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**FACULTY OF MEDICINE  
UNIVERSITY OF MONTENEGRO**

**STRATEGY FOR INTERNATIONALIZATION FOR THE  
FACULTY OF MEDICINE  
2024-2028**

**Approved by Dean of Faculty of Medicine, UoM**

**July 2024**

**Erasmus+ KA2 Capacity Building in the field of Higher Education**  
Strengthening capacities and digital competences in biomedical education through  
internationalization at home BIOSINT  
101082863-BIOSINT-ERASMUS-EDU-2022-CBHE

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## **1. INTRODUCTION:**

The strategy for internationalization is in accordance with:

1. The framework document approved by the participating institutions of the BIOSINT project
2. Strategy for internationalization of the University of Montenegro (UoM) 2021-2026
3. Strategy for development of the UoM 2019-2024
4. Strategy for development of the Faculty of Medicine 2019-2024
5. Annual reports of UoM.

The process of completing the strategy for Internationalization at Home (IaH) included following stages:

1. Analysis of situation. According to the BIOSINT project task T2.2 within Work package 2, Research and needs analysis, the project team from University of Montenegro, Faculty of Medicine, conducted the analysis of the state of internalization at home at WB partners' HEI – for Albania University of Shkodra and University of Tirana; for Bosnia and Herzegovina University of East Sarajevo, University of Mostar and University of Tuzla, and for Montenegro University of Montenegro. The analysis has been conducted during the period April-Jun, 2023. WB partners developed specific types of questionnaires for students, academic staff and deans in online form with automatically generated results. These results were used for the comparative analysis of the different institutions as well as the baseline for the SWOT analysis. Results of surveys and SWOT analyses were analysed at workshop in Podgorica, in June 2023 (T2.3) for establishing integrative framework road map.
2. Defining strategic objectives, indicators and target values as elements of the strategy for IaH.
3. Draft of strategy for IaH. During the workshop in Podgorica the first draft of strategy framework and road –map was established and revised and discussed at the second EU training, organized by EU partners UniKg in Vrdnik, Serbia. The strategy framework has six strategic themes, in which we suggested appropriate activities as well as indicators, target values for each of the activity. This framework was supposed to be integrative and recognised by every WB HEI involved.
4. Inclusion of suggestions and finalization of the strategy.
5. Approval of the Strategy for IaH document by the Dean's Office of the Faculty of Medicine, UoM.

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## **2. INSIGHTS INTO FACULTY OF MEDICINE, UOM**

Faculty of Medicine, University of Montenegro, was established in 1997 with the sole study program of medicine. In the present studies are organized as follows:

1. Academic studies in five different study programs:
  - a. Medicine – six years of predoctoral academic study, at the end student is awarded a Doctor of medicine degree,
  - b. Dentistry - five years of predoctoral academic study, at the end student is awarded a Doctor of dentistry degree,
  - c. Pharmacy – established as a different study program - five years of predoctoral academic study, at the end student is awarded a Doctor of pharmacy degree,
  - d. Medical college – first cycle – Bachelor – three years , at the end student is awarded a Bachelor degree
  - e. Applied physiology – first cycle – Bachelor – three years , at the end student is awarded a Bachelor degree
2. Master studies for study programs of Medical College and Applied physiology – two years, at the end student is awarded a Master of Science degree.
3. Doctoral studies for study programs of medicine, dentistry and pharmacy, lasting for three years, et the end student is awarded with the PhD degree
4. Long lasting specialization programs:
  - a. In medicine – in the fields of Radiology and Family medicine – lasting for four and three years,
  - b. For study programs of Medical college and Applied physiology – lasting for one year.

The primary mission of the Faculty of Medicine, UoM is aimed at creating competent, highly educated health professionals, who will be mainstay of the Montenegrin health system, symbiotically connecting the quality of health care, scientific research and development of the society as a whole.

The vision of the Faculty of Medicine is reflected in the continuous development and improvement of education process, in order to have the learning outcomes of this HEI adequately positioned and recognized as the outcomes of competitive educational institutions on the academic map of the region and Europe.

Bearing in mind that professions of doctors of medicine, dentistry and pharmacy as well as nurses and technicians are in the groups of seven necessarily regulated professions in the European Union (EU), these study programs are aligned with the EU directives on regulated professions (Directives 2005/36/EU and 2013/55/EU) of European parliament and Council of recognition of professional qualifications with recommendations and guidelines of international professional associations and faculty associations on the status of HE.

