

**ERASMUS-SOCRATES PROGRAM AT "BABEȘ-BOLYAI"
UNIVERSITY, FACULTY OF GEOGRAPHY.
TEN YEARS OF WORK**

V. SURD¹

ABSTRACT. – Erasmus-Socrates Programme at "Babeș-Bolyai" University, Faculty of Geography. 10 years of work. In this programme, beginning with 1998/1999 academic year, the number of foreign partners constantly increased till now, from four universities in 1998 to 25 universities in 2007. At the same time, the number of participants (students, Master students and PhD students) increased from 13 to 53. The total number of participants at the programme in these years was 257, which represents about 12 % of all the students the faculty has.

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Erasmus-Socrates Program, conceived as a first step towards the integration of the upper education in Europe, was initiated in the spring of 1997, when an exceptional delegation from Würzburg University, Germany, lead by the eminent Romanic specialist Theodor Berchem, PhD, rector and by the head of the Department of International Relations, Johann Iannovici, PhD visited "Babeș-Bolyai" University, and also the Faculty of Geography. During the summer of the same year, Professor Vasile Surd, PhD, as a delegate of the Faculty of Geography, visited the universities from Glasgow, Brussels, Würzburg and Tübingen, thus signing the first cooperation agreements for 1998/1999 academic year. The four famous European universities represented the first important step for our students to become acquainted and to enrol in the programs offered by these faculties. These international agreements between faculties involved scholarships of three to six months, out of the wish to include a large number of students, considering the fact that the stipend per student per month was approximately 500 euros. Thus, 13 students from our faculty were included in this program, summing up 82.5 months of mobilities. We have to emphasize the positive response the foreign universities had concerning our students' interest and perseverance in studying. We have to mention, thus, the messages received from Professor Ronan Padison, PhD from the University of Glasgow, from Professor Christian Vandermotten, PhD from Université Libre in Bruxelles, from Professor Horst Förster, PhD from Tübingen University and from Johann Iovanovici, PhD, Manager of the Department of International Relations that support this fact.

1999/2000 academic year was characterized by a lower number of mobilities, due to the small number of students that knew German and were interested in the program.

2000/2001 academic year meant an extension of the international cooperation between faculties, with the inclusion of the Italian universities from Modena and Bari, thus the number of mobilities reached 16, summing up 86.5 months of mobilities. We wish to emphasize the support the rector of the University from Bari, Professor Francesco Tritto and Professor Palmentola from the same University and also our distinguished collaborator and always a friend, Professor Dorian Castaldini gave during the program.

¹ University „Babeș-Bolyai”, Faculty of Geography”, 400006, Cluj-Napoca, Romania.

2001/2002 academic year started with signing three new agreements with the universities from Verona (Italy), Innsbruck and Klagenfurt (Austria), thus the number of the student mobilities reached 22 which mean 140.5 months of mobilities. We have thus to highlight the support given by the following collaborators: Professor Klaus Frantz, PhD from the University of Innsbruck and Professor Michael Sauberer from the University of Klagenfurt.

International mobilities of the students, the Master students and the PhD students from the Faculty of Geography from Cluj-Napoca, during 1998/1999 - 2007/2008

Table 1

Academic year	No. universities	No. students	Months - total
1998-1999	4	13	82.5
1999-2000	4	10	50.5
2000-2001	6	16	86.5
2001-2002	9	22	140.5
2002-2003	9	19	87.0
2003-2004	9	18	102.5
2004-2005	16	32	224.0
2005-2006	20	31	238.0
2006-2007	22	43	312.0
2007-2008	25	53	364.0
Total		257	1687.5

For 2002/2003 and 2003/2004 academic years, as a result of the large number of requests of mobilities at a national level, and also within "Babeş-Bolyai" University, the stipend became 300 euros, therefore the number of students from our faculty who went abroad with a scholarship decreased to 19 and 18, respectively. Yet, in the new agreements signed, the duration of the mobility was increased to 6 and 9 months, respectively which correspond to the graduation of a semester and a year, respectively there at the foreign partner university.

A qualitative and a quantitative improvement was to be highlighted with the beginning of 2004/2005 academic year, when the credit transfer system was approved while the stipend remained approximately at the same level of 300 euros. New agreements were signed with universities as: Nürtingen, Münster and Leipzig (Germany), Strasbourg and Savoie (France), Salamanca and Leon (Spain). Thus 32 mobilities as a value is reached, which mean 224 months.

For 2005/2006 academic year, even though the collaborations were again extended to include the universities from Artois (Arras - France), Veszprem and Székesfehérvár (Hungary) and Vila Real (Portugalia), the number of mobilities was 31 (just one less than the previous year), as there were less demands for German-language universities even though the Faculty of Geography houses a German line of study.

