IUC ASSOCIATION REPORT FOR 2024

1. As you all know, Professor Ørjar Øyen, Co-founder of the IUC and a member of the IUC Association has passed away on 2 March 2024. Condolences were received from many of you as well as numerous IUC friends. May Executive Committee meeting has started in honouring his work. His legacy and vision for the IUC remains with our institution.
2. In 2024 there were 47 courses and 12 conferences held within the IUC academic programme with the total of 2070 participants, 169 of them online. 5 programmes have been cancelled due to different reasons, mostly organisational or financial. Trend towards in person meetings continued and technology was used only sporadically when certain lectures were not able to come. The average number of people physically present at the programme was 32. The number of participants is slightly higher than last year, the number of courses higher, but conferences lower. General participation is stable at around 2000 participants for some time now and it is not expected that it would significantly change.
3. Prof. Šimonović arranged with the Minister of science Prof. Fuchs that the Ministry’s support would be slightly higher for inflation. It was also arranged that the Ministry would secure the funds to University of Zagreb to be able to have the third full time paid position in the IUC Secretariat. This could only be secured when University of Zagreb sends in a request. The contract with the Ministry of Science, Education and Youth was signed in April on 115.000 Euro, which is an increase of 15%. This increase enabled the IUC to (with firm control) fund the same number of participants as last year since University of Zagreb Dormitory has increased the accommodation prices for app. 20% and have slight increase for the operational costs. The IUC received 10% of these funds, while the remaining funds would come after the final report is accepted at the end of the year. The final report has been submitted and the office is waiting for the feed-back from the Ministry. There were 163 grantees from the Croatian Ministry Scholarship. 4 grants were issued from SE European Scholarship fund (Kosovo, North Macedonia, Serbia) and 11 grants from Marija and Mirjan Damaška fund (Ghana, Kosovo, Nigeria, North Macedonia, Russia, Serbia, Ukraine).
4. Negotiations with University of Zagreb were intensified by the end of the 2023 and very difficult in the first part of 2024. This new agreement has introduced changes in the payment to the University of Zagreb. Instead of the previously arranged payment of the IUC’s share of utility and maintenance costs, University governance has insisted on the new methodology which consists of fees for every participant and each room. This methodology is complicated due to different categories of participants (students, doctoral students, lecturers or professionals/ percentage of participants staying in the Dormitory, number of years the programme is being held, size of the programme,…). But basically, after long negotiations signing it was the only option for the IUC since University of Zagreb insisted on this model, arguing that they wish to have the same criteria for the programmes organised by CAAS and by the IUC. The final contract was also tremendously more favourable to the IUC than the initial offer from the University of Zagreb.

The contract was discussed and accepted at the May EC meeting, so Prof. Pisk has signed it on 22 May.

A more favourable part of the contract was that University would cover the full salary of the three employees in case these funds would be secured by the Ministry, instead of the previously covered two and a half salaries. After receiving a request from the University (few months later) the Ministry approved the increase and University of Zagreb announced the public tender for the job in the IUC Secretariat. Ms. Nikolina Vekić applied and was hired as a full-time employee of the University of Zagreb for the IUC, after working for the IUC on temporary contracts for 6 years. The IUC again has three full time employees in the Secretariat, after more than 20 years. This solution would alleviate part of the IUC budget for staff, since until now this position was paid by the University and the IUC – 50% each.

1. Due to the new payment regulation to the University of Zagreb, the IUC Secretariat has been evaluating expenditures and income from each programme. 45% of programmes generate minuses (fees collected from the programmes do not manage to cover fees to University of Zagreb, welcome reception and city tour), while 55 % generate a small surplus. The only significant surplus is generated from programmes that are accommodated in the Dormitory. After payment of these expenses, the IUC remained with 25% of collected fees and it is concluded that additional sources need to be found to fund the yearly operation of the IUC office. Certain funds are gathered from membership fees and Ministry agreement, but it is not sufficient. Also, the analysis has shown that certain longstanding courses do not pay any individual fees, but cover only General course fee, claiming that all participants are lecturers. It is mostly programmes that used to be structured as courses, but in time have transformed to scientific conferences with small number of students. Due to these facts, the Executive Committee at the last meeting in fall has concluded that changes need to be introduced in the way fees are collected. To make the same rules for courses and conferences it has been concluded that there would be two types of fees: **General fee** (for courses and conferences alike) would be 600 Euros and those would be the responsibility of course directors. All participants (students and lecturers alike) would need to cover **individual fee** of 55 Euro. Organisers are exempt from paying the individual fee, but there can be maximum 5 organisers per programme. In case a programme is lasting 3 days or less the General fee is 300 Euros. In case a programme cannot close the financial construction, it may appeal to the Director General to ask for certain discounts.

