2020.pdf

³¹ <http://www.gointernational.uns.ac.rs/>

relate to the language domain we refer to mid-term objectives set by the end of 2020: 1. Acquisition of appropriate foreign language competences for teaching and administrative staff; 2. Increasing the number of teaching and administrative staff participating in international mobility. Long-term objectives set by the end of 2025 are: 1. Increasing the number of foreign teachers who are permanently employed at our universities and 2. Having higher education institutions where the entire teaching staff is involved in some aspect of internationalization. Tempus project - Fostering University Support Services and Procedures for Full Participation in the European Higher Education Area (FUSE) 544006-2013, (Tempus project number: 544006-TEMPUS-1-2013-1-RS-TEMPUS-SMGR³²), is also expected to produce a number of important documents related to the topic of internationalization at the level of higher education especially in the area of the Capacity building of teaching and non-teaching staff for the full participation in EHEA. Pursuant to Article 45 Paragraph 1 of the Law on Government ("Official Gazette of RS", No. 55/05, 71/05 – correction, 101/07, 65/08, 16/11, 68/12 – CC and 72/12). Serbian Government has adopted the STRATEGY for Education Development in Serbia 2020 and this is an umbrella document³³ for all other documents pertaining to higher education policies. We could also draw on the following documents: Institutional framework for development of the third mission of universities in Serbia³⁴ and Enhancement of HE research potential contributing to further growth of the WB region³⁵.

Multilingual and multicultural differences are one of the main barriers for higher levels of inclusion of professionals originating from WBC into EU wide markets even though their high technical skills are often highly recognized. Teaching LSP at universities or as part of a life-long learning environment represents the main tool for addressing the problem. However, traditional teaching and educational practices in LSP not delivered according to the modern students' demands are very hard to change due to specifics such as ultra fine-grain and personalized learning materials that are difficult to develop but are of interest for just a handful of students. Modern ICT technologies, particularly Web and Social Computing, are perfectly capable of radically changing the situation by offering collaboration and sharing services able to scale globally. In this way, a critical mass of students and teachers could be achieved in such a way that a required quality and relevance of teaching and learning materials are assured. What is needed is a global open collaboration platform for fine-grain multimedia learning materials focused on specific concepts from different knowledge domains that are ideally suited for large scale open LSP. To achieve sustainability, the platform should be augmented with new adequate pedagogy and teaching methodology.

Additionally, participants on the system would grow into a global community of teachers, learners and professionals. It is important to note that such bottom-up self-organizing social systems on the Web need careful design and fostering in order to grow successfully. Also, it is highly desirable to make the process blended in a brick-and-mortar process, such as everyday teaching practice at Universities. Hence, special attention should be paid on the community design together with corresponding learning methodology and pedagogy. The proposed seed for content co-creation process, based on simple and short videos/presentations explaining a single concept or relation, includes materials created by teams of few knowledge domain experts and LSP professionals. On top of the seed, the system would grow based on contributions from all over the community members thanks to an easy-to-use web based system interface.

3. CONCLUSION

The knowledge-workers of the twenty-first century require the ability to jump between fields of technical specialization and capture the key issues quickly. A base-level of familiarity with scientific concepts and processes reduces the time taken to master new areas where emerging tasks and work processes occur. Generic skills are not just restricted to their usefulness in the workplace but are equally required across the spectrum of living experience in today's world. Emerging work place demands a set of new generic skills for maintaining employability. In addition to job-specific technical competencies, there is a requirement of a set of generic skills, which are generic to a cluster of occupations in order to perform competently as knowledge worker. Generic skills are required by all workers. However, the extent by which these skills need to be possessed varies from one occupational grouping to another.

Part of generic skills are communication skills which are highly desired by business and industry. To just glance at the local scene we mention our Sports science students who will certainly seek their job within sports business and industry, whether as personal trainers, gym owners or headmasters in schools. Oral and written communication proficiencies are consistently ranked in the top ten desirable skills by employer surveys year after year. This is something tangible which can be corroborated by survey pools of most frequent sports graduates employers which are published at the end of each academic year and serves as a signpost in study programs design. In fact, high-powered business executives sometimes hire consultants to coach them in sharpening their communication skills as part of their social competence and soft skills. According to the National Association of Colleges and Employers, following are the top five personal qualities or skills potential employers seek: 1.

³² <http://www.fuse.ni.ac.rs/>

³³ <https://erasmusplus.rs/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/Strategy-for-Education-Development-in-Serbia-2020.pdf>

³⁴ <http://www.if4tm.kg.ac.rs/>

³⁵ <http://rewbc.ni.ac.rs/>

Communication skills (verbal and written), 2. Strong work ethic, 3. Teamwork skills (works well with others, group communication), 4. Initiative, 5. Analytical skills. Surprisingly, or not, our sports graduates are ranked very high in their domain specific knowledge and competence but communication skills are always emphasised as most desired contributing to the overall good and efficient employee profile. The good amount of research studies undertaken in studying generic skills are guideposts in formulating educational policies and initiating pedagogical reforms that can bridge positive consequences to the learning outcomes and achievements of the future workforce. While no single list of generic skills can be concluded as conclusive to one job or sector in this constantly changing economic and social landscape, the dominating skills sets and competencies required in 21st century occupations must be consigned to the learner. Doing this needs to utilize appropriate teaching and learning methodologies, integration models and skills formation adapted by educational systems and institutions, at all educational levels. The possession of generic skills, then, will be a flexible passport of the workforce to move from one job to another, and ticket to enter any given condition and environment within 21st century requirements.

Finally, what is it that we can expect from the students and the teachers as well, in the area of professional language skills to be applied in prospective jobs? If all goes well, if students acquire workplace languages knowledge and if this knowledge is properly valued and validated by the competent teaching staff, then our mutual goal of creating competent, highly organized, highly motivated students is going to be realized. This is also a good opportunity for higher education institutions in a country such as Serbia, to widen its horizons, to present itself in the vast labor market, and become highly competitive in the knowledge market as well. Considering the local scene capacity in the light of the above mentioned challenges and perspectives of putting professional languages into the limelight, the University of Nis exhibits the potential of all of its constituent Faculties to provide highly qualified staff in the field of professional languages teaching at each respective faculty, design and implement English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and other LSP (Language for Specific Purposes) curricula, perform needs analysis of domain specific languages, diagnose, improve and upgrade the existing ESP and LSP language levels of knowledge, construct and design adequate ESP and LSP curricula, ESP and LSP teaching materials, ESP and LSP assessment tools, administer cutting edge ESP and LSP writing and reading pedagogy, implement successful ESP and LSP teaching methods, organize numerous platforms for the ESP and LSP knowledge disseminations internationally and worldwide in the form of widely acknowledged conferences, refereed journals and other published materials. Thus, if the university internationalization is our prime aim we should utilize professional languages potentials to the utmost for the benefit of students, prospective employers and the society at large.

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