

## Session 2 - Chain5 conference - Internationalisation & level 5

Here you will find the notes as they were made during the break-out groups of session 2 topic internationalisation and level 5 education.

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Introduction: of the group

### Countries

- France (Business level 5: international trade students/Alain)
- Netherlands (policy advisor AUAS/Marleen HENNY)/
- Norway (professional college: Annelise)/National Student Union for vocational students (Henning/Aleksander)/Level 5 qualifications
- Slovenia: Vocational institution
- Belgium: Thomas More (Patricia)

Reason for participating in the conference:

- Wanting to learn more about sending students abroad for internships within level 5;
- Learn about best practices of other EU institutions on Level 5;
- Exploring opportunities for internationalization within the level 5 programmes;

### Belgium:

- 2 year program is a challenge for internationalisation because students who just start have to decide very soon, in the first minutes of their studies.
- Obstacles: Exchange is not possible because of the language.
- Intercultural/internationalisation competences are not in the curriculum.

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- Buddy programme: some associate degree courses they have integrated the buddy system in the English course.
- International Business programme offered by a German university/finish programme: 1 week.
- Obstacles: level 5= 30% should be at the work-floor demanded by the government so it is not possible to send students too long abroad.
- Agreements: is lifting on the level 6 agreements.
- Erasmus + funding for all students who asked.

### Norway: Institution

- Send students abroad after they finish their curriculum: Europe/Australia (30%);
- Ambition: more mobility internally in the programme, started 2 years ago with asking for Erasmus + funding
- Ambition: more staff mobility;
- Obstacle: study credits are not equivalent to ECTS and Norwegian language is an issue as they don't offer courses in English;
- Erasmus+: who applies for Erasmus+;
- Short term/extracurricular good be a solution;

Norway: student union

- Obstacles: Credit system in Norway and language barrier;
- Students are eager to have more possibilities for internationalisation;
- Want to talk to other European student unions in Europe;

### Slovenia

- The financial/socio-economic situation of the students in level 5 are not always permitting students to go abroad;

- Two years programme: and Erasmus + is asking min of 2 months so this is not always possible;
- Level 5 is different in each country so it makes it harder to exchange/collaborate
- Internships: with Austria/Croatia/Italy
- Language is often a barrier
- Dual degrees: 2 years, 4/5 extra learning outcomes should be achieved.
- Challenge: Brexit will not impact the dual degrees.

### France

- International period is mandatory in the International Trade programme: internship 8/12 weeks abroad in a non-French speaking company. All students are engaged and motivated. 200 students in total. May/June/July at the end of the first year. English language is incorporated in the programme. Students are finding their internships but the institution also helps
- Study mobility: difficult to organise because of the two year programme.
- Incoming students: learn French/internship in a French company/some countries.
- Erasmus+ for internship mobility

### Netherlands

- 15 ECTS are reserved in year 2 for activities in relation to internationalisation (Bootcamp with international partners blended: virtual and short term mobility)
- English literature
- Guest speakers
- Issue: 2 years programme & language

Marleen Henny - Policy Advisor Internationalisation(O&O FDMCI)

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Notes by: Karen Goor Erasmushogeschool Brussel

### Introduction members break-out room

2 members are working in higher education in Flanders, Belgium  
 1 member working in Vocational education in Tallinn, Estonia

### Best practices

- Estonia
  - Students can participate in a international exchange (4 weeks). The majority of the students are adults with families or a job, so they don't have much interest in that exchange.
  - The school in Estonia has a partnership with school(s) in Germany. The schools in Germany are not less willing to participate in that partnership, since the students from Estonia don't speak German fluently.
- Belgium
  - There are not so many best practices yet in Belgium. A lot of students from level 5 are students that are working and have families. There are some short excursions in one of the school in this group, but there are no structural programs or exchanges (yet)

Future plan: finding out possibilities for an exchange with schools or organisations from The Netherlands, since it is close by and there is no language barrier.

