



30 YEARS OF ERASMUS IN EUROPE AND 18 YEARS OF ERASMUS AT MEDICAL UNIVERSITY – SOFIA



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ISBN 978-954-9318-86-9

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Medical University - Sofia is highly esteemed and the undisputed leader in its area of education in all five professional fields showed the new fifth consecutive ranking of universities in the country for 2015. It is №1 in each of five areas of study: Medicine, Dental Medicine, Pharmacy, Health Care and Public Health. The Institutional accreditation: granted by the National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency on 07/25/2013 for a period of 6 years, valid until: 07/25/2019, rating: 9.68 out of 10. Full report on completed institutional accreditation procedure of higher school is published on the following link: <http://www.neaa.government.bg/en/accredited-higher-education-institutions/higher-institutions>

The aims and objectives of the Erasmus mobility project are set in line with the European Union flagship initiatives: Youth on the Move; Education and Training 2020 Agenda and the Renewed modernization agenda of Europe's higher education systems in compliance with the specific national and institutional needs and challenges listed in the National Strategy for Higher Education and the Institutional Strategy for internationalization and the Erasmus Policy Statement of Medical University – Sofia.

As stated in the main institutional documents, listed above the quality and relevance of learning and teaching is the main priority of Medical University – Sofia. For that reason EDUCATIONAL GOALS AND LEARNING OUTCOMES have been set up and adopted at a meeting of the Faculty Council of the Faculty of Medicine at the Medical University - Sofia on 27/09/2013: <http://medfac.mu-sofia.com/?q=node/257>.

This instrument of the Bologna toolkit facilitates recognition of the degree students as well as the Erasmus ones. According the institutional strategy for internationalization and the Erasmus Policy Statement and Erasmus Charter of Medical University – Sofia – all the Study Programmes in Medicine, Dental Medicine and Pharmacy are taught parrarel in both English and Bulgarian languages. As it is stated in the Agenda for the Modernization of Europe's Higher education systems, Globalization and digitalization emerged as important “mega trends” affecting higher education institutions directly and the world for which they are preparing graduates. For that reason each year the Curricula are updated with new educational modules, exploring the Intersection of Regulation, Medicine, Science, and Law to meet the needs of a changing scientific and policy landscape. They have been structured to explicate core competencies in medical science and technology through illustrative case studies.

The Medical University – Sofia explores the modular system of education and the bedside learning with a lot of hours of clinical practice.

This is the reason the MU-Sofia to attract more Incoming students. Both Incoming and Outgoing students highly appreciate the bedside learning and the higher horarium of Clinical practice at MU-Sofia. That is why the potential Outgoing students to prefer to follow their disciplines at the home university and the same reason motivates more Incoming students.

At the same time we have registered increased number of Outgoing Staff mobility. The results of the enhanced Erasmus Staff Mobility are increased universities' international partnerships which enable the student and staff to explore variety of disciplinary perspectives and professional competences and stimulate major changes in their institutional curricula.

The future increase of the Erasmus Outgoing students as well as the recognition of study periods are subjected to deep analyses at faculty level with representatives of the Erasmus office, Institutional coordinator and the Head of the International Integration and Project Funding Department at the Rector's Office. The institution makes steps forward in contribution to the Promoting student mobility within and between cycles and supporting mobile students is an ongoing task and it is part of all organized events.

Quality assurance and the contribution to European and international level are confirmed by the long list of graduates, including former Erasmus ones, employed in prestigious hospitals and health care institutions worldwide.

Erasmus mobility helps to fulfill one of the major objectives set up in the Institutional Strategy for Internationalization of Medical University – Sofia to build up the „Global” doctor, possessing the following skills:

Understanding and tolerance for human diversity, multiculturalism and religious affiliation.

Ability to work in an international perspective.

Knowledge of a second language / languages.

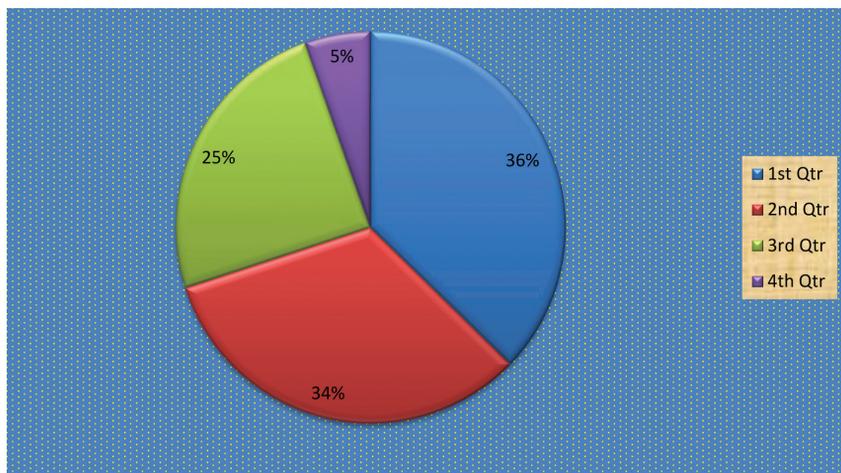
General knowledge outside the field of medicine

Strengthening the knowledge triangle (education, research, innovation).

