IUC ASSOCIATION REPORT ON OPERATION IN 2023

1. In 2023 there were 37 courses and 18 conferences held within the IUC academic programme with the total of 2005 participants, 193 of them online. 9 programmes have been cancelled due to different reasons, mostly organisational or financial. Trend towards in person meetings continued. Majority of programmes were held in person, and technology was used only sporadically when certain lectures were not able to come. Only 8 programmes were structured in a hybrid way, while 24 programmes worked only in person. The average number of people physically present at the programme was 33. The decrease in number of participants from last year is only noted for online participants, not in-person participants, so the figures for participants are close to pre-pandemic times. However, the number of conferences is in the upward trend, while the number of courses has declined from pre-pandemic times even up to 30%.
2. Prof. Šimonović held a meeting with the Minister of science, Prof. Fuchs at the end of the last year discussing mid-term possible developments and the possible increases of the coefficients to University of Zagreb, so that IUC could have the third full time employee before. The Minister showed willingness to find a solution for these issues as well as for the continuation of the Ministry support.
3. The contract with the Ministry of Science and Education was signed in April on 100.000 Euro, and IUC Association received 10% of funds. The remaining funds would come after the final report is accepted at the end of the year. There were 169 grantees from the Croatian Ministry Scholarship. 3 grants were issued from SE European Scholarship fund (two from Serbia and one from Ukraine) and 6 grants from Marija and Mirjan Damaška fund (3 from Ukraine, 2 from Serbia and one from Kosovo). Reports are being prepared for both Ministry and Prof. Damaška.
4. Prof. Šimonović, Prof. Pisk and Ms. Bruer held a meeting with rector of University of Zagreb, Prof. Lakušić and Vice-rectors professors Pentek and Ostojić at the very end of the last year. Rector Lakušić presented the intentions of University of Zagreb with the building while the IUC delegation presented the operation of the IUC as well as its historical identity. Since the contract between IUC and University of Zagreb has expired with the beginning of the 2023, it was agreed that University would send a new version. The new contract suggestion was received only at the following meeting between Prof. Šimonović and rector Prof. Lakušić on 9 May. This meeting was attended also by vice-rector Prof. Pentek and Mr. Frano Hartman, Head of the CAAS and director of Dormitory and Ms. Bruer. University of Zagreb delegation presented their view that the IUC should cover its part of utility costs, a percentage in the investment as well as the commercial fees for the rent of the space. In this suggestion minimum of funds was set, but the maximum was unlimited. University of Zagreb leadership also expressed their position that the rent of the space would not be crucial if the Dormitory would have better occupancy. Ms. Bruer reminded about higher Dormitory prices, not competitive to the new dorm of University of Dubrovnik. It was agreed that detailed analysis of possible dormitory prices and its occupancy would be made available to the IUC, while IUC would make additional efforts to secure new programmes that would cover the occupancy of the dormitory. Unfortunately, the IUC is still waiting for the information necessary to respond to the proposal of the new Agreement with the University of Zagreb. The IUC received information from the Dormitory about the total revenues in 2022 coming from IUC programmes, but without the information on the IUC’s percentage in the Dormitory’s operation although reminders were sent on more occasions. Unfortunately, University of Zagreb has not delegated a representative to be a part of the IUC Executive Committee /vice-chair of the EC. Vice-rector prof. Pavičić has been present at the May meeting while there was no representative at the October meeting.

