

DELIVERABLE D7.4

REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ACTION PLAN FOR THE HARMONIZATION OF STUDY PROGRAMS (M39)

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Abstract	This deliverable describes first steps in implementation of the action plan for harmonization of study programs.
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INTRODUCTION

The presented document is the implementation report of the action plan for the harmonization of study programs within the European Digital UniverCity (EDUC) alliance. It is a part of work package 7 (WP7) of the pilot phase of the project. WP7 “Reducing barriers for physical mobility” is focused on streamlining and harmonizing mobility procedures in such manner that existing barriers preventing students or staff going on mobilities are reduced as much as possible. The reporting period covers May 2020 – December 2022.

The action plan is the result of task 7.2 (Harmonization of study programs) and includes suggestions for possible harmonization of study programs in step-by-step plan, which includes mapping of the current situation, mapping of study programs, selection process, designing/harmonizing, harmonization, validation/credits recognition, promotion, mobility administration and evaluation. The action plan was approved by the EDUC Steering Committee in December 2022. The following report describes steps taken to implement it.

Partner universities in the EDUC alliance and their abbreviations

University of Potsdam – UP

Université de Rennes 1 – UR1

Université Paris Nanterre – UPN

Masaryk University – MU

University of Pécs – PTE

University of Cagliari – UNICA

PARTNERS' IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ACTION PLAN

The action plan was reconcepted in a guideline/recommendation format to accommodate needs and obstacles which have arisen during partners' meetings and discussions concerning task 7.2. Some steps were taken to model possible harmonization and to better understand the situation at each partner university, while others remain incomplete due to lack of time and personnel.

Partners have met throughout the years to discuss the best approach to create and implement the plan. First, the need to learn more about current study regulations, existing guidelines and good practices at each partner university was identified, and therefore also the need to engage study officers and especially heads of degree program (professors) into the discussion as international coordinators do not have such a knowledge of how degree programs are conceived, structured or managed. However, as it was during Covid-19 pandemic and all universities had to quickly adapt to distance learning mode, the priority of study officers and professors lied in the urgent requirement to adapt their courses and programs to new circumstances, and it was not possible to engage them. Huge continuing workload was the reason these parties did not join the conversation regarding the best possible approach to harmonization. Without their contribution it was exceedingly difficult to move forward.

Partners tried to identify degree program overlaps between the partner universities based on available information (study catalogues, university websites, brochures). Collective agreement was to choose only English taught degree programs as English is the main language of the alliance and except for French universities, each partner uses a different national language. Further criteria were also discussed: whether to compare programs on the same degree level, how many programs to choose, how many common courses these programs should have in common, etc. For model purposes, partners have agreed to compare the programs on the same degree level, to choose those programs that at least 3 partners have in common and that offer at least 3 similar courses.

Lists of English degree programs were provided, as well as their description and curricula, if available. Thanks to this exercise the partners have found out that in some instances information about the study programs was not easily accessible which could have potentially impact on attractivity and promotion of these programs.

Coordinator of the task (MU) then analyzed provided information and compiled the definitive list of EDUC universities English degree program, divided into thematic clusters. Based on information available, 9 programs were identified as common between the partners, with 3 program clusters bearing biggest similarities: 1. Business Management, 2. Economics and 3. Computer Science and Cybersecurity. Partners have reached out to the heads of these study programs to obtain more information about the programs and to find out whether the professors would be interested in joining this activity with their expertise. While the professors mostly agreed, more obstacles have arisen during discussions with them, such as:

- 1) Need for incentives – while several partners can put in place financial incentives, the professors are so busy that financial side is no longer an incentive enough.
- 2) Some selected programs did not have ideal characteristics (being freshly introduced, being very short and already including international students, having more differences to other selected programs in the same cluster than foreseen), etc.
- 3) Willingness of students to go on mobilities within the selected study programs need to be considered as well as in some cases, the English taught programs are predominantly studied by foreign degree students who, thanks to studying in a country other than their home country, are already on “mobility” and might not have sufficient finances, time or motivation overall to travel even more.

These points were very helpful in understanding better how the harmonization can be realized in efficient and beneficial way to all stakeholders. Professors also expressed their interest in getting more information before contacting other partners, such as an overview of who is involved in the similar study program at the partner universities. However, due to aforementioned lack of time and capacity of the professors, partners could not continue to further develop this task. In EDUC roll-out the alliance plans to continue to work on this activity (in the task, dedicated to the internationalization of the curricula). With lessons learned from the pilot phase, partners are optimistic to reach the set goals in the next phase of the alliance activities.