FACTS & FIGURES

Medical University –Sofia started to exchange students since 2000, when Erasmus Programme has been open for participation for Bulgaria as a pre-accession country in 1999. For the period of 18 years 81 Erasmus Inter-institutional Agreements have been signed with partner universities from 21 Programme countries and 1 Partner Country

Fig. 1. Distribution of Erasmus Inter-institutional Agreements by Faculty



1st Medical Faculty; 2nd Faculty of Pharmacy; 3rd Public Health Faculty; 4th Faculty of Dental Studies

For 18 years Erasmus at Medical University – Sofia, 423 Outgoing students have been sent and 281 Incoming students received. The number of students who have spent time abroad for studies and/or internship during their full degree study at Medical University – Sofia is fairly stable over time. The last two years the number of Incoming students exceeds the Outgoing ones. This is due to the fact that the education at Medical University – Sofia explores the patients' bedside learning approach. A lot of practical hours are included in the curriculum. During their study the students practice at the 14th university hospitals under the supervision of highly qualified Professors. This opportunity is greatly appreciated by the students from our partner universities.

The below data highlights the specific trends and developments in the Student Mobility during the years.

Key figures 2000/2017 – Internationalization of Education at Medical University - Sofia



Additionally 80 Teaching staff has the opportunity to realize a teaching and/or training Erasmus period at more than 81 partner universities in 22 Programme and Partner counties. Most training periods abroad were undertaken by academic staff (41 %), followed by general administrative and technical staff (22 %) and staff from international offices (15 %).

Teaching assignment mobility contribute to achieving the objectives set in the strategy of internationalization of the Medical University - Sofia, developed in accordance with the EU Programme for the Modernisation of 2011 and its priority areas and implementation of the Communiqué 2013 on “Open Education”, in particular: improving the quality of education through mobility and cross-border cooperation. Particular emphasis is placed on mobility of teachers, in order to:

- provide support to promote the development of new ways of learning, in particular the integration of a wide variety of ways of learning through new forms of personalized learning, strategic implementation of educational resources, free access platforms and virtual learning;
- Internationalization of the Medicine curriculum at Medical University – Sofia with the ones from European and non-European countries.

- Exchange of research knowledge and results and development of joint research and educational projects.

Participation in international university consortiums and alliances under ERASMUS+ Programme 2014 -2017

Together with the mobility the university is involved in 3 Multilateral ERASMUS+ projects.

Medical University – Sofia addresses Higher Education policy priorities through participation in Erasmus Higher Education Joint Projects in terms of Quality Assurance, Internationalization of the university curriculum, Recognition, Employability, Social dimension and Knowledge triangle (research, education and innovation). It is important to note that some of these projects tackle more than one policy area. The projects listed below run three years.

- Training in community mental health/ComMent. Eurotraining Educational Organization - KEK EUROTRAINING AE, GREECE, Action Type: Strategic Partnership in Vocational training.
- Joint Curriculum Development in Health Technology Assessment 2015-1-TR01-KA203-022402 2015- 2017; Key Action: Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices; Action Type: Strategic Partnership for higher education;
- Reinforcement of Framework for Experiential Education in Healthcare in Serbia (ReFEEHS); Key Action: Cooperation for Innovation and the exchange of good practices; Action Type: Capacity Building in Higher Education.

Credit Mobility between University of Hiroshima, Japan and Medical University - Sofia

The Medical University of Sofia has won a project for the exchange of Erasmus teachers and students with the University of Hiroshima, Japan for the academic year 2016/18. In connection with the implementation of the project activities, three teachers arrived from 15 May to 19 May 2017 and an expert from the International Department, the organizer of Erasmus Mobility on their behalf. Prof. Tajiro Sueda presented lectures on Surgical therapy for atrial fibrillation at the “Maxima” Aula of university hospital “Saint Ekaterina”.



The following lectures were presented at the Anatomy Auditorium at the Medical Faculty:

Prof. Takemasha Sakaguchi - on the subject: Microbiology, Virology. Perspectives of replication and pathogenicity of mammalian viruses such as influenza viruses, hepatitis viruses and herpes viruses. Current status of vaccines and drugs against viruses.

Prof. Norio Sakai - on the topic: regulation of serotonin transporter (SERT) function via its membrane trafficking.

The lectures were attended by more than 350 students and lecturers from the Medical Faculty of the Medical University - Sofia. Within Erasmus period, they visited the university hospitals: “St. Catherine” and “St. Ivan Rilski”, the cell signaling transduction laboratory at the Department of Medi-

cal Chemistry and Biochemistry at the Faculty of Medicine. At Faculty of Dental Medicine they met with the Vice Rector for International Integration and Project Financing - Prof. Dr. Radomir Ugrinov, MD, DSc. With the head of the Department of International Integration and Project Financing - Prof. Dr. Radoslav Girchev, MD, DSc, including the experts from Erasmus Office, discussed the Internal Rules for Administration of Erasmus Mobility between the two Universities, the procedures for selecting students for exchanges. Meetings with university lecturers and students were organized, as well as they participated in training on the “Sophisticated Medical Teacher in a Multicultural Environment” according the project’s program.



