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Integrated Doctoral Program for Environmental Policy, Management and Technology – INTENSE

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A Round-Table Discussion

'Establishment and Development of the Doctoral School' under the auspices of Erasmus+ Project 586471-EPP-1-2017-EE-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP - INTENSE

24 September 2021

Odessa State Environmental University (OSENU)

15 Lvivska Str., Odessa, Ukraine

The International Research-to-Practice Conference

'Climate Services: Science and Education', 22 – 24 September 2021.

MINUTES

Participants: Anton Shkaruba (Estonian Life Science University, Tartu, Estonia), Hans-Peter Nachtnebel (The University of Natural Resources and Applied Life Sciences, Vienna, Austria), Viktor Kireyeu ('Erda Research, Technology, Education', Rotterdam, the Netherlands), Anatolii Polovyi, Yurii Tuchkovenko, Valeriya Ovcharuk, Inna Khomenko, Kateryna Husieva, Anhelina Chugai (OSENU, Ukraine), Oleksandr Kryvoshein (Ukrainian Hydrometeorological Institute, Ukraine), Andrii Achasov, Svitlana Reshetchenko (V.N. Karazin Kharkiv National University, Ukraine), Hanna Skryhan (NGO Ekapraekt, Belarus), Ghada Amin (The American University in Cairo, Egypt)

Moderators: Anatolii Polovyi, Anton Shkaruba

Main agenda items:

The purpose of the roundtable is to ensure project sustainability, and better use of project deliverables to benefit universities, students and staff. This would include the following aspects:

- Attractiveness of PhD studies – in general, and specifically the INTENSE PhD studies
- Visibility of partner universities as members of the INTENSE National Program, and OSENU as the lead institution of the first National Program in the field
- Specific benefits of the institutionalized cooperation at the national level as well as within the international INTENSE network, and how they can be maximized building on project deliverables
- The expansion of the INTENSE National School, how this should be formalized, what we shall offer to the new partners, and what are our expectations from them
- What INTENSE activities will be maintained and in what form; what is less important, and what new features are needed
- INTENSE e-learning – the best options for formats and partner involvement

- Options for virtual and physical mobility under the INTENSE – what is missing to work well
- Joint events – what and how
- Governance of INTENSE – whether it needs any changes to make it serve better the needs of the School.

Discussion points:

1. Attractiveness of PhD studies – in general, and specifically the INTENSE PhD studies

Prof. Anatolii Polovyi stated that INTENSE project resulted in legal establishment of a doctoral school, and the students were enrolled both last year and this year, therefore it is fully functioning.

Anton Shkaruba, a representative of the Grant Coordinator, asked how the partner HEIs use the potential of the brand we created and pointed out that this is the first national environmental school, led by OSENU and comprised of well-known institutions.

Yurii Tuchkovenko, OSENU Vice-Rector for Research, focused on the project adaptation to the Ukrainian realia. He informed the participants that there is an ongoing restructuring of the process for approval of PhD programmes. There have been minimum 3 different specialities in the scope of the School – Earth Sciences, Environmental Science and Economics. Until this year, we could not provide PhD training under a joint integrated programme. We offer our students in 3 specialities to choose the courses of free choice, which have been developed under the Doctoral School. They get ECTS credits for these courses during fulfilment of the training plan. But in February 2021 a new opportunity appeared – for elaboration of an interdisciplinary programme for PhD training in doctoral schools. This provides great perspectives for our Doctoral School, since it means that a PhD student is trained under 2-3 specialities and can defend a degree under several closely related fields. This can be attractive, because upon joint creation of such a programme, the students enrolled in the related specialities will then choose whether to have a defence in one or several specialities at the same time. They will be given an academic certificate for getting training in the mandatory components for several specialities.

Anton Shkaruba pointed out that this is a very important matter, which should be used for the project sustainability, reflected in the work of the Ukrainian School, and made a visible component for the scientific community in Ukraine, showing that our infrastructure is prepared and we are ready to be the first in Ukraine to implement the provisions of the Law in such a way. Thus, PhD students will be given all the advantages provided for in the new legislation and rules.

2-3. Visibility of partner universities as members of the INTENSE National Program, and OSENU as the lead institution of the first National Program in the field. Specific benefits of the institutionalized cooperation at the national level as well as within the international INTENSE network, and how they can be maximized building on project deliverables

Anton Shkaruba inquired how much do other universities know about the organizational structure of the Doctoral School, whether they want to join it and how OSENU use the opportunity for promotion as the lead (adviser) institution of the first National Program in the field.

Anatolii Polovyi noticed that the opinion of Kharkiv and Lviv partner HEIs is needed here.

