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Self-Assessment Report

Introduction

This self-assessment report is prepared as part of the endeavor by Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University to pass Authorization requirements by proving that the University is compliant with the overall standard of education quality as stipulated in the document on Authorization Standards for Higher Education Institutions of National Center for Education Quality Enhancement (NCEQE) and ensures student centered learning environment.

The document <u>covers the period of 6 years from August 2011 until January 2017</u> and is organized in as follows:

- I. Documents on TSU Internationalization relevant to Department of Foreign Relations (DFR)
- II. Roles and Functions of DFR
- III. Exchange Mobilities Coordinated by Department of Foreign Relations
- IV. International Projects at DFR
- V. Goals and Objectives for 2018-2021

I. Documents on TSU Internationalization relevant to Department of Foreign Relations (DFR)

Department of Foreign Relations (DFR) is a centralized unit at Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University. It is functioning under the direct supervision of a University Rector and a University Chancellor.

The DFR bylaw is a regulatory document outlining the main priorities and functions of the department. In accordance with the DFR bylaw, the Department's "main goals and objectives are to take care of the University internationalization, development of strong partnerships with the world's leading universities, support integration of TSU's professors and academic staff into international education area, involve the university in a comprehensive manner in Bologna process and care for its international profile (acknowledgement)."¹

Between 2011 and 2017 the University adopted 2 Strategic Development Plans, which provide general framework for the goal-specific strategies and functions and define the scope of what the department must undertake. The TSU Strategic Development Plan that was endorsed in 2011² sets

¹ DFR Bylaw

² TSU Strategic Development Plan 2011-2017

out internationalization as the main priority of the university development, advancement of research and teaching of the kind, which must be compatible with the world's leading universities. The TSU Strategic Development Plan for 2017-2021³ has an ambition that "by the year of 2021 the university will be a research institution based on the national traditions in which European values are embedded and which will ensure internationalization of academic, research and administrative processes." Georgian law on higher education is the overarching normative document defining the priorities of higher education in the country in which the state pledges to ensure: "Full participation in the unified European educational and research area of teaching, learning and research and in other international systems of cooperation."⁴

Consistent with the aforementioned documents DFR at Tbilisi State University has the responsibility to steadily steer the university-wide internationalization. More specifically, DFR aspires to increase the number of student and staff mobilities, develop better services for exchange students and staff, support the university in reaching its internationalization efforts, with the exception of recruitment of international students.

³ <u>TSU Strategic Development Plan 2017-2021</u>

⁴ Law of Georgia on Higher Education

II. Roles and Functions of DFR

DFR is a liaison office handling the university's cooperation with foreign higher education institutions, research centers, foundations and other relevant organizations.

The main areas of work of the department include:

- Implementation of the university internationalization
- Developing strategic alliances and managing institutional partnerships and collaborations
- Building international profile for TSU through visits to our existing and prospective partners, participation in education fairs and other relevant events and activities
- Hosting visits by delegations from international universities and cultural affairs offices of the diplomatic corps in Georgia
- University-wide coordination and administration of student and staff exchanges
- Providing support services of incoming and outgoing exchange students and staff
- Developing and managing international opportunities for students and staff
- Working with different university faculties to promote their international agendas. This includes international agreements, funding opportunities, information on student and staff exchanges and participation in university-wide visits
- Development and management of institutional capacity building projects together with international partners

These priorities and values were developed and strengthened at the Department of Foreign Relations in the reporting period (2011-2017) partly due to the efforts of the head of the department to recruit high skilled staff and to upgrade the knowledge and skills of its staff members.

DFR Staff

At present, Department of Foreign Relations has 11 full time employees and is run by the head of the department. The DFR staff members are highly experienced professionals in education sector. Every staff member has undertaken some kind of professional development activity at least in one higher education institution in a foreign university. 5 staff members out 12 hold advanced higher education degrees from leading American and European universities (Harvard University, University of Dusseldorf, San Jose State University, Sapienza University Rome, School for Advanced Studies in the Social Sciences).

From 2013, majority of the DFR staff members were able to receive mobility grant from the EUfunded Erasmus Mundus Action 2 programs for a minimum month-long work visit to one of the partner universities. Starting from 2015, the number of administrative mobilities has increased with the inception of Erasmus Plus credit mobility projects, which allowed every member of DFR team to spend several days in one of the partner university and work for an international office of the host university.