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Erasmus + signed institutional contracts for students and staff mobility programs:

- Universit t des Saarlandes in Saarbr cken, Germany
- Sapienza Universit  di Roma, Italy
- Univerza v Ljubljani Zdravstvena fakulteta,
- Heidelberg University, Heidelberg, Germany,
- Universitatea de Medicin   i Farmacie Craiova, Romania
- Freie Universit t Berlin, Germany
- Uniwersytet Warszawski, Warsaw, Poland
- Universidad de Granada, Granada, Spain
- Universidad de Leon, Spain
- Tren ianska univerzita Alexandra Dub eka v Tren ine, Slovakia
- Universit  de Reims Champagne Ardenne, France
- Aristotle university of Thessaloniki, Greece
- University of Novi Sad, Serbia
- Consorzio Erasmus + Uniadron Italy
- Philipps Universit t Marburg, Germany
- Orta Do u Teknik  niversitesi , Turkey
- Radboud Universiteit, Nijmegen, Holland
- Silesian University of Technology, Poland

Bilateral cooperation agreements:

- With other universities (national and international) – 20
- Other international medical and non-medical institutions – 10
- Other national medical and non-medical institutions – 11

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### **3. INTERNATIONALIZATION AT HOME**

De Wit and Hunter defined internationalization as “the intentional process of integrating an international intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, function as and delivery of post-secondary education, in order to enhance the quality of education and research for all students and staff, and to make a meaningful contribution to society”(1).

This shows increased awareness that internationalization process needed to be more inclusive then previously, and not focusing predominantly on mobility but more on the curriculum and learning outcomes. (1)

In 2020, as it was stated in the 6th IAU Global Survey on Internationalization, the International Association of Universities (IAU) revised its strategic plan and reaffirmed internationalization as one of its four strategic priorities, with revised vision of internationalization, putting attention on the inclusive nature of the process, both in terms of people and ideas, and on the ultimate goal for internationalization - societal benefit. (2)

Internationalization at home (IaH) is an area of educational research in international higher education that investigates how to achieve objectives of internationalization by “... incorporating intercultural and international dimensions into the curriculum, teaching, research, and extracurricular activities, and hence helping students develop international and intercultural skills without ever leaving their country” (3). The prime goal of IaH is to provide all students with the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in a globalized world by exposing them to diverse perspectives, developing intercultural competence, and enhancing their ability to communicate effectively with individuals from different backgrounds, and all of that in their one academic surrounding. (4)

One of the main characteristics of IaH is inclusiveness – the process is focused on all students. The process includes development of proper and inclusive mobility, but also strongly promotes teaching and learning in diverse home environment. IaH targets not only students interested in internationalization, but the whole community, with the idea to bring them closer the concept of internationalization.

As stated in the overview and analysis of the future of the internationalization of HEI in Europe, certain universities have focused on the internationalization of their curricula (IoC) and programs, in order to harmonize them with the needs of the globalized society and labour market, but most national strategies are still focused on emphasizing joint projects, mobility, recruitment and/or training of talented students and scholar, the transfer of academic knowledge and other models of cooperation with foreign universities, in order to enhance their international profiles on mobility.

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Therefore, it is recommended that future strategies incorporate IoC and learning outcomes as a means to enhance the quality of education and that research receives more attention. (1)

Most important future priorities for internationalization chosen by HEI that were included in the last global survey were “Academic staff training in international, intercultural and global competencies” and “Internationalization and interculturalization of the curriculum at home for all students”.

IoC and IaH are two concepts with separate origin but according to certain definitions of IoC - “the incorporation of international, intercultural and global dimensions into the content of the curriculum as well as the learning outcomes, assessment tasks, teaching methods and support services of a program of study” (5); and IaH: “the purposeful integration of international and intercultural dimensions into the formal and informal curriculum for all students within domestic learning environments.” (6) these concept are very similar and nowadays used almost interchangeably. (2)

Therefore the IAU considered the two concepts unified - internationalization of the curriculum at home, which is a very important area of internationalization as it can impact 98% of students who do not experience mobility. (2)

One of the important aspect of internationalization process is internationalization of research as well, since it can have impact on research productivity through cooperation and exchange of experience and resources, but also on project financing and strengthening excellence. ‘International research involvement is a cornerstone for fostering global academic collaboration and knowledge exchange’ (2).

It is important to increase the number of young researchers, to attract foreign partners and enhance visibility at the international research panel. Due to the current challenges in securing sustainable budget financing, international programs and project activities also represent significant new, alternative potential sources of university financing.

The last global survey on international also showed among other issues that the main internal drivers for internationalization are institutional leadership and the international office, and therefore should be more open to and more included in this process. Also the correlations between internationalization and societal/community engagement in higher education is important for ensuring HEIs as active contributors to their local communities and vice versa. (2)

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Online activities such as virtual exchanges, COIL, online collaborative international projects, and virtual international internships, is the activity that increased in importance at most HEIs strategies. (2) In a high burden developing country, most medical students had a positive perception of E-learning. However, there are many challenges considered as an inhibitory factor for utilizing electronic technologies for medical education. There is lack of evidence of a perception of E-learning among students from Western Balkan countries. Bearing in mind that e-learning offers a handful of advantages but also that traditional learning should not be neglected, the best form of education for future health professionals is blended learning. This might include curriculum design, computer supported collaborative learning, computer aided assessment, learning materials and learning objects, content management systems, change management strategies, institutional policies, and patient education and involvement (7, 8).

