

Office for International Studies

Annual Activity Report 2003

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In 2003, activities of the Office for International Studies developed mainly in five traditional fields, namely international cooperation, foreign language programmes, MU presentations, activities in international networks, and miscellaneous.

1. INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

ERASMUS

The principal mobility programme at MU is SOCRATES/ERASMUS, which facilitates stays of MU students and teachers abroad, as well as the stays of their counterparts at MU. As expected, the growth of the programme in the academic year 2002/2003 was slow: the 341 students and 63 teachers travelling abroad represented an increase of 14 % and 7 %, respectively. After two years when the number of international students arriving to Brno under the ERASMUS programme remained almost the same, their number grew slightly to 71 this year, an increase of 18 %. With its 5:1 ratio between Czech and international students, MU is nevertheless still lagging behind the Czech average (3:1) for the ERASMUS programme. This underlines the importance of some of the goals set in the new Strategy of Internationalization of Masaryk University (see below).

Compared with 2002/2003, a slightly bigger increase (about 20 %) in the numbers of MU students and teachers participating in the ERASMUS programme was expected this academic year – 2003/2004. The expected increase of 25 % in the number of international students coming to MU is encouraging; hopefully, MU will finally succeed in attracting larger numbers of international students by its broader range of study programmes in foreign languages (particularly in English), better promotion, services to international students, etc.

Under the ERASMUS programme, MU also developed an intensive environmental programme under ERASMUS at the FoS, and the project for the introduction of the European Credit System (ECTS). MU entered the new ERASMUS Thematic Network (FoE). MU also became more active in the sub-programmes Comenius (FoA) and Arion (FoA).

LEONARDO

Experience gained by the Centre from its membership in the international network LeoNet, which provides a number of services to its members, have proven their usefulness in 2003, when the Centre offered scholarships to MU students under the Leonardo Programme for the first time. The original number of 8 scholarships in the project coordinated by West Bohemian University in Pilsen grew to 27. MU students who did well in the project spent 3 to 9 months in various East and West European countries.

In addition to the above programme, there are four other Leonardo programmes currently under way at Masaryk University, mainly pilot projects at the Faculty of Science and in the Centre for Further Education of Teachers, which are research-oriented.

JEAN MONNET

In 2003, six projects under the Jean Monnet programme (the so-called Jean Monnet Chair, European module and Permanent course) continued at the Faculties of Law, Arts, Education and at the School of Social Studies.

CEEPUS

In the spring 2003, representatives of the Office for International Studies met with the central coordinator of the CEEPUS programme in Vienna to better inform their clients about that programme possibilities at MU. New developments in the programme were also discussed at the autumn national meeting in Brno. The number of CEEPUS programmes at MU remained unchanged (7) in spite of an absolute decrease in their number in the Czech Republic. There is an interesting project that offers MU the possibility to organize training of several young Bosnian scholars (research stays at MU).

Cooperation with twinned universities

The group of the so-called twinned universities (Wroclaw, Szeged, Katowice, Poznan, Regensburg, Vienna, Greifswald, Bratislava) was extended when a new bilateral agreement was signed with Pécs University. The total number of teacher mobility days under twinning agreements also increased. Because of long-term negative experience, cooperation with the Silesian University in Katowice was reduced to a standard level as defined in the agreement on cooperation, and starting from 2004, no teacher mobility programmes supported from the Centre's budget are to be offered.

Bilateral agreements

In 2003, new bilateral agreements were executed with Paris V University (Sorbonne), the Saskatchewan University, Pécs University, Nizhni Novgorod University, University of Ivan Frank in Lvov, University of Cyril and Methodius in Skopje, and University in Plovdiv (renewed cooperation).

Other scholarships to study abroad

Under special agreements, students were offered scholarships to study at Greifswald, Wroclaw, Pécs, Bologna, Toronto and Osaka (Kansai Gaidai University).

MoE programmes for transformation and development

For the third year running, these programmes have been supporting student mobility by offering funds to both students who go to universities under bilateral agreements with MU, and to the so-called free-movers. In 2003, the number of students who used this type of scholarship to spend one or two semesters at universities in Europe, America, Africa or Asia grew sharply from 85 to 123 (of which 28 were "freemovers").

Study stays under governmental agreements

Every year, the Academic Information Agency announces various types of stays (summer courses, study stays, research and lecture stays) organized under agreements between the Czech government and governments of other countries. In 2003, nine teachers and 47 students profited from those programmes (an increase of approx. 20 %), and they went to 17 European countries and Egypt, Mongolia and Mexico.

Miscellaneous projects

There are a large number of agreements at MU that were executed either by faculties or for the use by individual workplaces. Under those agreements, dozens of other students and teachers go for short-term or semester- or year-long stays abroad, attend summer schools there, etc. Under similar agree-

ments, limited numbers of students and scholars from abroad come to MU. These projects, however, are not registered centrally.

2. FOREIGN LANGUAGE PROGRAMMES

Central European Studies Programme (CESP)

The Central European Studies programme (CESP) is a one-semester programme taught in English and offered every semester to tuition-paying students from the USA and the students that MU receives under the SOCRATES/ERASMUS programme; for the latter, CESP seminars represent the main study programme in a foreign language at MU. In 2003, the CESP programme was attended by 53 students compared with 51 in 2002.

TESOL TE

Centre for International Studies is for teachers of English as a second language. On successful completion of the programmes, participants receive the internationally recognized certificate “CELTA“ for the teaching of English. MU is one of six universities outside the UK accredited for this programme. The programme is attended by both Czech and foreign students. For personnel reasons, the programme was offered in the spring semester only in 2003.