Besides recruiting Georgian-speaking staff, between 2011-2014 department of foreign relations employed 2 foreign country citizens. A German national was recruited in 2010 until 2013 and was assigned to the task of strengthening the cooperation between TSU and German universities, to raise funds from different German foundations with the aim to support TSU's faculties in teaching

German language and to support the MA program in Public Administration at the Faculty of Law. From 2012 until 2014, a national of the United States worked at the department focusing on strategic partnerships and project development.

III. Exchange Mobilities Coordinated by Department of Foreign Relations

Exchange mobilities at TSU started in early 1970s. From 2006 a more institutionalized and organized form of study and teaching mobilities of students and staff emerged and was administered by TSU department of foreign relations staff. The primary source of funding for these mobilities came as a result of bilateral agreements between TSU and its partner universities or through an embassy or a government of a respective host country. In 2007 a new funding scheme was added to support student and staff exchanges at TSU. This was through Erasmus Mundus program funded by the European Audiovisual and Cultural Exchange Agency (EACEA) of the European Commission (for more information about projects, please see section IV).

The Tables below show the dynamics of the student and staff mobility in 2011-2017. In total 965 students and 209 professors and administrative staff from TSU benefitted from the mobility exchanges.

It is apparent, that until the academic year 2015-2016, the highest number of outgoing students were funded through bilateral exchanges. In 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 the highest number of scholarships were distributed by Erasmus Plus K107 mobility project. Overall, the number of exchange students almost quadrupled in the past 6 and a half years. These figures show the students of all three levels of education- undergraduate, graduate and PhDs.



 Table 1: Outgoing exchange students per academic year (2011-2017)

As regards the incoming students taking a semester or two at TSU, as it is demonstrated by the Table 2 the number of incoming exchange students has been steadily increasing with only 32 arriving in 2011-2012 and 49 in 2016-2017 academic year.



 Table 2: Incoming exchange students per academic year (2011-2017)

In the case of academic and administrative staff members, the highest reported number of exchange mobilities were recorded in 2016-2017, when 70 people from TSU administrative and academic personnel were able to benefit from Erasmus Plus mobility. The second largest contributor to staff mobility has been the project funded under the EC Seventh Framework Programme Marie Curie Actions—International Research Staff Exchange Scheme (IRSES).





Similar trend is noticed in relations to incoming staff. As is demonstrated in Table 4, the number of incoming exchange staff has increased from 3 The highest number is reported in 2016-2017 and the lowest number in 2011-2012.

 Table 4: Incoming exchange staff per academic year (2011-2017)



It should be mentioned that apart from incoming exchange staff, in 2012 TSU department of foreign relations invited and hosted **65** professors from different Western Universities. The funds were provided in January of 2012 by the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia for the project submitted by DFR titled "Foreign Professors at TSU". The professors delivered short subject-specific courses at then six faculties of Tbilisi State University. The duration of this pilot program was one year.

Services provided to incoming and outgoing students and staff

TSU students and staff receive different types of services that are aimed at informing them and guiding them throughout their mobility. Most of these services were developed much earlier than the beginning of this reporting period (already in 2006 with the start of the first exchanges), nevertheless, they were institutionalized and received a formal institutional character with the years. These services are the following:

- 1. Information sessions by DFR staff- Mobility team at DFR hold information sessions every academic semester
- 2. Tet-a-Tet consultations with DFR staff- individual personal consultations with students takes place every day during the working hours (from 9am till 6pm)
- 3. Group consultations with DFR staff-group consultations are mostly held before the application periods
- 4. Online consultations with the DFR mobility team- email and Facebook are actively used by DFR mobility team to communicate with students and provide them with relevant feedback
- 5. Info release through social media- The DFR Facebook account is predominantly used to serve as an information resource for the TSU students on various activities of DFR
- 6. TSU webpage- The DFR mobility team regularly updates the webpage both the main webpage of TSU and the DFR's page
- 7. Arrival orientation- Is conducted regularly once every semester for incoming exchange students at TSU and is mandatory for all
- 8. Pre-departure orientation- Is held regularly once every semester for outgoing exchange students at TSU and is mandatory for all. Intercultural training was first offered to TSU

students in 2016. In 2018 DFR has invited Ms. Christine Bouding, Director of International Office of Kiel University of Applied Science, who will offer a special training for TSU students going to Germany

9. DFR Brochures-The first info brochure was prepared by DFR in 2008 and has been annually updated. The brochures are posted on the DFR website and hardcopies are circulated among TSU students and staff as well as our partners.