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#### **4. ONGOING PLANS FOR INTERNATIONALIZATION OF THE FACULTY OF MEDICINE AND AIMS**

The previous strategy for development of Faculty of Medicine, UoM was established for the time period of 2019-2024. One of the strategic objectives was to setup fundamentals for internationalization process. Some activities planned for that strategy (covering above mentioned aspect of IaH process) were:

- Formation of subject modules in English language in order to increase the number of foreigner students (incoming mobility) and make basics for internationalization at home (for domestic students)
- Launching of study programs in English language (organization of educational programs and workshops in English at all study levels, as a pilot study for future classes in English)
- Starting common study programs with strategic international partners
- Launching joint specialist programs (specializations) with Universities from abroad (dual degrees), through a change of organization existing specialist programs.
- Development of the e-learning system - modernization of existing equipment and technical support for e-learning system elements
- System development and training of teaching staff for introducing combined teaching methods – blended learning approach
- Developing a virtual classroom system, collaborative learning, systems for learning management
- Strengthening international cooperation and establishment of strategic partnerships with renowned scientific research institutions in the world
- Increased number of publications with researchers from strategic partnerships institution
- Increased number of outgoing and incoming mobility of researchers from partner countries institution.
- Intensification of cooperation with renowned highly educated institutions through signing and realization of the contracts on bilateral cooperation and mobility
- Enable wider support for project activities and international programs cooperation
- Promote applications for projects on international and national competitions
- Memorandums of cooperation concluded with institutions from the public sector relevant for interaction with the study programs of the Faculty of Medicine and creation of joint projects

The BIOSINT project and following strategy for it is both the part of this previous strategy and its continuation in certain fields which still needs to be more addressed during the following time line.

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What the Faculty of Medicine considers as the main benefits but also goals in internationalization processes are the ones recognised by the last global internationalization survey:

- Increased global, international and intercultural knowledge, skills and competences for both students and staff
- Enhanced internationalization of the curriculum at home
- Enhanced international cooperation and capacity building
- Improved quality of teaching and learning
- Improved quality of research
- Improved graduate employability
- Increased international networking by professors and researchers
- Opportunity to benchmark/compare institutional performance within the context of international good practice

The final benefit of the previously settled goals is enhanced prestige/profile for the institution which will then be condition for development of the same goals that lead to it.

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## 5. SWOT ANALYSIS

	Positive	Negative
	<b>Strengths</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Majority of students are interested to spend some time studying/practice abroad</li> <li>- Good knowledge of English language among student and teachers</li> <li>- Knowledge of importance of international mobility</li> <li>- Higher percentage of students who would apply for mobility</li> <li>- Interest for studying in different countries and cultural groups</li> <li>- Knowledge of importance of international gained experience for future practice</li> </ul>	<b>Weaknesses</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Not enough information about student/staff mobility</li> <li>- Not enough interest from student to receive any information about possibilities of international mobility</li> <li>- Not enough interest to stay abroad for longer period of time</li> <li>- The biggest obstacle was financial cost, lack of information, and difficulty to connect studies abroad with the content from study programs in country and recognition of results (ECTS points)</li> </ul>
Internal environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increasing number of home students who would like to attend classes in English and are interested in developing study courses which have international perspective</li> <li>- Accredited curriculum</li> <li>- Willingness of teacher to teach in English, to improve their own English skills</li> <li>- Number of teachers who got some kind of education/training abroad</li> <li>- Willingness of teachers to motivate students</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Low number of student who were in different mobility programs</li> <li>- Majority was only clinical practice</li> <li>- Low percentage of international perspective in the content of provided courses</li> <li>- None of the courses are organized for teaching in English language</li> <li>- Although high percentage of teachers who had experience abroad it was mainly academic/practice, not about internationalization or teaching</li> <li>- Still not enough international collaboration in academic,</li> </ul>

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		<p>teaching, clinical practice projects</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- More than half academic staff have not been involved in close international collaboration</li> <li>- Not enough collaboration in terms of guest lecturers / mainly from regional universities</li> <li>- More work on giving opportunities for students not interested on going abroad to receive content with international perspective</li> </ul>
External environment	<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Opportunities from EU for different exchange/research programs</li> <li>- Low cost of academic and postgraduate studies</li> <li>- Increased interest from foreign students to study at our Faculty</li> </ul>	<p><b>Threats</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Additional financial request for studying/teaching in English</li> <li>- Governmental financial support</li> <li>- Low capacities</li> </ul>

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## **6. STRATEGY FOR INTERNATIONALIZATION AT HOME**

### **1. STRATEGIC THEME 1. PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AND RECOGNITION.**

The theme concerns staffs and students and it involves training, mentoring and professional learning opportunities related to internationalization engagements and achievements. It should lead to some form of institutional recognition, reward and/or accreditation, supported with esteem indicators.

