

ESTABLISHING EUROPEAN AREA OF HIGHER EDUCATION BY ERASMUS MUNDUS PROJECTS

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Abstract. The article partakes of the EMERGE ERASMUS MUNDUS mobility *Romanian-Ukrainian/Romanian-Russian cultural interference in the European context* divided into 12 lectures of 2 academic hours within the Faculty of Philology of Yuriy Fedkovici University from Chernivtsi.

Keywords: European area of learning, active-participative methods, cultural interferences, Romanian-Ukrainian, Russian-Romanian.

Introduction

Romanian-Ukrainian/Russian-Romanian cultural interferences are a reality which, in terms of European integration and vicinity, gains actuality. The roots of the Romanian-Ukrainian cultural relationship rests in the deepness of the two peoples' past and despite some unfavorable historical contexts they have developed continuously, contributing to the affirmation of spirituality and historical values in a wide international context. There is a real tradition regarding the knowledge of spiritual relations between the two nations and within them, of the particularity of Romanian culture. The interferences and influences occurred mainly in relation to the “cultural peaks” as Andrei Plesu says.

There is, of course, a specific character of the Romanian-Ukrainian/Russian-Romanian interferences, even in the European context, which lies in the fact that they were achieved not only during the international exchange of values and ideas, but also by a direct contact, the result of cohabitation for centuries in a space with common borders, which resulted in a spiritual unification of the two peoples. Especially in terms of these contacts it is considered, as another competent researcher in the field says, Karl Kurt Klein, that it was not an “unequivocal influence, but exchanges.”

Therefore, Paul Philippi considers that such interfaces “are seen as an example regarding the European cultural exchange opportunities that offer interesting insights, both during history and in modern times”.

1.1. Regarding specific areas of Romanian-Ukrainian/Russian-Romanian cultural relations and interferences of intercultural communication, there has been a constant concern of both parties to establish some general trends of evolution. What is still missing is a synthesis contribution that would include a review of all these interfaces ensemble, establish the horizon and provide insight for development of investigations in this area of interest, not only for the two peoples, but also in the context of spiritual history of Europe. The title of our project – *Romanian-Ukrainian/Russian-Romanian cultural interferences in European context* – enriched the course content proposed within the mobility of the academic staff. Culturally, it was motivated by the significance of interculturality itself and by the need to fill a void in interdisciplinary/multidisciplinary/ transdisciplinary research which opened an unexpected horizon of reading and of information that was subject to concentric and condenses analysis and interpretation. In the teaching-scientific and educational policy field, the project was designed to

- support the establishment of a European learning area,
- help develop quality learning and to promote high performance,
- promote innovation and a European dimension of the systems and practices in the field,
- help improve the quality, attractiveness and accessibility of learning opportunities,
- reinforce the contribution of learning to social cohesion, to active citizenship, to intercultural dialogue, to gender equality and to personal fulfillment;
- develop among young people the knowledge and understanding of culture diversity and of the cultural interference value in the globalization processes. Our mobility has the role to help young people acquire general life qualifications, skills and competences necessary

for their personal development, future professional activities and active citizenship at national and European level.

1.2. The project, divided into lectures, addressed bachelor students and master students interested in the Romanian-Ukrainian/Russian-Romanian intercultural relations, in the issues of Romanian/Ukrainian/Russian cultural identity in European context, in the cultural construction mechanisms, in the form of relations with otherness, in the research of literature, languages, culture mentalities of the cultural areas covered in intercultural context, in the forms of recovery, patrimoniality and dissemination of the cultural heritage of the two spaces in the new European context. The Project *Romanian-Ukrainian/Russian-Romanian cultural interference in European context* provided a cycle of integrative modules, designed to highlight the dominant thematic in terms of literature, culture and educational policies of the two geo-cultural spaces, viewed in the European context of interculturality and aiming at a 'knowledge-based Europe' “

The general objective of the project rested in supporting the achievement of a European area of study by approaching from an interdisciplinary/multidisciplinary/transdisciplinary perspective, within some lectures for bachelor degree students and master students, the Romanian-Ukrainian and Russian-Romanian intercultural relations in European context, and in investigating the way in which they have found expression, they have been mirrored and reflected on civilizations and cultures from the geo-cultural areas mentioned above.