Anton Shkaruba made a remark, that it is important both for OSENU and all other partner HEIs that the information on the INTENSE National School was visible in the university promo materials and on the website, etc. The task of branding and promotion in the media (social and traditional ones) should be discussed to make it visible.

Yurii Tuchkovenko assumed that, to drive this, we should develop the integrated programme in accordance with the Ukrainian requirements and then license it. After that, we will have an opportunity to promote the instrument, which appeared only February 2021 and enables the School to develop and implement its large potential at the national level.

Anatolii Polovyi and Yurii Tuchkovenko made notices that V.N. Karazin Kharkiv National University, being actively involved in the project, could implement this programme as well, though they had a licensed PhD training only in the speciality of Earth Sciences. Institute of Ecology of the Carpathians, on the opposite, had a license for PhD training only in the Environmental Science. There has been no training in Economics. OSENU has such a programme, it is licensed and operational, but not yet accredited. Therefore, it would be a good variant to combine the efforts for establishment of the programme, that will be beneficial for all of us.

Anton Shkaruba admitted that it is very important to make a Development programme for the School and a report on the activities of the Ukrainian School for the last year, and outline the plan of future activities.

4. The expansion of the INTENSE National School, how this should be formalized, what we shall offer to the new partners, and what are our expectations from them

Anton Shkaruba informed the attendees that we already have the letters of interest from other institutions, e.g. Uman National University of Horticulture, Research Institute of Forestry and Forest Melioration named after G. M. Vysotskyi in Kharkiv, Mykolaiv National Agrarian University etc. Now we have a strategic goal to finalise this expansion stage, in order to fill the niche of the Doctoral School in Ukraine. He asked what we could do in this regard and how it could be arranged legally to formalize the work of the doctoral school and joining new partners – whether through joining the Agreement on Doctoral School or making minutes of meetings of the School governance bodies with these points.

Anatolii Polovyi expressed his opinion that we should search for the new partners, which have a relation to Earth Sciences or Environmental Science, and pay a particular attention to the closely located ones (e.g. Odessa and Kherson agricultural universities).

Yurii Tuchkovenko admitted that our experience of accreditation procedures for PhD training shows that mentioning of joining such international doctoral school is advantageous, and suggested to hold seminars for stakeholders during which we can explain the benefits from using these opportunities. In order to formalize this, the institutions concerned may submit a letter with the request to join the Agreement, and then there could be 2 options: resigning of the Agreement or making a separate protocol.

5. What INTENSE activities will be maintained and in what form; what is less important, and what new features are needed



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Hanna Skryhan has presented the INTENSE sustainability plan she developed for INTENSE through a subcontract.

Anton Shkaruba noticed that we can use various options as sources of external funding for the summer schools, including Erasmus+ ClimEd project and prospective joint applications for the Visegrad Fund.

Anatolii Polovyi commented that for expansion of the Doctoral School we should involve more learners for holding such summer schools from new partner institutions.

Anton Shkaruba suggested to recruit the ClimEd project partners from various regions of Ukraine in the Ukrainian INTENSE programme and make use of the possibilities provided by the ClimEd in terms of mobility costs.

Anton Shkaruba listed the alternative options for development of the Doctoral School in future: an application for the upcoming calls Erasmus+ in spring 2022, joint Jean Monnet Module, use of internal sources, etc. To make full use of these opportunities, we need to define the team of performers and start a discussion.

Valeriya Ovcharuk added that cooperation in submission of a proposal for individual grants for academic mobility under Erasmus+ can also be promising for continuation of INTENSE School.

Oleksandr Kryvoshein made a remark about the problem with involvement some institutions, e.g. T. Shevchenko National University of Kyiv or Ukrainian Hydrometeorological Institute in international programmes owing to the possible decrease in financing from the state budget in case of an emerge of external funding source under the international projects (a conflict of interests).

Yurii Tuchkovenko responded that this is specific for institutions directly financed from the Government, but for all the rest HEIs this is an opportunity to increase their international rating, and finding external funding sources are only welcome. He concluded that, to expand the national school, each partner university should hold a regional seminar to promote the programme, and the efforts should be focused on development of interdisciplinary programme for PhD training in related specialities.

Anton Shkaruba asked if there is a need to hold Ukrainian regular conference under the auspice of INTENSE and summer schools.

Yurii Tuchkovenko replied that these activities are needed for successful operation and development of the School. He pointed out that we faced a difficult challenge, since nowadays there is a dramatic decline in readiness of young people to apply for PhD studies. They do not see the advantages and prospects of PhD training in the conditions of a low financing of education and science at the national level.

Anton Shkaruba noted that it is a situational and systemic problem being out of our control.

Anatolii Polovyi stated that it is quite possible to hold international conferences for PhD students with publication of proceedings in the context of the project sustainability.