#### **Strategic objective 1.1. – Involve the decision makers for internationalization issues.**

This involves the management of each WB partners HEI as well as the University managements since it concerns changes in the internal organization and rulebooks. With this objective we try to raise the awareness of decision makers about needed changes in structure in order to facilitate the process of internationalization, because of their role in policy and faculty development, curriculum integration for internationalization of education, partnership and global research collaboration as well as quality assurance.

#### **Operational objective 1.1.1. Provide appropriate policies and/or regulations within and/or outside university for academic recognitions of internationalized engagement of staff.**

The main activity within this objective concerns updating the rules and conditions for selection and/or promotion of university teachers and associates involved in process of internationalization. This can give appropriate directions and rules for development of IaH through adequately educated staff.

Activity: Updating conditions and criteria for the selection and promotion of academic staff involved in the IaH activities.

Indicator: Number of criteria related to engagement in internationalization.

Target value: One new criterion for teachers and associates.

#### **Operational objective 1.1.2. Assigning the responsibilities for the internationalization activity.**

This requires the changes in rulebook on the internal organization of work and the systematization of job posts – to hire new / improve function of employees – teachers, associates, and administrative staff, depending on needs and possibilities of each WB partners HEI and their current staff involvement, on order to provide adequate management, planning

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and implementation of internationalization activities by assigning clear roles to involves individuals.

Activity: Improve the functions of the job posts involved in internationalization and adding additional title - 'for internalisation at home related affairs'.

Indicator: Number of improved functions for academic/administrative staff.

Target value: At least one job position with extended descriptions related to internationalization; expanding the functions and obligation of Vice-Dean for international collaboration.

Activity: Appointment of contact person.

Indicator: Number of contact persons related to internationalization among academic/administrative staff and students.

Target value: One contact person among academic/administrative staff and one among students regarding internationalization issues.

Activity: New job posts related to internationalization

Indicator: Number of working posts for academic/administrative staff designated to internationalization jobs.

Target value: One new post for academic/administrative staff.

Activity: Establish a rulebook regarding internationalization.

Indicator: Established rulebook.

Target value: One established rulebook.

Activity: Create a reward system for students involved in internationalization

Indicator: Certificate for internationalization; Bonus for future mobilities

Target value: 5 or more certificates for internationalization; 5 or more students rewarded with a bonus for future mobility.

### **Operational objective 1.1.3. Ensure that all students receive equal opportunities for participation in international activities.**

Since the one of the main characteristics of IaH is inclusiveness this objective is focused on giving the all possible information and opportunities to every student to participate in all international activities. The goal is to raise awareness of all the possibilities that students, but also others involved –teachers, associates, administrative staff can gain through internationalization.

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Activity: Involving students in international activities.

Indicator: Number of students involved in international activities on an annual basis.

Target value: 15 students involved in internationalization activities per year; 5 students involves in new curricula internationalization per year.

Activity: Make relevant information about internationalization publicly available and transparent on the website of university and faculty.

Indicator: Sections on webpage dedicated to internationalization.

Target value: One section on webpage dedicated to internationalization.

Activity: Ensure bilingual information for students.

Indicator: Bilingual news relevant to internationalization on web page/social media post and information board.

Target value: Bilingual news relevant to internationalization on web page/social media post and information board.

Activity: Utilize the insights from international students or students who conducted mobilities and their contact persons to guide others in communication techniques associated with internationalization.

Indicator: Number of meetings/trainings.

Target value: 2 annual meetings/trainings.

**Operational objective 1.1.4. Provide training opportunities for staff to learn how to internationalize their teaching and the curriculum.**

It is important to provide the staff adequate education in developing fields of IaH and Internationalization of Curricula through hands-on sessions and training.

Activity: Organization of trainings for staff to learn how to internationalize teaching and curricula.

Indicator: Number of meetings/trainings.

Target value: 2 annual meetings/trainings.

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## 2. STRATEGIC THEME 2. INSTITUTIONAL STRATEGIZING

The theme involves key tasks of IaH implementation and subsequent quality improvement. It also encompasses monitoring and evaluation systems, definition of explicit goals, ways to assess them as well as institutional bodies to oversee the progress.

### **Strategic objective 2.1. – The faculty provides the framework, means, agreements and procedures for internalization.**

One of the major activities in the EU HEIs is the faculty and staff development and includes means and procedures that provide staff language proficiency, competence for various activities in the process of IaH including internationalization of curricula, ability to teach in an international and/or virtual classroom. These activities should include continuous education in English language, joint programs with partner universities for developing international, intercultural and digital capacities, promotion of staff/student mobility and fostering the hosting international teachers (for academic classes and internationalization trainings).