Student and Staff Evaluations

TSU department of foreign relations has been regularly asking the beneficiaries of the exchange programs to fill out the evaluation questionnaires. The most complete feedback was received by the outgoing students upon their return from their host institutions. Table 5 shows the asked our exchange students of 2015-2017 to evaluate the services provided by DFR before and after their mobility. As is indicated in Table 5 below, the largest majority or 63% of our respondents say that the services provided by DFR are excellent, 34% report that the services by DFR (info sessions, group & individual consultations, pre-departure orientations etc.) are good enough, 3% of the respondents say that they are reasonable. Nobody from evaluated the services by TSU DFR as weak.





Summary

The data show that the number of exchange mobilities have increased considerably in the past 6 years. In the case of outgoing students from TSU the overall numbers have increased four times and in the case of outgoing personnel the number is twenty times more compared with the end of the reporting period. It can be assumed that a relatively slow increase in the case of incoming students can be attributed partly to the stagnation in the development of foreign language taught academic programs and courses. As a matter of fact, a Master's program "Managing International Enterprises" a double degree program of Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University (Georgia) and the Friedrich Schiller University of Jena (Germany), which is funded by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) functioned only between September 2011 and 2016⁵.

⁵ https://www.tsu.ge/ge/faculties/economics/reectxn7-mkyprtgn/mastprog/bizmim/wgjji2yhcjgestsal//

The aggregated data of the past 6 years demonstrate that the exchange outgoing students and staff annually constitute roughly 1% of the total student and staff body (22, 000 students and 4,400 staff, including those with suspended student status). TSU department of foreign relations plans to increase the number up to 3% at least by the end of 2021 (until the current strategic development plan is in effect).

In the next round of inquiry (Spring semester of 2019) DFR plans to prepare a more detailed questionnaire focusing on every service that DFR mobility team provides.

IV. International Projects at DFR

Altogether, in the reporting period TSU Department of Foreign Relations has attracted funding for and implemented **136** projects (including ongoing projects).



Table 6: Projects at DFR (2011-2017)

Between 2011 and 2016 **six** large scale Erasmus Mundus Action2 projects and **one** External Cooperation Window (Lot5) projects were attracted and implemented by DFR staff members:

- 1. External Cooperation Window LOT 5
- 2. **WEBB** Whole Europe Beyond Borders
- 3. BACKIS Between Black and Caspian Seas
- 4. IANUS Inter-Academic Network Erasmus Mundus
- 5. *ELECTRA* Enhancing learning in ENPI Countries through Clean Technologies and Research Related Activities
- 6. EMBER Erasmus Mundus Broadening Educational Experiences
- 7. *HERMES* Humanities Education Revitalized Via Mundus

(https://www.tsu.ge/en/government/administration/departments/foreign_relations/int_relations/erasmus_mundus //).

DFR staff members developed and authored two of these projects (**EMBER** and **HERMES**), which were further submitted to EACEA by TSU's European partners. Furthermore, TSU has served as a co-coordinator for three of these projects: WEBB, HERMES and EMBER.

From 2015 DFR actively engaged in obtaining funding for the student and staff mobilities through Erasmus+ mobility projects. In the past two and a half years, TSU in collaboration with its European partners received funding for **120** agreements within Erasmus+ KA107 International Credit Mobility Projects.

MEVLANA - Mevlana Exchange Programme is aimed the exchange of students and academic staff between the Turkish higher education institutions and higher education institutions of other countries. From 2012 TSU partnered up with Turkish higher education institutions to receive funding for the student exchanges. The first 6 projects between TSU and the Turkish universities were funded in the academic year 2014-2015 and between 2014 and 2017 13 such projects were funded by the Turkish government to exchange student and staff.