3. PRESENTATIONS ABROAD

Presentation of Masaryk University at various conferences and other events abroad and at home is an important part of the Centre’s responsibilities.

In 2003, the Centre’s representatives participated at the usual two main conferences and educational trade fairs in Europe and America in the field of foreign relations organized by the European Association for International Education (EAIE) in Vienna and the Association of International Educators (NAFSA) in Salt Lake City.

EAIE – For this year’s EAIE conference, the CIS initiated and coordinated a project whose aim was enhance the image of Brno and its schools of higher education on the international scene, and to attract potential partners for programmes of exchange, research and other types of cooperation. The stand of all Brno universities at the conference, met with a lively response and so did the English-language publication “The Brno Universities”, the first booklet ever where all Brno universities outlined their programmes, courses taught in English and possibilities for the study of international students.

NAFSA – at the conference, CIS representatives met with representatives of several US universities and, in cooperation with the Fulbright Foundation, coordinated the presentation of universities from Central and Eastern Europe.

MU representatives also participated in a conference on aspects of internationalization entitled “Internationalization at Home” organized by the university in Malmö (Sweden), and in the international conference on “Comprehensive Role of International Centres Staff” organized by the University of Agriculture in Prague, where the CIS’s director read the paper on the “Internationalization as a University Strategy”.

At the annual meeting of the International Student Exchange Program, MU gave a presentation as a new member of the network (see below).

4. ACTIVITIES IN INTERNATIONAL NETWORKS

Utrecht Network

In April 2003, MU hosted the Utrecht Network annual meeting for the first time. At the end of the very successful two-day meeting, a celebratory event was held where the staff of the CIS performed as soloists and the choir in the 15-minute opera “Phil and Sophy” composed especially for that occasion. The cooperation with the NU executive continued in autumn, when the CIS director was a member of the Utrecht Network delegation that met with the top representatives of Comenius University in Bratislava to assess its suitability as a potential new member of the group.

Student exchanges remain the main form of cooperation in the Utrecht Network of universities. There has been a moderate increase in the number of exchanges made under SOCRATES/ERASMUS programme agreements between MU and other member universities. Brno welcomed two tuition-paying students to the CESP programme from the member university in Bergen, and the first two MU students left for a one-semester study stay in Australia organized under an agreement between the Utrecht Network and a consortium of Australian universities.

Another important activity of the Utrecht Network are its summer schools. This year, scholarships to attend the summer school on “Dutch Society and Culture” were again awarded to five MU undergraduates. This year, the second Utrecht Network summer school in Bologna on human rights was attended by three MU students and two teachers.

Another important activity of the UN is the support to exchanges of experience between member universities. The CIS was awarded a scholarship for a working visit of two of representatives of partner universities in Antwerp and Utrecht. The aim of the visit was to acquire experience in areas that are not made full use of at MU, e.g. work placements for students and participation of student unions in issues of international relations. The visit included participation in the trade fair organized by the Utrecht University for students who are considering a stay abroad at one of the Utrecht Network partner universities.

Compostela Group of Universities

At the annual general CGU meeting in September 2003, the CIS director was elected to work in the new CGU executive committee; in this way, the tradition established when the CGU was founded, namely the presence of an MU representative in the highest body of the organisation, was continued.

The CIS director had shouldered the responsibility for CGU publications for some time, in fact two publications have been published under his supervision, and three more are being prepared. The CGU has set the broadening of possibilities for cooperation between member universities as one of its current priorities. A new thematic group “European Studies” has been established, and one of MU teachers participated in the meeting at Compostela where the group was established. MU also became a member of a new working group dealing with exchanges of non-academic staff of member universities, and it participated in the selection process of candidates for working placements. Under the new programme, two administrative MU workers (from areas of IT and librarianship) travelled abroad, and MU received one guest for the area of IT.

International Student Exchange Program

Through the CIS membership, MU became the first Czech school of higher education to be a member of the International Student Exchange Program network. Membership in the network will make it possible for MU students to study at universities in the USA and other member countries under advantageous conditions (students do not pay any tuition fees, and get free accommodation and meals; they, however, pay for the stay of their counterparts at MU).

5. OTHER ACTIVITIES

The first stage of the most important CIS project in the field of internationalization was concluded on 1 April 2003 when the Rector's Council approved the "Strategy for MU Internationalization". The strategy, based on conclusions of year-long debates in the Committee for Internationalization at MU and recommendations reached at those debates, defines the development until 2006. In the future, the Committee for Internationalization at MU's role will be to coordinate and oversee the implementation of the Strategy.

Together with another 14 schools of higher education (out of a total of about 150 that participated in the programme), MU was invited to attend the evaluation meeting at the end of the 5-year University Programme of the Salzburg Seminar. MU was represented by the CIS director, who prepared a detailed report on the impact of Salzburg Seminar Advisors' visits at MU between 1999 and 2001.

The establishment in autumn 2003 of the new International Student Club at MU under the auspices of the CIS significantly improves the conditions for international students at MU. The Club's mission is to contribute towards higher integration of international students at MU, and to provide orientation – and not only in the academic environment.

As a part of their 5-week learning trip to Slovakia and the Czech Republic, 12 university and secondary-school teachers from the USA spent a week in Brno. The extensive programme of lectures and cultural events in Brno and South Moravia was organized by the CIS in cooperation with the Fulbright Commission in Prague and Bratislava as part of the so-called "Fulbright-Hays Summer Study Program".