#### **Operational objective 2.1.1. Establish cooperation agreements with international partners with comparable curricula.**

Newly signed and approved agreement with foreign HEIs are one of fundamentals for development of internationalization. Those will help in transfer of knowledge (basic knowledge about field of studying, but also about different cultures and environments), students and staff mobility, joint participation in scientific projects, as well as in developing/creating new joint academic courses/programs which can facilitate internationalization of the curricula.

Since this project involves HEI among biomedical sciences it would be a great opportunity to make initial agreements of cooperation among comparable study programs, with previously prepared regulations about ECTS acknowledgments. Through this cooperation some new opportunities may be open once students/staff spend some time abroad.

Each involved university have already established cooperation with different foreign university so we can focus on also revision of those agreement, evaluate the degree of their use in order to create more chances for student/staff mobility.

Therefore it is important to make more contact with foreign universities acknowledged as possible strategic partners for development of international relations and IaH.

Activity: Increase the degree of use of signed agreements on cooperation with foreign universities on bilateral cooperation, mobility and research

Indicator: Number of revised/reactivated agreements with foreign universities.

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Target value: 90% of signed contracts are actively in use, bi-annually; 3 signed contracts (re) activated per year.

**Operational objective 2.1.2. Engagement and promotion of the academic staff and students in joint international networks.**

The end goal is to provide opportunities and motivation for staff and students to enhance their skill in implementation, development and mentoring others in process of internationalization through participation and partnership creation through joint international networks.

Activity: Integrate the Faculty of Medicine (UoM) into joint international networks.

Indicator: Number of joint international networks registered.

Target value: One new/re-activated registration in a joint international network.

Activity: Integrate the staff and students of Faculty of Medicine (UoM) into joint international networks.

Indicator: Number of staff and students registered.

Target value: 5% of staff and students registered in a joint international network.

**Operational objective 2.1.3. Integration of knowledge from international lecturers**

The end goal with hosting international lecturers (from academic community as well as experts in internationalization process) is to provide the opportunity for all students and academic/administrative staff to receive academic knowledge and insights in process of internationalization without having to participate in mobility programs.

Activity: Lecturers/seminars/trainings from foreign lecturers.

Indicator: Number of lecturers/seminars/trainings organized.

Target value: 10% more related to the above indicator.

**Operational objective 2.1.4. Monitor international levels of achievements regarding internationalization of research and participation in international projects.**

One of the important aspect of gaining visibility in international networks is internationalization of research as well, since it can have impact on research productivity through cooperation and exchange of experience and resources, but also on project financing and strengthening excellence. It is important to increase the number of young researchers, to attract foreign partners and enhance visibility at the international research panel. The goal is also to increase the participation in national and international projects regarding internationalization (in all the associated fields). In order to properly monitor advances in this fields we need adequate indicators and systematic approach.

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Activity: Adoption of a quality system rule for monitoring of teaching and research achievements of international ranges.

Indicator: Number of organized national/international educational events regarding international projects.

Target value: 20% or more related to the above indicator.

Activity: Evaluation of teaching and research activity of international ranges.

Indicator: Number of project applications; number of conferences of international ranges.

Target value: 20% or more related to the above indicator.

Activity: Evaluation of teaching and research activity of international ranges.

Indicator: Number of published scientific papers with researchers from international partners institutions.

Target value: 5% or more related to the above indicator.

Activity: Evaluation of teaching and research activity of international ranges.

Indicator: Number of incoming and ongoing research mobility.

Target value: 1-3% or more related to the above indicator.

**Operational objective 2.1.5. Strengthening the capacity of the Faculty of Medicine in the process of application and implementation of international projects and program within international cooperation**

Activity: Enable wider support for project activities and international programs cooperation in cooperation with UoM and international partners' institution.

Indicator: Strengthening a network of administrative support for the implementation of projects and international cooperation program.

Target value: Strengthening a network of administrative support for the implementation of projects and international cooperation program.

Activity: Promote applications for projects on international and national competitions by establishing, widening and educating project support team which will facilitate process of application.

Indicator: Number of involved current staff/ new staff.

Target value: 1-2 new members of current staff/ 1 new job post.

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### **3. STRATEGIC THEME 3. – CURRICULUM AND CO-CURRICULUM**

The theme includes activities that are designed to ensure a meaningful and internationalized academic experience of students and staffs. The aim is also to promote international and intercultural competences, including the formal and non-formal acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes, including those about IaH, with the far goal to prepare students for the global job market. Internationalization of curriculum (IoC) is the most demanding part of internationalization process and requires comprehensive approach with collaboration of faculty, academic staff, administrative staff, students and external partners.

