

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION AS A POSSIBILITY FOR A DIALOGUE AND INTERNATIONALIZATION (BELARUSIAN EXAMPLE)

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Abstract. The article attempts to reflect on how the European Union's educational programs have helped and continue to help to cope with this problem of isolation of the Belarusian system of education, creating conditions for participation in exchange programs, joint research, etc.

The history of EU-Belarus relations starts in August 1992 when the diplomatic relations between Belarus and the EU were established. In March 1995 a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement was signed between Belarus and the EU in Brussels.

We can distinguish the following stages (with a certain degree of conventionality) in relations between the European Union and The Republic of Belarus:

1994–1996 (active phase, signing of cooperation agreements, Military-technical cooperation);

1997–2007 (ratification of agreements was stopped, “frozen” political relations and at the same time the development of an economic cooperation);

2008–2010 (normalization of relations, high-ranking representatives of the EU visited Belarus). In 2008–2010, Belarus and the EU were engaged in an active dialogue to find ways to normalize the relations;

2011–2012 (introduction of restrictive measures as a response to the events surrounding the presidential elections of 2010, decrease in the level of political contacts);

2013–to present (intensification of contacts, negotiations on visa facilitation [1].

The crucial episode for the system of higher education of Belarus was the joining of Belarus to the so called Bologna Process on the 14th of May 2015 the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

The system of education of the Republic of Belarus was always one of the priorities of the development of the country due to its great ideological context. One of the main problems of transition period was economic crises which affected negatively the educational system. So, in the light of this situations, various programs, launched by the EU not only enhanced cooperation in higher education area and thus contributed to the formation of a dialogue between Belarus and EU but also played an important role in value change and *internationalization of the system of higher education of Belarus*.

TEMPUS. Belarus joined the implementation of TEMPUS Program in 1993. Since then, Belarusian partners have become participants in 64 projects (joint projects and projects on structural measures). The implementation of TEMPUS projects by Belarusian universities had a number of positive results, both tangible and intangible, having a positive impact on the work of not only the institutions of higher education themselves, but also the Belarusian higher education system as a whole [2].

ERASMUS MUNDUS is a program of academic mobility aimed at strengthening cooperation and international relations in higher education on the basis of supporting high-quality European programs. The main objectives of Erasmus Mundus program are to promote European Higher education, to help enhance and improve career prospects of students thus promoting intercultural understanding through cooperation with third countries in accordance with EU external policy objectives in order to contribute to the sustainable development of third countries in the field of higher education [3].

ERASMUS+ In 2014, TUMPUS and Erasmus Mundus were replaced by the programs of the European Commission for Higher Education called Erasmus+. It is designed for a 7-year period (until 2020) and thematically aimed at education, vocational training, youth and sports. Erasmus + will finance more than 10 different types of projects (tools), the rules of participation in which are different for representatives of different countries [4].

The European Union's Erasmus+ program is a funding scheme to support activities in the fields of Education, Training, Youth and Sport.

MOST is an EU funded project to enhance people-to-people-contacts between Belarus and the EU for promoting mutual understanding and exchange of best practice. The word is MOST sounds the same like Russian word bridge and that is symbolically underlines the main purpose of the program - providing professional exchange and mobility opportunities between Belarus and the EU [5].

The first serious participation of the University happened in 2004 when university joined Tempus program "The introduction of environmental specialization for teachers" (2004–2007). In 2010–2012 university fulfilled the second Tempus program "Implementing tools and policies to improve the quality of education at the institutional level". Due to the EU funding the faculty of natural sciences got new equipment for its educational and research activity. Ecological and educational centre was created. The scientific and administrative staff got financing support for the participation in traineeships which were held in Sweden, Hungary, Poland, the Ukraine etc. The faculty of natural sciences implemented a new ranking system for the teachers and students, new technology of teaching based on the leading European experience was adopted.

In 2012 Mogilev State A.Kuleshov University joint Erasmus Mundus program the project **EMINENCE (where Adam Mickiewicz university from Poland was a coordinator). In 2013 the cooperation with Adam Mickiewicz University was extended and a new Erasmus Mundus project - EMINENCE II appeared.**

Participation in EMINENCE and EMINENCEII and Tempus projects has become a locomotive to increase the participation of students in the international exchange programs. In 2010/2011 educational year only 25 students participated in mobility programs, in 2016/2017 - 63.

In 2016 10 representatives of the University took part in the above mentioned MOST program which helped us to establish new contacts with the representatives of Poland and Germany and start new cooperation with them.

In 2017 the University joint 3 new ERASMUS+ projects with University of Pardubice (Czech Republic), University of Tübingen (Germany), University of Valladolid (Spain).

Formation of broader world outlook, development of communicational and interaction skills, getting acquainted with the culture and traditions of the host country, studying the language and becoming a member of a given society for some period are among many positive outcomes of mobility. If 10 years ago participation in the EU programs was something new and unknown for staff and students now it's considered to be one of the University strategic way of development. We are becoming open the European Union and the world in general. Implementation of the advanced European experience in the educational process led to the attractiveness of the University not only for Belarusian but for foreign students. If in 2009/2010 education year, the University had 38 foreign students mainly from Russia and the Ukraine; in 2016/2017 its total number increased till 284 from and hosted students from 11 countries of the world.

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