Its main scientific objectives were to complement and deepen the knowledge of history and literary theory gained over years of study, to enrich students with notions of synthesis from the approached fields and, not least, to reconsider them from an inter- and multidisciplinary perspective, to develop among the students and the teaching staff the knowledge and understanding of the diversity of cultures, languages and European values; in order to promote the project from an educational perspective, the priority was to focus on learning outcomes, on the effective guidance of the target group to apply tools such as ECVET that enhance learning and promote the validation and recognition of non-formal and informal learning, that we preserved and developed.

The specific objectives of our project were: supporting the achievement of a European higher education area and socializing with the young people to help them acquire general life skills, qualifications and competences necessary for their personal development, for their future occupation and for active citizenship at national and European level.

1.3. The scientific novelty and originality of our project rested in the research of the Romanian-Ukrainian and Russian-Romanian intercultural relations in a European area of learning by applying new methods of teaching and research, gathered by means of this interdisciplinary scientific approach, involving both investigation methods specific to disciplines such as cultural historiography, cultural anthropology, sociology, literary history, psychology, pedagogy, as well as combinatorial methods that complement each other or interrelate. We believe that the suggested theme was welcomed given that aspects of Romanian-Ukrainian and Russian-Romanian intercultural relations in the geo-cultural space mentioned above had not been fully reported in a space of learning, much less in the Ukrainian cultural space in which an interdisciplinary approach to the problem was almost inexistent. The opportunity of this research-teaching theme was justified by the existence of a small number of articles, studies and works dedicated to the proposed topic and especially by the need to emphasize and show to the target group the way in which intercultural relations between Romania and Ukraine related to each other by exploiting the cultural identities of both spaces and cultures. The singular nature of our research-teaching project was also proven by the use of a considerable amount of cultural-historical and theoretical information on the phenomenon of “influence” of the Romanian-Ukrainian/Russian-Romanian intercultural relations in Eastern European space. The contribution of the mobility we proposed consisted not only in the synthesis and transmission, through lectures, of some observations on the way in which intercultural relations between Romania and Ukraine had developed, but especially in emphasizing interdisciplinary relations that base interculturality on a cultural intertextuality that crosses territories and even continents. Also, our contribution aimed to “mark” the key aspects of interculturality and acculturation of the analyzed cultural spaces by certain cultural, literary, religious, historical implications, through the Byzantine Christianity, the marriage alliances, and ethnological component. The importance of the subject proposed is overwhelming,

because it integrated, by means of the project purpose, in the European Area of Higher Education, contributing to its development and to the indissoluble unity of several civilizations and cultural spaces. The topic of lectures opened and offered possibilities to know the whole through a common upper space, promoting the unity in diversity of the Central and Eastern European cultural space. The research on the circuit of values in the cultural space of Eastern and Southern Slavs came to enrich our project and the national perspective of each of the cultures in question, while the applied value of the lectures completed the project.

1.4. The final aim of the research project was to achieve along with the course titular teachers of the host university – a synthesis (course material) of the different cultural aspects that circumscribe the cultural interference in the Romanian and Slavic-eastern area, in relation to general European Cultural phenomena. In the scientific/cultural final product we highlighted the originality of each culture, explaining and defining their independence and individuality, knowing that each of the cultures of the area of focus keeps a set of values that is proper, specific to it. In this respect, our comparative studies on the cultural dimension of the capitals mentioned in the work, on the activity of the great personalities of the two cultural areas – Petru Movila and Paisius Velichkovsky, on the one hand, and Maria Bashkirteff and Iulia Hajdeu, are an undeniable proof of the Romanian-Ukrainian/Russian-Romanian cultural interference in the European context.

We believe that the result of our approach (course material) is of use mainly to the target group, to the specialists in comparative literature, art history, philosophy of culture and cultural historiography. The results of the studies are used as scientific and theoretical material and as instructional-didactic material in teaching university courses. Also, the presumed results of the mobility will be presented during scientific events (workshops, seminars, symposiums, conferences) or published in various books, scientific journals, having the purpose to explain as clear as possible the importance of the phenomenon of “influence” of intercultural relations between Romania and Ukraine/Russia in the mentioned geo-cultural areas and in the Eastern European cultural space. By applying a wide range of research and teaching methods, from methods such as that of the bibliographic and theoretic inventory, the comparative, systemic research for the elaboration of lectures – to that of planning, prognosis, tracking and forecasting of the learning process – we achieved the essential points of the research object.

1.5. In order for our common aim (the teachers and the students) to be successful we adopted a strategy of action, basing our entire teaching-educational process on strategies likely to succeed and by stimulating the students’ interest, directly or indirectly for their own training and development.