#### **Strategic objective 3.1. Internationalize existing and new curricula and co-curricula**

In order for students to be more active and competitive in global job market it is necessary to have opportunity to gain adequate skills and knowledge through internationalized curricula, formal and non-formal. The process of IoC should be one of the main goals through the process of internationalization, but it also represents the most complex part, both theoretically and practically. It includes accreditation of study programs, creating new courses/study programs in English language which can bring some diversity and make academic offer more appealing for home and foreign students. Since this project is being common for different HEIs and Universities, although in the same field, there will be many obstacles in order to harmonize all the differences between the existing curricula, environments, intercultural dimensions. Also, this process will have to include strategy for validation, monitoring and evaluation systems for creation and implementations. Therefore, the recommendations from our EU partners include careful selection of the existing courses, targeting those with the greatest potential for quality improvement, the simplest implementation and the usefulness in global market, and also means for constant evaluation, according to institutional and international practices.

#### **Operational objective 3.1.1. International benchmarking of faculty programs and international networks.**

Since the knowledge and educational processes are in the continuous evolution and development around the world, with continuous establishment of different HEIs and curricula, there is the need for constant evaluation of its performance. Therefore many countries have started to embrace the concept of benchmarking in different fields, including the higher education area. The concept is based mainly on comparing the organization with one or more others that are identified as a reference in respective field, but also in learning from differences and developing adequate methodology to be used in organization in question. Given the fact that V.L. Meek and J.J. van der Lee states that “benchmarking involves two mandatory elements: the existence of an agreement of the institutional leaders to take into account the results of the benchmarking and to make the necessary improvements; and the existence of a

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collaboration between all the parties involved in benchmarking”, one of the main activities in this objectives should be establishing the cooperation with the respective IBR.

Activity: Connecting with and evaluating from the international benchmarking resources (IBR) in higher education area.

Indicator: Number of IBR with established connections and evaluations.

Target value: One additional IBR, bi-annually.

### **Operational objective 3.1.2. Internationalize existing curricula.**

Having on mind the fact that BIOSINT involves HEI in biomedical sciences, this gives an opportunity to choose courses that are same/similar in different study programs and do the joint internationalization, which is going to be approved by different universities and will facilitate future cooperation in terms of student/staff mobility and guest lecturing. The process will start with proper selection of courses, which focus on the cultural elements, educational systems, structure of health in different countries, but also have both global perspective and future-looking perceptions, the ones related to research in medicine, bioinformatics and statistics. One of the criteria should also be the complexity of the course, and for the start of the internationalization process it is needed to begin from least demanding ones.

Activity: Select and internationalize curricula from existing / common courses.

Indicator: Number of ECTS from existing curricula which are internationalized; number of changed syllabi/courses from existing curricula which are internationalized.

Target value: Up to 30 ECTS are internationalized, 1-3 internationalized syllabi/courses.

### **Operational objective 3.1.3. Internationalize new curricula.**

In this project we will focus on developing and forming joint plan for 1-3 new virtual elective courses that can be applicable on every study program. Since the process of accreditation of curricula itself is different in each WB country, the target value for this activity will be 1-3 new course application. This process is very complex and will have certain risks, with the first one being language barrier, with teachers and students. It is required to educate staff to perform lectures in English language, so HEIs will need to provide appropriate human and material resources. Also language barrier in students, lack of motivation for IaH and overload with regular curricula can have negative impact on number of home students willing to enroll in these new courses. Finally the process of accreditation itself can be very complex, so this indicator can represent the challenge in this project.

Activity: Develop new internationalized curricula for virtual courses.

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Indicator: Number of developed curricula for new internationalized virtual courses; number of new course application for accreditation/ accredited virtual courses; number of students interested for enrolling in the new virtual courses.

Target value: 1-3 developed curricula for new internationalized virtual courses; 1-3 new course application for virtual courses; minimum 5 students per each new virtual course.

#### **Operational objective 3.1.4. Facilitate the process and set the fundamentals for IoC**

Activity: Formation of subject modules in English language

Indicator: Number of subject modules offered to students in all study programs

Target value: 5% of existing curricula with included different modules in English language

Activity: Continuous development of e-learning system

Indicator: Modernization of existing equipment and technical support for e-learning system elements

Target value: Modernization of existing equipment and technical support for e-learning system elements

Activity: System development and training of teaching staff for introducing combined teaching methods – blended learning approach.

Indicator: Developing a virtual classroom system and means of collaborative learning.

Target value: One new virtual classroom and at least one new learning platform introduced.

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#### **4. STRATEGIC THEME 4. ENGAGEMENT AND INFLUENCE**

The strategic theme endorse internal actions for engagement of students and staffs in IaH plans and delivery. The recommendations from EU partners are that faculty and staff should enhance their knowledge and skills related to internationalization and intercultural communication and have to include primarily early career staff, mid-career staff and leadership staff. Therefore careful planning of the types/formats and content of development actions and programs should be a one of the vital parts of the overall institutional operational objectives. The strategy should include clearly defined competences and instruments for implementation and follow up, with strategic goals being formal recognition for academic, administrative and managerial staff, students learning outcomes and graduate competencies.