OTHER DEVELOPMENTS:

1. At the very end of 2023 Mr. Grievink has submitted comments on behalf of the IUC on the Interim evaluation of Erasmus+ until 2027. He suggested continuing with BIP’s (Blended Intensive Programmes), introducing KA2 funds for intensive programmes of 5 days (instead of longer period as it is now), for KA171 recommending to make it possible for the HEIs to organize the courses at a third location, instead of just in the countries of the HEIs involved and supporting individuals from non-programme countries as capacity building – especially in the light of possible extension of the EU. He also advised for NGO’s to be included as full partners or hosts of Erasmus activities.

1. Prof. Seitz printed the Academic programme brochure for 2024 as each year. A 2025’s year version is also just being prepared in his UKE office. This is the most valuable contribution to the visibility of the IUC.
2. Due to previous good relations with Indian ambassador to Croatia, Mr. Srivastava, the IUC took part in the 3 days events of Days in India in Dubrovnik, organised for the local population.
3. As the Fulbright Specialist programme was approved, Prof. John Cox from North Dakota State University came to the IUC and spent May carrying out his project. He contacted more than 100 scholars from the SE European region to identify their familiarity with the IUC and interest for specific academic topics. Topics of interest that emerged from the project were: AI – including ethics, climate change, ecological responsibility and history, bio-poetry, digital humanities, freedom of press, quality of news, social media, fake news, colonial and post-colonial studies in EE – post imperial transitions. Scholars from the region also mentioned some topics that are already a part of the IUC offerings (minorities, multiculturalism, anti-corruption mechanisms, EU expansion, church and state revisited, terrorism, extremism, and radicalization). Additionally, prof. Cox offered his view regarding circumstances to consider when trying to enhance the presence of the academic community of the region which include restricted housing options, the need to support the mobility costs, advertisement options and engagement of US scholars. The IUC Secretariat has initiated investigating if some of the advertising options suggested would be feasible.
4. Number of visits of different ambassadors have taken place in the report period. Ambassador of the Kingdom of Belgium, H. E. William De Baets visited the IUC on December 14th 2023 and Ambassador of Austria H.E Josef Markus Wuketich on 1st February 2024. On June 27th 2024 the IUC was visited by the Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, H. E. Charlotte van Baak accompanied by Honorary Consul, Mr. Pero Kulaš and in a separate visit Ambassador of the Italian Republic, H. E. Paolo Trichilo. Ms. Bruer welcomed all ambassadors, presented the IUC history, mission, current programmes with the special attention to cooperation with academic institutions and individuals from respective countries.
5. The IUC office had one intern during winter 2024. Ms. Katarzina Wilk was an Erasmus student at University of Dubrovnik and she spent a bit less than two months in the IUC office. Since there were no other applications for internship, the IUC office has engaged a student support to help with intense workload in spring-summer-fall season.
6. The IUC has received a request from following institutions to terminate the membership: Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, Indiana University and University College Copenhagen. First two institutions did not have active participants but the last one was due to the policy of the institution to reduce travel expenses and thus reduce CO2 emissions. Also, a request for membership has been received by the Södertörn University, through its Departments of Media and Communication Studies which is active in one IUC programme. These changes have been noted by the EC.
7. Ms. Bruer attended Kathy Wilkes memorial conference in Torino in April, as well as a programme on the occasion of the 50 years of University of Montenegro in Podgorica in September. She also took part at the EAIE conference in Toulouse in mid September. It is the biggest European conference on internationalization in higher education with extensive exhibition space and a variety of sessions. She held some meetings with non-members and representatives of member universities, representatives of EU Commission for the W Balkans and attended sessions. The short conclusion is that the IUC operation is unique but under the threat of being less visible due to the vast internationalisation options that exist and have strong support and backing from their home institutions. Possibilities exist in partnerships for different EU projects, especially for the W Balkans, in operationalising our course directors and maybe organising around certain thematic areas.
8. Mr. Tomislav Kvesić visited the office of the Utrecht Summer School in the period from August 12 to 16, organised by Prof. Wieger Bakker and supported by Mrs. Bettina Nelemans, Director of the Utrecht Summer School. During that week, he got to know more about the work of the office in Utrecht and participated in some of the programs offered. One new IUC programme is initiated because of this visit.
9. Based on the trips of IUC staff, the office is now introducing some changes in the practical operation, i.e. abolishing paper applications, introducing advertising on online platforms (summer schools in Europe) and introducing more functions for the IUC web page.
10. At the end of May Prof. Bakker has identified Ms. Jessica van Dam-Wisse as a person to be engaged in the project of enhancing the profile and recognition of the IUC – the announced project of IUC visibility. Ms. van Dam-Wisse has an MA in Governance and Policy and has extensive experience in communication and innovation for secondary vocational education. Ms. van Dam-Wisse has been volunteering for the IUC from September to November, so the expenditures for the 2024 visibility project are lower than planned. During three months Ms. van Dam-Wisse has formalised mission statement for the IUC, structured and carried out questionnaire to IUC course directors and conducted in-depth interviews with course directors, both on site and online. Feedback of these activities are that IUC organisers appreciate informal atmosphere, enough time for discussions, network building and the mix of highly esteemed scholars, early careers, and students. Everyone mentions increasingly high costs and difficulties to get funding. Suggestions for improvement were to provide affordable accommodation / dormitories, improve offer of the supporting restaurant, provide information on possible funding, make online publications attractive for participants, help disseminate calls for papers in Eastern Europe, organize alumni meetings and thus influence global networking.