 Table 7: Mobility Projects at DFR (2011-2017)

Between 2011 and 2017 TSU has contributed to the development of and managed 14 (Table 8) large-scale capacity development projects, which were funded through EACEA Tempus, ERASMUS+ CBHE, Marie Curie Actions, Finnish and Norwegian government. All of these projects contributed largely to strengthening institutional capacity by means of upgrading existing university structures (DFR first of all) and skills and in certain instances creating new structure and new skills.

Table 8: Capacity Development Projects at DFR (2011-2017)



Brief Overview of the Capacity Development Projects

Project: Internationalization in Central Asia and Eastern Neighboring Area (ICAEN)

Implementation period: 2011-2014 Project Number: 516663-TEMPUS-1-2011-1-ES-TEMPUS.SMGR Coordinator: University of Seville (Spain) Funding: EACEA TEMPUS The project was aimed at building the capacities of the partner universities on developing international cooperation and contributing to better international networking, enhancement and better exploitation of their potentials and to improvement of their capacities through internationalization of teaching, learning, management, research & innovation.

Final outputs and outcomes of the project at TSU developed by DFR project team:

- DFR staff was trained in all necessary aspects of internationalization
- Recommendations on internationalization of TSU have been developed
- DFR served as an editor for the book published in the framework of ICAEN project: Strategic Choices of Higher Education Institutions in Georgia and Belarus: Internationalization
- Signed an MoU among the project partners

<u>Project:</u> Developing Student Career Services in Georgia (CASEDE)

Implementation period: 2012-2014

Project number: 530566-TEMPUS-1-2012-1-LT-TEMPUS-SMGR

Coordinator: University of Vilnius (Lithuania)

Funding: EACEA TEMPUS

The wider objective of the project was to improve Georgian student employability by developing and implementing career education services (CES) in Georgian HEI and ensuring unbiased evaluation of CES, as well as wide dissemination and sustainability of the project results. The project yielded the following outcomes and outputs:

- Student Career Framework was introduced at TSU
- Student Career Development Center was set up at TSU and director of the center was introduced
- Career courses were piloted at TSU for the students
- Student Career Management Guide for Teachers
- Career Management Guide for Students
- Career Education Services Implementation Guide

<u>Project:</u> Leading and Managing Change in Higher Education (LaMANCHE)

Implementation period: 2012-2015 Project Number: 530621-TEMPUS-1-2012-1-BG-TEMPUS-JPGR (2012-3072/001-001) Coordinator: International University College (Bulgaria) Funding: EACEA TEMPUS The project's overall objective was to promote the modernization of PCs' higher education (HE) by building governance and management capacities at PC HEIs and initiating sustainable dialogue on HE reforms among relevant interest groups.

Project's main deliverables for TSU are as follows:

- Self-assessment and external analysis of leadership and management skills and models at TSU (the self-assessment tool was administered by DFR project team)
- A study on TSU's internationalization was carried out by DFR project team to evaluate the level of internationalization at Tbilisi State University using desk research and interviews with the university top administration, heads of departments and university deans
- DFR project team and several key management staff at TSU participated in the training of trainers in leadership and in change management
- A virtual think tank was set up by project partners and the project team at DFR took active role in the development of this tool

<u>Project:</u> Project Actors Capacity Training in Caucasus (PACT)

Implementation Period: 24 months, 2013-2015 Project Number: 544047-TEMPUS-1-2013-1-GE-TEMPUS-JPGR Coordinator: David Tvildiani Medical University Funding: EACEA TEMPUS

The main aim of the project PACT is to successfully transfer existing knowledge accumulated by the European Commission for project developers to the Caucasus Region and contribute to capacity building and international relations in Caucasus universities.

In the framework of the PACT project TSU has had the following outcomes:

- Designed the curriculum for a 6-month project development training for young researchers, lecturers, international liaison officers and PhD students;
- Piloted these training courses at TUS
- Set up an open-access platform with project development support tools in local languages for TSU
- Enhanced the capacity of DFR and Student Career Development Center at TSU

<u>Project:</u> Promoting Internationalization of HEIs in Eastern Neighborhood Countries through Cultural and Structural Adaptations (PICASA)

Implementation period: 2013-2016 Project Number: 544125-TEMPUS-1-2013-1 AM-TEMPUS-SMGR Coordinator: Yerevan State University (Armenia) Funding: EACEA TEMPUS

The aim of the project was to promote recognition of Eastern Neighboring Area HE systems-Armenian, Georgia, Belarus and Ukraine - through development and integration of internationalization dimensions into structural and cultural components of HEIs management.