##### **Strategic objective 4.1. Offer international experience for students and involve all staff members in internationalization**

Since the concept and implementation of IaH is broad and complex it is recommended that both internal and external stakeholders should be partners and involved in process. The first and the most important role goes to academic staff, who is responsible for the changes in curricula, teaching about internationalization, educating other members of HEI staff and students, but also for evaluation of the progress. To be effective educators they have to first themselves realize the value of global learning, to promote it outside the classrooms as well, to be ready to acquire new skills, to guide students through this change by connecting students' international and intercultural experience with formal learning. Second major part of involved participants are students which are also target group of the process, so the role of the HEIs and Universities is to create the environment for them to learn about IaH, help in implementation and use the benefits. Others involved should include international officers since they already have certain experience, then quality insurance officers, human resources staff, curriculum developers and off course management and leadership since they have to integrate IaH strategy with overall institutional long-term development plan. External stakeholders include international partners, guest professors, alumni.

##### **Operational objective 4.1.1. Learning track on intercultural competences**

Adequate non formal outside classroom activities organized with home students and external stakeholders contribute to intercultural competency development. Design a plan for international students and lecturers, facilitated by host students/staff, to familiarize them with the cultural, historical, and natural treasures of the country they are studying in/staying during mobility programs/staying during guest lecturing time period.

Activity: Designing and implementation of intercultural learning path for students and staff.

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Indicator: Number of engaged students and staff.

Target value: 10% or more of involved students and staff.

**Operational objective 4.1.2. Increase in English course offer and provide sufficient language attestation for teachers.**

Courses taught in English can be considered the one of the first steps to increase the attention of larger number of students interested in mobility to our Universities. In order to increase the number of courses it is needed to provide adequate education in English language primary for teachers, and then for home students as well. Since mainly universities in WB countries have professional English courses in their study programs it is partially resolved. Coordinate collaborative sessions with home students studying English and native language to improve proficiency in these languages for all students, both host and international, to facilitate everyday communication.

Activity: Organize trainings for academic and administrative staff for an advanced level of English language skills.

Indicator: Number of employees who have obtained a certificate of advanced level of English language skills.

Target value: An increase of at least 5% from the number of employees who have a certificate at the baseline.

**Operational objective 4.1.3. Achieve significant number of international students or adopt plans for foreign students' enrolment.**

Incoming mobility of students and teachers creates opportunities to increase cultural diversities and multi-ethnic surrounding and also help in promotion of universities as good host institutions. This can be achieved through internationalized curriculum, increased number of courses in English language, already established credible student recruitment agents that some universities use, through well prepared and presented offers at international educational fairs, more harmonized study programs that can attract students. Also it is important to have good student network that can offer incoming student all important information about necessities beyond education itself. What is also recommended is organization of courses in native language of host countries for incoming students/teachers to facilitate their everyday activities.

Activity: Increase the number of international student mobilities / increase the number of international students.

Indicator: Number of incoming/registered students.

Target value: 0.5% or more incoming students of the total number of students at the HEI per year.

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## 5. STRATEGIC THEME 5. SUPPORT SERVICES

This theme fosters the strengthening of administrative, financial and technical resources allocated to the strategic planning and implementation of IaH. It also assigns responsibilities across institutional services, giving the visibility to the end-users of institutional IaH efforts.

### Strategic objective 5.1. Increase financial, human and organizational resources for internationalization activities

To achieve this strategic objective it is necessary to have close cooperation with various partners and institutions.

#### **Operational objective 5.1.1. Provide the support programs from basic and advanced costs**

In order to increase the mobility (outgoing and incoming) for students and staff as a part of internationalization and learning process it is important to create better conditions for realisation of mobility and recognition of the achievements gained during mobility. It can also help employees acquire the language and intercultural experience required for successful participation in internationalization process. Since the financial situation is one of the main obstacle in mobility programs one aspect of strategy is to implement new cooperation with local self-government (or national) for scholarships.

Activity: Implement cooperation programs with local self-government for additional scholarships to increase the number of application for international mobility of students/staff as well as to provide the means for incoming mobility of foreign teachers/students.

Indicator: Number of students/staff in mobility programs.

Target value: 1% or more increase of number of students and staff in mobility programs.

#### **Operational objective 5.1.2. Increase motivation for internationalization activities, buddy and mentoring programs**

Local student associations, student unions, local students in general, never mind being already involved in any sort of organization or not, have an important role in overcoming the gap between formal and non-formal dimensions of IaH. Therefore the concept of IaH and its benefits should be carefully explained through meetings and workshops since they can have some reluctances in terms of integration with international students. For this activity there is a plan to establish annual workshops and meeting, which will be held by teachers/student with mobility/internationalization experience to introduce the staff and students with concept of internationalization. The goal is to increase the number of intercultural workshops, establish buddy program, language tandems, and multicultural programmes.