### Options for cooperation:

- COIL (<http://www.coilconsult.com/what-is-coil-.html>)
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Report by

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## **1. Internationalisation: description of the local situations in the different countries- /institutions of the members**

### **Croatia**

Andrey is a schoolteacher in a level 5 institute but this position is a new position. So he wants to learn from other member's experiences and is not yet well enough informed about the actual initiatives and internationalisation projects to contribute to the discussion .

### **Italy**

Rossana works in a New level 5 Institution although they started immediately with student mobility. This is very important for them, not as a goal as such but as a means, a way to reach a goal. The problem with student mobility is that lots of students cannot participate due to their home situation or work obligations.

The students in their programmes have many different cultural backgrounds. It is very interesting to work with this type of groups on cultural competencies.

### **Latvia**

Talavis says that Latvia started 20 years ago with level 5 programmes as part of higher education (HE). They have lots experiences in different areas of internationalisation.

However, when it comes to student mobility he recognises the problem of part-time student with responsibilities on other levels ( family and/or work) .

The most popular countries to send students to are: Italy, Turkey, The Netherlands and other European countries.

To work on intercultural competencies it is important to work with:

- the Erasmus incoming students (different European countries)
- Regular students with a different cultural background (Russia, Bella Russia,...)

Some programmes with an explicit international profile, such as those of the Riga management institute, are recruiting students from different countries e.g. Pakistan, Uzbekistan.

### **Norway**

Level 5 programmes as part of higher VET (HVET) for the latest 20 year have built a lot of experience on international exchange projects.

A nice example of long term international collaboration on level 5 HVET is the green sector (Germany - Italy - The Netherlands - Sweden - Finland). One of their new projects is the bridging project between florist, gardening and landscaping. They are looking for synergy and common interests e.g. formation on green roofing and green walling.

Another interesting project is combining STEM and soft skills.

## **2. Exchange of views on internationalisation.**

It is a strength of a lot of level 5 programmes that their student population is very divers. More than in other types of higher education there are students with different cultural

background, age, professional experience, part-time learners, dual learners,... .This gives a lot of opportunities to work on intercultural competencies even in the home situation without real international mobility.

In a lot of level 5 programmes there are a certain numbers of so called pioneer students. Those students (often with another (sub)cultural background) are the first in their family to follow a HE programme. This is an opportunity for level 5 programmes to profile in the landscape of HE as a driver for democratisation in HE and intercultural competence.

Because of the specific profile of the student population the classic forms of internationalisation are sometimes not fit for purpose on level 5. This has led to a variety of creative solutions e.g. short time visits to neighbour countries, student exchange projects where students meet students of other regions of the same country (diminish the language barrier), virtual collaboration between student groups from different countries,...

The actual COVID crisis has given a boost to the digital competencies of students and staff members. Maybe this COVID crisis can be the start engine of a more intensive digital international communication in the education landscape/ Level 5 landscape.

All members are convinced of the value/advantage of intercultural competencies for the actual and future employability of level 5 students. In general, so called soft skills / transversal skills are as important as the disciplinary skills. Experiences learn that most level 5 positions in the world of work are jobs in which working as a team is very important. For this teamwork it is necessary to train our students to be flexible and intercultural competent.

Language is very important for internationalisation. English is the world's actual lingua Franca. But a lot of the students and staff members have not the in depth knowledge of the English language to participate in an international setting.

If Chain5 wants to communicate with people on the different levels (students, staff members, management, ...) it is necessary to use the actual opportunities to work with documents translated in the native language. However we all know translation apps always will need a critical look of a native speaker to avoid communication problems. E.g. the survey organised by Stenden HE in the Netherlands in collaboration with Chain5 will be (on demand) available in the different mother tongues of the members. But this requires for each country a native speaker with a profound knowledge of English who can serve as liaison officer helping with translation and communication.

A last remark was made about the digital way in which this annual conference has taken place. Digital participation is in many cases easier than live participation. However, we are convinced that digital communication can never replace "live" encounters. Maybe we should organise streaming in future conferences and provide at least one digital breakout room next to the live round-tables. Such a hybrid form of conference can help us reaching as many members of our Chain5 Community (C5C) as possible.