The principle outcomes and outputs of the project for TSU are:

- Trained staff and revised functions of IROs that become building blocks of the ethos and culture supporting international perspectives
- DFR staff was trained for necessary skills for internationalization activities
- Two academic programs (MA in public policy at TSU Faculty of Social and Political Sciences & BA program in Mathematics at TSU Faculty of Exact and Natural Sciences) were benchmarked against internationalization dimensions
- The DFR staff was trained on quality assurance of internationalization
- The DFR project team wrote an article *Impact of Interdisciplinary Education on Graduate Employability: A Case of TSU*, which was published in PICASA project book

<u>Project</u>: Reform of Education THru INternational Knowledge exchange (RETHINK)

Implementation period: 2013-2017

Project Number: 544178-TEMPUS-1-2013-1-PT-TEMPUS-JPCR (2013-5076)

Coordinating Institution: University of Lisbon, Faculty of Architecture

Funding: EACEA TEMPUS

DFR project team provided institutional and administrative support for the project, the aim of which was to design and develop a PhD program in Urban Studies.

<u>Project</u>: University-enterprise cooperation via spin-off companies network (UNISON)

Implementation period: 2016-2019

Project Number: 573555-EPP-1-2016-1-ES-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP

Project Coordinator: University of Santiago De Compostela (Spain)

Funding: Erasmus+ Capacity Building in Higher Education

This is an ongoing project administered at TSU by the DFR. The project is designed to define the mechanisms of transfer and commercialization of knowledge and technologies, which are to be understandable unambiguously and executable within the reasonable timeframes.

Project's projected outcomes and outputs for TSU are the following:

- Development of effective spin-off model for university-enterprise partnership
- Piloting spin-off model at TSU
- Creating of virtual international spin-off network for which DFR project staff is team leader

<u>Project</u>: Intercultural communication in academic settings in South Caucasus Countries and Norway

Implementation period: 2017-2019

Funding: The Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Education (SIU)

Project Coordinator: Oslo and Akershus University College of Applied Sciences (NO-HiOA)

The aim of the project is to enhance intercultural competence and academic cooperation in the South Caucasus Countries, as well as enhancing the understanding of these subject matters, and of the South Caucasus Countries, in Norway. In order to achieve these aims, a group of four universities, one from each of Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Norway, will cooperate in the organization and implementation of a Summer School in Intercultural Communication in Educational Settings in 2019.

The role of DFR will be to support organization of the summer school.

Summary

To sum up, it can be assumed that these projects have made an insurmountable impact on TSU's institutional capacity development:

Project Administration at TSU

In 2011 and 2012 the Department of Foreign Relations created a project administration guide describing the procedures and norms related with planning, administration and management of human resources for international projects at TSU. The capacity development projects have designated team members who handle project administration within the university, lead communication with project coordinators and partners and in compliance with the rules of project administration administer relevant tasks. Furthermore, the project team at DFR carries out the project deliverables within their competence, expertise and skills.

Outline of Achievements within Capacity Development Projects

After implementation of TEMPUS-CASEDE project the Student Career Development Center was set up at TSU at the end of 2013. Preliminary work had been carried out by the project team (including DFR staff as coordinators and project staff) to create career the Framework of Student Career Management Competences for universities nationwide.

It is owing to TEMPUS-ICAEN project that the DFR project staff produced a small-scale document reflecting the vision of the department of foreign relations project team on how to internationalize the university. One of the biggest achievements of the collaboration in the framework of ICAEN project has been the fact that the University of Seville (ICAEN coordinator) kindly agreed to coordinate one of Erasmus Mundus Action2 projects (EMBER).

TEMPUS-LaMANCHE provided the tools to the university for adapting and adjusting to the changing environment on various innovative strategies and provided the tools of quality and performance assessment. Within TEMPUS-PACT project coordinated and implemented by TSU department of foreign relations the TSU Student Career Development Center was actively engaged at the level of provision of the project development skills and expertise.