1. On the 4 May the contract for Nikolina Vekić has expired. Ms. Heli Hajdić Nikolić, General Secretary of the University of Zagreb has found a way to continue her employment for half time at the University of Zagreb, arranging a tender for a long-term substitute for the currently absent colleague. The tender has been announced in mid-April but there was a short break for Ms. Vekić which has been covered by the full-time contract with the IUC Association, to be continued for half time, once the half time University of Zagreb contract would come into force again. Unfortunately, University of Zagreb could not secure a full-time position for Ms. Vekić – as it was arranged with the Ministry, since the contract between the IUC and University has not been signed.
2. The IUC office has applied in February to the Fulbright specialist programme, announced with the American Embassy in Zagreb. The project envisioned the engagement of a professor from the USA to help activate academic staff of the region in the IUC academic programmes. With the help of Prof. Štulhofer, the IUC nominated professor of East European history John Cox from North Dakota State University who expressed willingness to carry out a project if granted. The are still no results from this tender. Only the final review is pending.
3. University of Zagreb management has introduced a new regulation according to which working weekends are no loner being paid for, but instead a free day can be used in other parts of the year when there are less activities. Working holidays remain to be paid. Due to the work overload the IUC office staff has no space to be using additional free days, due to numerous working weekends. After consultations with DDG and the Executive Secretary, DG decided that IUC staff will be compensated for working weekends from IUC’s Association resources. The IUC office has received specific instructions from the University of Zagreb, prohibiting Office to communicate with media regarding the University of Zagreb without its prior approval. The DG suggested to the Executive Secretary to interpret that instruction narrowly, meaning that it is relevant only for matters related to the University of Zagreb and instructed the Executive Secretary to freely communicate to media on matters that pertain the IUC Association and its programmes. If necessary, DG will engage with the University of Zagreb accordingly.
4. Prof. Seitz printed the Academic programme brochure for 2023 as each year. This is the most valuable contribution to the visibility of the IUC.
5. As part of the EU project “Weeks of International Teaching-Inclusive and Digital” Ms. Vekić took part at the workshop held at Hellenic Mediterranean University in Crete in January and on a project meeting in Brno in April. The IUC has carried out its part of the project: organising dissemination event that took place in Dubrovnik from 29 to 31 March. The project has passed the final evaluation and would get the full planned financing.
6. IUC is involved in the special academic programme in memory of Kathy Wilkes, together with University of Oxford and Herbert Simon Society in Turin. IUC hosted a conference in 2022 while in 2023 the IUC was to send two lecturers (Prof. Zvonimir Šikić and Prof. Dunja Jutronić) and a moderator (Prof. Prijić Samaržija) to Oxford. In 2024 the conference would take place in Turin and again the IUC would need to send two lecturers and a moderator and this should also be accepted as a part of the IUC Association programme for 2024.
7. Ms. Bruer took part in the Rectors’ Forum of SE Europe and W Balkans, that took place in Rijeka on 4 and 5 September. This participation was enabled by Prof. Prijić-Samaržija, who was elected as Forums’ President for next 2 years. Ms. Bruer presented the work of the IUC and as a follow-up send specific information to different regional rectors.
8. The IUC office had one intern that unfortunately left the IUC ahead of the scheduled time due to personal reasons. Due to very high costs of living in Dubrovnik the office was not able to secure any other intern, so student support was hired. Even this was a challenge due to work fluctuation of students and from July to September 3 different students worked in the office. It is becoming more difficult to secure interns in the period when the IUC needs help in the office due to high living costs and inability to get the room in the dorms since they also rent rooms at commercial prices.
9. The IUC Auditor Mr. Offerdal has advised the EC to engage in the operational plan for the future of the IUC in the following directions:

* Generally: make a strategic operational plan for investing certain amount of money of the current financial balance within the next 2-3 years. These should be invested – in a coherent and responsible manner – in activities that can contribute to boost the academic output, profile, visibility, and recognition of the IUC as a relevant and solid centre for advanced studies.
* Concretely: evaluate the tasks undertaken by staff at the IUC office as well as the workload. Which tasks are important; is the office properly staffed given the high volume of activities; are there important things that should be done that (due to lack of capacity) are neglected; are there functions that can, reasonably, be offloaded/outsourced, etc.?
* Concretely: consider how the IUC can take better advantage of its web page, social media, and other electronic instruments as tools for the goal of expanding academic- and educational activities / including possibly Alumni club

Based on these suggestions, DG, DDG and ES had number of meetings and decided to move cautiously forward in order to keep the financial safe-cushion for the unexpected developments and move in the direction of engaging course directors to make scientific output available and visible, organizing modules that are part of longer programs from (coalitions/consortia of) partners and exploring possibilities of BIP (Blended Intensive Programmes) and Micro-credentials. This project is ongoing.

1. Due to the fact that the IUC logo is no longer compatible for the use on the contemporary digital media, the IUC office has worked with (different) designers in order to find a new solution that would be both compatible with contemporary use and visually and symbolically acceptable. At the last meeting of the EC the solution done by the designer Pero Mrnarević has been accepted by the EC and the office would undertake the transition to the new visual identity during next 6 months.



NB, December 2023