In relation with the implementation of the project activities, during the period from July 1 to July 8, 2017, three lecturers from Medical University – Sofia realized an Erasmus Mobility for Teaching at the University of Hiroshima: Prof. Dr. Radoslav Girchev, MD, DSc. and Chief Assistant Professor Dr. Nikolay Ichshtiev, MD, PhD, from the Faculty of Medicine and Chief Assist. Professor Dr. Nikolay Apostolov, MD, PhD, from the Faculty of Dental Medicine.

Prof. Dr. Radoslav Girchev, MD, DSc in seminar hall 1, in the building of Basic and Sociomedical Research, at the University of Hiroshima delivered lectures presenting the structure and curricula of the Medical University - Sofia, including the educational objectives and the learning outcomes of Physiology training as required by the Bologna Process. He

also presented the ERASMUS credit mobility at the Medical University of Sofia with the industrialized partner countries of the 13 region. During a seminar organized by Professor Hideya Yamamoto, he presented a scientific report entitled “Effects of Newly Synthetized Nociceptin Analogues Modified in Ninth Position on the Sympatho-Vagal Balance in Spontaneously Hypertensive Rats.” During his stay, Prof. Girchev visited the Department of Cardiovascular Research, headed by Professor Iasuki Kihara, the Functional Research Laboratory headed by Prof. Higashi and the Department of Physiology at the Medical Faculty, where, in a conversation with Prof. Massao Ocusumi and his Collaborators exchanged ideas for future scientific cooperation. As Head of the International Integration and Project Funding department, he is involved in the selection procedure development for Erasmus students from the University of Hiroshima, including the selection criteria and the preparation of the documents required by the Program. Prof. Girchev participated in the interview for selection of Erasmus students and in this connection he also met the Dean of the Faculty of Dentistry, Prof. Kuichi Kot, to discuss the admissions of students of dentistry at Medical University - Sofia.



Dean's Body, Hiroshima University, Japan, 05.07.2017

Chief Assist. Professor Dr. Nikolay Ishkitiev, MD, PhD, delivered lectures on “Potential for Differentiation of Stem Cells in the Dental District”. During his Erasmus stay Dr. Ishkitiev attended the Department of Biomaterials, the Department of Biochemistry headed by Professor Chisa

Sukumami, the Department of Oral Biology and Engineering of Prof. Hiroki Nikava, with whom they exchanged views on future cooperation.

Chief Assist. Professor Dr. Nikolay Apostolov, MD, PhD delivered lectures on “Prosthetic adhesives - application and necessity”, held meetings with the Dean of the Faculty of Dental Medicine - Prof. Kuichi Kato and the Head of the Department of Oral Physiology Prof. Sugita, with whom discussed the possibilities for collaborative research projects.

The lectures were attended by more than 300 students and professors from the Medical Faculty of the University of Hiroshima.

Within their Erasmus stay they also visited the hospital complex of the University of Hiroshima. During their visit to Hiroshima, Prof. Dr. Radoslav Girchev, MD, DSc., Chief Assist. Professor Dr. Nikolay Ishkitiev and Chief Assist. Dr. Nikolay Apostolov also met with the members of the Friendship Society between Hiroshima and Bulgaria, where they were welcomed by a letter from the Foreign Minister of Japan, Fuimo Chischi.

Cultural competence in a wider context is “an active, deliberate and constant commitment to diversity that aims to raise awareness, content knowledge, cognitive complexity and empathic understanding that interact within systems and institutions.” Given this broad definition, it is clear that the curriculum of medical schools must help students to reflect on their attitudes and assumptions about cultural and ethnicity. In addition, medical lecturers should also make students realize the depth of their focus on their preconceptions to overcome the new realities. Multiculturalism in medical education is not only a matter of difference in values but also of different education systems in medicine. Medical teachers need to know the diversity of learning systems, interact with them and apply them in a multicultural environment. The teaching of medicine to foreign and Erasmus students is becoming a model of a multicultural society that is in constant dialogue with values in order to improve students’ knowledge, skills and empathy in serving a multicultural population, thereby improving wellbeing of society. Given the topicality and social relevance of the topic, as well as the fact that there are more Erasmus students Incoming than Outgoing (a tendency that has been sustained over the years), the project team has organized training for Erasmus lecturers from the University of Hiroshima and the Medical University of Sofia topic: “The Sophisticated Medical Teacher in a Multicultural Environment”, which culminated in the issue of Certificates to the 14 participants.

This brochure “30 years of Erasmus in Europe and 18 years of Erasmus at Medical University – Sofia” is published with the support of the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union.

“The European Commission support for the production of this publication does not constitute an endorsement of the contents which reflects the views only of the authors, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.”