Ms. van Dam-Wisse also initiated a Fundraising campaign for South East Scholarship fund. It is a crowdfunding initiative with the goal to gather 15000 Euro for 20 students. The link to the campaign can be found [here](https://iuc.hr/news/fundraising-campaign-for-the-south-east-european-scholarship-fund) with the bar code: 

She has also updated the IUC LinkedIn page, applied for Google AD Grants and identified numerous foundations that might be willing to fund the IUC programmes. This information would be shared with IUC course directors.

1. On 29 October, within the IUC Visibility project, the IUC organised a round table on higher education in SE Europe in Bruxelles, for representatives of different educational and governmental organisations from the region and W Europe that have offices in Bruxelles. IUC was represented by Prof. Šimonović, Prof. Bakker, Mr. Grievink and Ms. Bruer. It included online participation.

The round table focused on the role of higher education in the fields of justice, human rights, civil society and the European Higher Education Area in South-East Europe, while looking ahead to the expected expansion  of the EU in the region. It consisted of two elements: presentations of IUC activities and mission and follow-up discussions. There would be follow-up activities after this meeting.

1. DG Prof. Šimonović, DDG Prof. Bakker and ES Bruer have held the online meeting with course directors on 27 November, while similar meeting is scheduled for 12 December. App. 60 course directors have applied for these two terms. The purpose of the meeting is to thank them for their work, inform them about latest developments and changes in fees, present them with possible funding schemes, advertising options for their programmes, but above all, find out about their needs from the IUC and gather ideas about what they consider important as a role of the IUC. There will be a summary of these meetings after the second meeting takes place.
2. After a meeting that took place on 9 December, it has been approved by the Dubrovnik Mayor, Mr. Mato Franković that City of Dubrovnik would enable IUC participants free entrance in more areas that are governed by the City of Dubrovnik like island Lokrum, City walls, on top of the current entrance in Dubrovnik museums. The methodology still needs to be arranged with the city. This is initiative was undertaken to offer a bit more to course directors to compensate the overall increase in prices in Dubrovnik.

NB December 2024