Valeriya Ovcharuk made a notice that according to the results of the last summer school, these activities are very beneficial for PhD students and should be held in future. Such experience leads to the rise in the interest of students for training.

Anton Shkaruba suggested that it would be the most efficient and valuable by the results of summer schools to motivate PhD students to stay within those research groups, which they belonged to, and make efforts to publish papers in respected journals. The positive experience was regarding the Summer School in Mahilioŭ, after which the paper with S. Shyrokostup, a PhD student from Kharkiv, was published in Land Use Policy with impact-factor of 4.5.

He also expressed an idea to launch a series of monthly Ukrainian national webinars, by the example of Mongolian partners. Another successful example is a webinar under Erasmus+ SUNRAISE project, which was incorporated into 5 Master programmes, 2 HEIs beyond the consortium and 50 more participants. It would require finding interesting lecturers, outlining the topic and identification of the audience. The languages of the webinar could be Ukrainian and Russian, since you may invite your colleagues from the WMO – A. Baklanov, A. Prishchepov, etc. But this is possible, if we are interested, have the organizational potential and know who will be dealing with it.

Yurii Tuchkovenko said that it is hard to predict the development of the situation during the next year. He supported the idea, but noticed that we need to discuss the particular organizers with all the UA partners.

Anton Shkaruba suggested to launch a joint webinar with the ClimEd project on the climate issues and climatic information.

Valeriya Ovcharuk supported the proposal and suggested delivering the courses, which are being developed, on the webinar as pilot testing and dissemination.

Hans-Peter Nachtnebel told the attendees that not so long ago they had a similar situation in Austria with a misupport from government and other institutions as now in Ukraine, and BOKU put, on one side, a pressure to the ministries and, on the other side, they were looking for international funding. Therefore, he suggested looking not only for the EU funds, but for many other options, such as international research grants from WMO and FAO.

Anton Shkaruba remarked that universities in Austria are much more autonomous than in Ukraine, and opportunities for fundraising within the EU are not fully available in Ukraine.

Oleksandr Kryvoshein concluded that we should gather the academic society and jointly search for financial support.

6. INTENSE e-learning – the best options for formats and partner involvement

Anton Shkaruba proceeded to the next point and asked OSENU representatives if they have commitments to maintain the project Moodle and Chamilo platforms to ensure the functioning of the School.

Kateryna Husieva confirmed that OSENU team will maintain and update the resources created under the INTENSE project at least for the following 5 years.

Anton Shkaruba noticed that this will provide a sustainability for the Ukrainian INTENSE School.

7. Options for virtual and physical mobility under the INTENSE – what is missing to work well

Anton Shkaruba made a remark that, as regards virtual mobility, we have good opportunities for holding webinars, but we should also discuss the opportunities for physical mobility in future.

8. Joint events – what and how

Anton Shkaruba summarized the possible joint events: regional seminars promoting INTENSE to environmental community, annual conference for PhD students under the auspice of INTENSE organized by various partners, e.g. Kharkiv/Odessa for a start.

9. Governance of INTENSE – whether it needs any changes to make it serve better the needs of the School.

Anton Shkaruba noted that we need to define how the School governance bodies (the Head is Prof. Sergiy Stepanenko, Rector of OSENU) could facilitate joining new partners. Maybe, the clear procedure and a specific protocol should be developed and made accessible, in order to formalize the joining of partners and determine their commitments in the School. There is a very successful environmental doctoral school in the Netherlands, which incorporates almost all national universities and provide the whole research education in the field; the partners pay contributions; the organizational measures are coordinated by the Secretariate. Anton Shkaruba asked UA partners if there is a possibility to implement something similar in the Ukrainian realia

Yurii Tuchkovenko replied that, at first, someone should make efforts to bring the School to such a level, at which everyone would be able to see the real benefits.

Anton Shkaruba assumed that we could talk about an in-kind co-financing and a lot of free-writers, and suggested to distribute the commitments (the website, e-learning, webinars, annual conferences) to new partners, and change the Secretary every year. He urged partners to discuss the issue of practical functioning of the School and share the ideas.

Yurii Tuchkovenko expressed his thought that intensive actions are needed to make an integrated programme, get licenses for it in different institutions and then try to pass an accreditation. He admitted that this is difficult and new, but feasible, since the legislation provides an opportunity to create such interdisciplinary PhD programmes.

Anton Shkaruba made a suggestion to UA partners (from Odessa, Kharkiv and Lviv) to draft a formal proposal for discussion with partners – an invitation in written.

Yurii Tuchkovenko replied that this could be discussed at the meetings of the Governance Council, and now we have outlined the agenda of the Council for further development of the School.

Anton Shkaruba addressed a request to Prof. Sergiy Stepanenko, as the Head of the School, to convene a meeting of this Council, with participation of EMU as observers, and facilitate solving this issue.