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Activity: Train and educate more actively teachers and students on participation in international cooperation programs.

Indicator: Number of workshops and/or training meetings, organized annually.

Target value: Two workshops and/or training meetings are organized annually, at least.

### **Operational objective 5.1.3. Enhance information environment about internationalization**

Besides already proposed means of dissemination of internationalization information through official websites and posts on social media, it is also planned to make joint document/guide for internationalization to be printed on different forms of promotional material, to be used in each University. These means of disseminations are supposed to be used for other various internationalization programs and activities.

Activity: Production of leaflets, brochures, instructions and multimedia material on various internationalization programs.

Indicator: Number of available different forms of promotional material on internationalization.

Target value: A minimum of three forms of different promotional material available.

### **Operational objective 5.1.4. Creation of buddy system**

The aim is to create a structured and supportive buddy system, modeled on already established ones in different foreign universities but in harmony with our local environment and means, in order to provide solid and more accessible support system among students and inclusive environment, in formal and non-formal activities.

Activity: Trainings and lectures for students in order to appropriately present the idea and to form a strategy for establishing Buddy program and all its components.

Indicator: The creation of the Buddy system.

Target value: The creation of the Buddy system.

### **Operational objective 5.1.5. Creating a solid support system (Safe and security)**

This operational objective includes very important activities for implementation of internationalization process. It requires detailed manual, mainly for students incoming students but also for visiting lecturers and staff (translated in different languages) what to do in different situation, including different kind of accidents, health issues, bureaucratic issues and documents, living options, everyday needs and necessities. The proposed protocol should include some of the most important information about the country, city, faculty, academic program and administration, campus life, health and safety, accommodation, services, policies and regulation.

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Activity: Collaboration of faculty staff, local self-government, bureaucratic, emergency and health institutions in order to prepare appropriate document.

Indicator: Formulation of Safe and Security document.

Target value: Formulation of Safe and Security document in electronic and printed form.

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## **6. STRATEGIC THEME 6. INTERNATIONALIZED UNIVERSITY EXPERIENCE**

The strategic theme ensures the access to an internationalized university experience to all those who may benefit of it, including but not limiting to students, staffs and community members. It also enables the transparent demonstration of institutional IaH competences.

### **Strategic objective 6.1. Collaborate with external partners regarding sustainability, multiculturalism and capacity building of internationalization.**

As explained in the analysis of IaH by EU partners in BIOSINT project, community partnership have high impact on authentic intercultural experience, beyond formal education, and provide different perspective for students in domain of societal challenges, community-driven internationalization policies in different areas beyond biomedical sciences, insight in activities of various governmental and non-governmental organization, etc. Therefore the recommendations are to gradually increase and develop cooperation with community stakeholders, selecting the most appropriate arrangements which will have the best academic and societal impact.

#### **Operational objective 6.1.1. Use comparative advantages of West Balkan region: cultural heritage, natural resources, lower cost of living**

In the EU universities cultural events are organized in variable formats, content and extent. It is recommended that these should be planned in a systematic and resource effective manner taking into an account goals such as diverse and inclusive environment, intercultural competency development and community partnerships. Cultural diversity in the classroom enhances inclusive learning, teaching and assessment practice and what is an advantage in WB region is that cultural diversity already exist among home students (gender, age, nationality, religion, various experiences etc.) despite common background and similar language. So these kind of events may promote several dimensions of cultural diversity, like religion, ethnicity and social class which is important in fostering students' understanding and making a positive and safe classroom environment.

Activity: Connect and co-operate with local stakeholders which promote cultural heritage and natural resources of the community.

Indicator: Number of organized joint events dedicated to promotion of cultural and natural values of local community.

Target value: One specific event organized, per year.

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**Operational objective 6.1.2. Organize new social events and use existing ones, specially dedicated to the internationalized topics, engaging alumni people, students and public**

The international students, staff members and students with international experience as well as foreign guest professors are often engaged actively in internationalization process, which helps create truly multicultural and internationalized environments and experiences.

IaH process should create opportunities for student engagement with 'cultural others' in local society (i.e. community research projects; engagement with local cultural, ethnic or religious groups) which can be done by involving employers, local NGOs and other actors in the local society.

Activity: Connect and co-operate with institutionally-tied, external stakeholders for campaigning of IaH.

Indicator: Number of organized joint events dedicated to promotion of IaH.

Target value: One specific event organized, per year.

**Operational objective 6.1.3. Increase publicity and visibility to support sustainability**

The goal is to enhance the visibility of the faculty by promoting initiatives through various channels and engaging the broader community.

Activity: Connect and co-operate with media marketing stakeholders for IaH sustainability assistance

Indicator: Number of media marketing organization with contractually established co-operation.

Target value: 0.5% contracts in force of all active institutional business contracts

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