Our approach was student-centered and followed a predetermined plan that placed the student in the best learning situation, in a context of requests, conditions and resources which enabled the acquirement of skills foreshadowed by the proposed project objectives. We organized the teaching and learning process for the benefit of students, and the relations with them were open, stress relieved, stimulating, in order to ensure students conditions of active participation within the initiated learning experiences. We organized the content features and we conceived the education strategy based on the particularities of the target group, combining the most appropriate methods, teaching materials and forms of organization.

To the teaching-learning-assessment we added qualitative valences by increasing the efficiency and effectiveness in a stimulating, motivating, stress relieved environment, based on authentic communication between teachers and students, thus respecting their right to ask questions and seek additional explanations for the understanding and interpretation of knowledge. We opted for active-participative methods, such as: the heuristic approach, problem-solving, discovery learning, modeling, experiments, computer assisted instruction/self-instruction, case studies, by means of which students will be trained to conduct studies, researches, analyses, comparisons, creations etc., which require a voluntary effort. We also developed the spirit of scientific research, theoretical and practical creativity. To achieve a flexible interaction between our actions as teachers and the bachelor degree/ master students we took into account the potential of the latter: their motivation, their capacity to act in a certain way and to work with certain types of knowledge, their level of education, their learning style, etc.

Moreover, the used management methods of individual project – the Logical Framework method, the logic matrix, the GANTT chart, – guided our steps in monitoring and controlling the project progress, namely the amount of the work done and the results obtained as compared with the period of time allotted for the task and for the general objective of the project.

1.6. The Research Activity

- We supported the activities of the university, of the Department of Romanian Philology and of the Slavistic Studies Center, aimed at the knowledge-based triangle consisting of education, research and innovation,
- We participated in scientific events organized during our mobility at the host-university, sharing the experience of ensuring quality education in the European area of knowledge.

The Institutional Activity

- Since in our research activity we were interested in the European space of Higher Education and since we had experience and activity of 12 years in this area, we shared our experience and provided the necessary help in defining and implementing common procedures for internal and external evaluation of the study program quality, approaches and common tools on the recognition of diplomas in the European area, and clear principles to ensure the quality of trans-border education,
- We promoted the performance of institutions of higher education. The European space for Higher Education, especially the experience of “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University in organizing the educational process, the offer of education, the students’ assessment, their mobility,
- During our mobility we contacted other partner institutions of the host-institution, establishing contacts for a better development of the mobility,
- The knowledge of the city history, of the cultural institutions made our mobility even more valuable.

Conclusion

EMERGE mobility *Romanian-Ukrainian/Romanian-Russian cultural interference in the European context* divided into 12 lectures of 2 academic hours was divided, within the Faculty of Philology of Yuriy Fedkivci University from Chernivtsi in 2 modules: Dialectology (1st year) and International Relations (2nd and 3rd years), enriched, according to the assessments performed by the management of the Faculty of Philology of the host university “the range and content of courses offered to university students and master students, supported the creation of a European area of learning, promoted innovation and a European dimension of the systems and practices in the field, helped improve the quality, attractiveness and accessibility of learning opportunities, developed among youth the knowledge and understanding of cultural diversity and of the value of cultural interference in the processes of globalization, helped young people acquire general life qualifications, skills and competences necessary for their personal development, future professional activities and active citizenship at European and national level.” (See Assessment, on file)

Based on three pillars – the teaching activity, the scientific activity and the institutional activity, the impact of our mobility on the institution in which we performed our activity was primarily defined by the fact that this benefited from the experience of a teacher from the European learning space, with European experience. The example was followed by other colleagues who will also want to participate in mobility activities. Regarding the impact on the diversification of the topic of the proposed courses and on the dissemination of the information obtained during the mobility, the achieved experience was shared in a potential master course, or through the discussions, written reports, file and CD of the mobility. The impact of the transfer of knowledge and experience was found in their effective use during the practical and scientific activities. We used the knowledge acquired and offered in the mobility as effectively as possible in the elaboration of course materials, and we employed our skills and abilities to provide quality education in the field by promoting the European dimension in the education process. The knowledge and discovery of other cultural areas and the European and global approaches, through interaction with the institution organizing the mobility, provided us interaction with cultures other than Romanian, helped us overcome language, cultural barriers, unfounded

prejudices, to become richer in knowledge, to discover the extraordinary European unity in diversity. In a multicultural context promoting tolerance (against cultural differences or of a different nature) became a transferable European value applicable to other cultural environments as well.

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