



LONG PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Network

Shared History of Central Europe

(proposal for academic year 2021/2022; prolonged network #CIII-SK-1315-00-2122)

1. Involved institutions:

A/ Coordinator:

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2. General information and motivation for prolonging a network

In academic years 2021/22 the institutions involved within the CEEPUS network intend to strengthen a transnational cooperation on the field of research and sharing knowledge of joint history of Central European and Balkan countries, which has historically been overlapping one another's development throughout centuries. After successful first years of CEEPUS network's implementation, the partners within the network have the ambition to deepen a mutual cooperation and to provide the students as well as the teachers another round of fascinating opportunities to expand their own academic networks and push the boundaries of their knowledge and experience. In 2021/22 academic year the consortium intends to concentrate on commemorating the anniversaries of recent notable historical events which we could not have commemorated within our courses and programs as we wished in 2020/21 due to coronavirus pandemia: the 1945 end of World War II and its consequences, the 1990



start of democratic transition, and the 1991 outbreak of the Yugoslav war which impacted both Central Europe and Balkan.

Lectures delivered by teachers for students at host institutions will focus on events which shaped current face of Central Europe after 1945, formed relations and foreign affairs between Central European and Balkan nations and their diversity. Our intention is to spread the idea of Central Europe as a bunch of countries and nations which made history together, contrary to what the nationalistic narratives have been stressing. Thanks to already well-developed cooperation between universities from Slovakia, Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia, Montenegro, Slovenia, Romania, and North Macedonia, in academic year 2021/22 we will try to continue emphasizing our primary motto, that we all share many similar problems of historical development and history of every single involved country, more or less, directly emphasizes the history of another one's.

Every university taking part at the CEEPUS network will encourage its students to take a chance and to spend a part of their study abroad - just to experience a new challenge or to complete a research regarding his/her thesis.

Last but not least, teachers from involved institutions will participate in ongoing joint MA program "Central European Historical Studies" during their teaching mobilities, launched by universities in Banská Bystrica (SK), Ostrava (CZ) and Katowice (PL), and in newly added double-degree MA program "Political Science", offered by universities in Banská Bystrica (SK) and Mostar (BH). We believe that guest lectures of foreign experts may significantly even more enhance the quality of already highly rated joint programs, to internationalize the proposed obligatory and optional courses, as well as to build up a foundation stone for planned continuation in an accredited doctoral level.

Nowadays, in the "age of hoaxes" and far-right populism on rise, discussing the shared history is extremely desirable. In accordance with this, a key mission of our network is to convert students' perception of history from national stories to transnational narratives and to "plant a seed" of critical contextual thinking into their minds. Transnational approach is indispensable. We just do not want to contribute to building of a progressive knowledge society within the Central Europe and Balkan, but through discussing jointly shared history also to enhance mutual understanding between Central European and Balkan nations, to defuse traditional prejudices and hate speech drawing on misunderstandings occurred mainly in the last century. Partner universities hope that network's activities will help to strengthen students' civic awareness and stimulate their joy over being part of a system based on values of tolerance and freedom.

To achieve this primary goal, the partner universities were intentionally selected from multicultural or former multicultural regions which experienced ethnic conflicts in past and the possibility of their comeback is not ruled out in case the democracy in Europe falls into a crisis again. Guest lectures, delivered within our network, will thus contain not just an educational aspect but will serve as an "academic prevention" for the youth.



The teachers will show the students that Central Europe as well as has much more in common and to what social disasters can the ethnic clashes and wars lead to.

Though English is intended to be an official communication language within the network, national languages of involved countries will be allowed on a basis of a mutual agreement between host institution and visiting teacher/student. Since the network primarily focuses on future historians and political scientists, who usually have a good knowledge of several languages, it is expected that teachers will not have any problem to deliver their guest lectures in local language and that visiting students will enrol for courses in local language too. As a part of shaping the Central European identity, its good relations to Balkan countries and mutual understanding, we encourage the students to enrol for courses in national language of host institution (especially in case of student's mother tongue's proximity, e. g. between Slavic languages). However, every involved university guarantees a wide range of interesting courses in English regarding common history of Central Europe, which will surely satisfy students' requirements and expectations.

3. Objectives and focus in academic year 2021/2022

Main objectives of the network do not differ from goals set in academic year 2020/21 and are as follows:

1. to strengthen the bond between academic institutions within the Central Europe and wider region (Balkan countries). Educational framework of mobilities will deepen students' faith in history and political science as a scientific discipline which has a key role for understanding our present, solving current social problems and preventing conflicts based on ethnic or religious basis;
2. to promote Central European and Balkan history on a transnational basis. All mobility activities will outstandingly promote a common history of the Central European region (as well as its interrelations with the Balkan countries), point out its similarities and specifics comparing to other European countries,
3. to boost a civic awareness of students. The lectures will address a vivid message to students that nationalistic experiments are not a solution for "Achilles heels" of democracy and that they inevitably lead to social disasters (persecutions, genocides, etc.).
4. to provide the students an opportunity to spend part of their study in the "next-door" country and to experience life in multi-cultural city with open-minded atmosphere.

In academic year 2021/22 we want to focus our educational activities on following areas containing a strong anniversary aspect:

1. end of World War II (1945) and its consequences in following years (migrations, expulsions of civilians, social impacts),
2. history of Yugoslav war (1991-1995) and their



impact on Central Europe (refugees, changes in social and demographic structure, humanitarian aid), 3. clash of ideologies and impact of nationalisms in Central Europe and Balkan (post-WWII and after 1989/1991, 4. national conflicts in past and their "solutions" (ethnic cleansings, genocides, etc.), 5. comparative approaches in history and political science (Central Europe x Balkan).

4. Network's uniqueness and importance for region

Relations between all involved countries are currently on the best level ever. However, their mutual relations, from time to time, suffer from disputed historical issues. Even though thanks to existence of the European Union there is no actual threat of ethnic or border conflicts like in the 19th and 20th Century, the devil never sleeps. Uniqueness of our network lies in a methodological approach to shape the modern Central European identity and to evoke a positive pride on our culture and values via common history. Transnational thinking of shared past is, in general, still an exception among the Central European societies, whose population is, from their elementary schools, educated to think ethnocentrically. We are convinced that guest lectures, study stays, and internships will enrich our joint MA programs by new inspirational perspectives and help to open up new horizons, strengthen the knowledge and ideas of tolerance, which have not been always a matter of course in the Central European region as well as in cooperating Balkan countries.