Shortcomings: Since project management and fundraising is not institutionalized at TSU, there are risks that the capacity and knowledge accrued at the Department of Foreign Relations will become obsolete after some time. As DFR is not formally entitled to lead institutional capacity development.

Other International Activities of TSU Supported by DFR in the reporting period

Among some of our international activities in the past 6 years include:

- Visiting Chair of Georgian Languages, Culture, and Society at University of Tartu, Leiden University and University of La Plata in Argentina (carried out in different academic years from 2011)
- Camoes Institute of Portuguese culture at TSU (2013-ongoing)
- Yunus Emre Center of Turkish Culture, Language of Society (2010-ongoing)
- Center for Japanese Culture and Society (2010-2015)
- Harvard Summer School (2016)
- Signed MoUs with 194 HEIs worldwide of which 179 are active partnerships

Summary

Currently, Department of Foreign Relations cooperates with Shota Rustaveli National Science Foundation to institutionalize Visiting Chair of Georgian Language, Culture and Society at Vilnius University, University of Tartu and University of Bremen. After negotiating the terms and conditions of the arrangement with DFR, these HEIs have expressed readiness to cooperate with TSU. DFR is leading negotiations with the University of Ca Foscari as well.

Organization of the Harvard Summer School in 2016 by DFR received highly positive feedback from relevant people from Harvard University. An arrangement was made between TSU DFR and Harvard University to hold the Summer School in 2018. Necessary steps are being undertaken by DFR to organize the Summer School at TSU for Harvard University students.

The short-term goal of the university is to increase the number of active partnerships from **179** to **250** and include strategically important regions as well.

V. Goals and Objectives for 2018-2021

Broader Goals and Objectives of DFR for 2018-2021 corresponding to the TSU Strategic Development Goals, according to which" by the year of 2021 the university will be a research institution based on the national traditions in which European values are embedded and which will ensure internationalization of academic, research and administrative processes", DFR aims to lead TSU's internationalization to support it on its pathway to become the education institution recognized globally. For this, DFR plans to implement the following:

1. International Networks and Alliances

- Become more pro-active and engaged in the activities of various international networks
- Set up strategic alliances together with our most reliable partners to pursue various internationalization efforts

2. Increase the number of Exchange Students and Staff

- Provide more opportunities for TSU students to spend an academic semester or a year abroad
- Provide more opportunities at TSU for international students
- Support professors from foreign universities take teaching and research positions at TSU

3. Professionalization of the Department of Foreign Relations:

- Improve and diversify the services DFR provides
- Bolster interaction of DFR with various departments, faculties and research institutes and programs within university
- Establish quality performance and monitoring system
- Train and re-train staff on regular basis.

Links to resources:

- 1. FAQ (in Georgian): <u>https://www.tsu.ge/data/file_db/International/Erasmus+%20FAQ_92585.pdf</u>
- List of Erasmus+ KA107 partner Universities: <u>https://www.tsu.ge/en/government/administration/departments/foreign_relations</u> /int_relations/erasmus_plus_ka1/1mxqtpgbpibpiezyl//
- 3. TSU Fact Sheet: <u>https://www.tsu.ge/data/file_db/International/FactSheet_TSU_67142.pdf</u>
- 4. Important dates for outgoing students, Erasmus+ KA107: <u>https://www.tsu.ge/data/file_db/International/ERASMUS+%20Calendar.pdf</u>
- 5. Welcome Brochure: <u>https://www.tsu.ge/data/file_db/International/Brochure%20-%20Final_28767.pdf</u>
- 6. Subjects taught in English: <u>https://www.tsu.ge/data/file_db/International/List.pdf</u>
- 7. Subjects taught in Russian: <u>https://www.tsu.ge/data/file_db/International/List_Russian.pdf</u>
- 8. Regulation for Cotutelle Agreement: <u>https://www.tsu.ge/en/government/administration/departments/foreign_relations/</u> <u>int_relations/erasmus_plus_ka1/cnee0xl5viwyuhbbm//</u>
- 9. TEMPUS projects: https://www.tsu.ge/en/government/administration/departments/foreign_relations/int_relation s/tempus/
- 10. Erasmus+CBHE projects: https://www.tsu.ge/en/government/administration/departments/foreign_relations/int_relation s/erasmus_plus_cbhe/