In 2006/2007, the improvement was an important one – as it concerns the number of partner universities as well as of mobilities. New agreements were signed with the universities from Harokopio (Greece), Nice and Perpignan (France). So, there have been 43 student mobilities, totalizing 312 months and 23 partner universities.

In 2007/2008, the Faculty of Geography has international agreements with 25 partner universities (as there were two other agreements signed meanwhile with the universities from Krakow and Montpellier).

Thus, the faculty ensures 53 mobilities to 25 partner universities, which totalize 364 months of studying abroad. There are 257 mobilities in total, which represent approximately 12 % from the students studying at our faculty. In total, the 257 Socrates-Erasmus students have studied 1687.5 months abroad, which mean 6.5 month per student. The new agreements, most of them being valid all through 2011, include scholarships of one academic year, thus facilitating the graduation of two semesters at our foreign partner universities. Yet, for the universities from Strasbourg and Nice, for the Master students and the PhD students only 3 months abroad for study are possible.

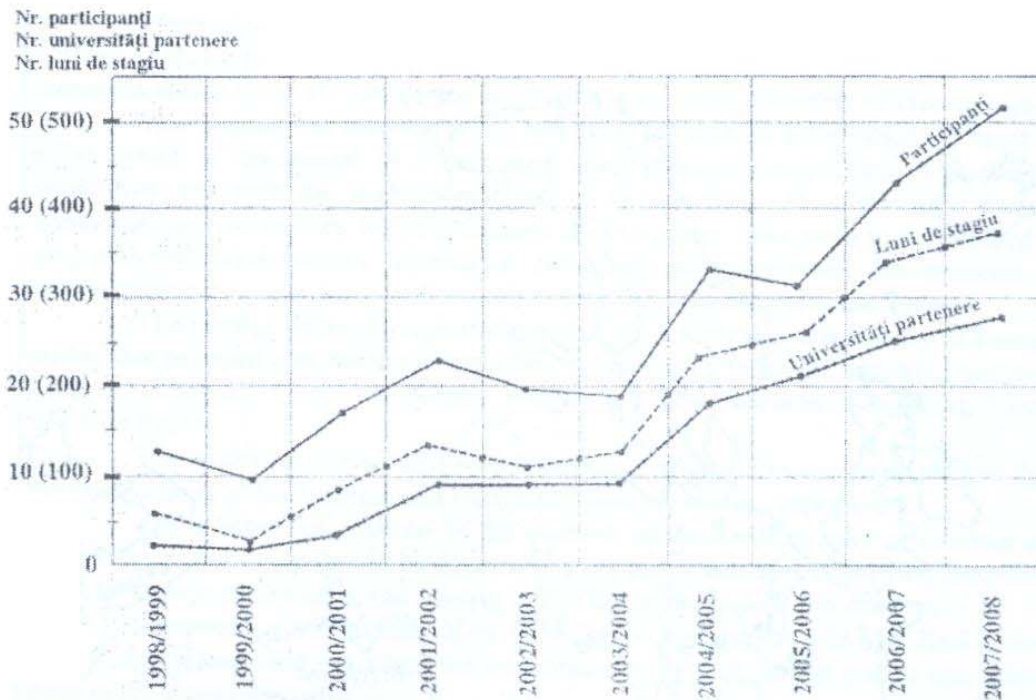


Fig. 1. The evolution of the number of partner universities, of participants and of the total number of months of study.

The initiation and the strengthening of this program is the result of the tireless international efforts which the head of "Babeș-Bolyai" University has been undergoing in the last 10 years. The actual signing of the agreements is the result of a more and more active involvement of the faculty in the international scientific life. Thus, the following professors supported such international agreements: Professor Vasile Surd, PhD; Senior lecturer Wilfried Schreiber, PhD; Professor Cocean Pompei, Professor Ionel Haidu, PhD; PhD; Professor Virgil Surdeanu, PhD Professor Benedek Jozsef, PhD; Senior lecturer Bodocan Voicu, PhD; Lecturer Lucian Drăguț, PhD and Senior Lecturer Dombay Ștefan, PhD. We should also mention the participation of Professor Irimuș Aurel, PhD and of Senior lecturer Moldovan Florin, PhD who support the program by delivering lectures.

Even though our faculty has been and is supporting, financially and administratively, the mobilities of the professors that teach in Erasmus-Socrates program, the number of those that really accepted the challenge to teach abroad is low. We can highlight the same situation for the partner universities, with some exceptions (professors that accepted to come and deliver some lectures at our faculty) that we present here Professor Ulrich Glaser, PhD; Professor Barbara Sponholz, PhD and Professor Eberhard Schultz – Würzburg University, Professor Michael Sauberer, PhD – Klagenfurt University,

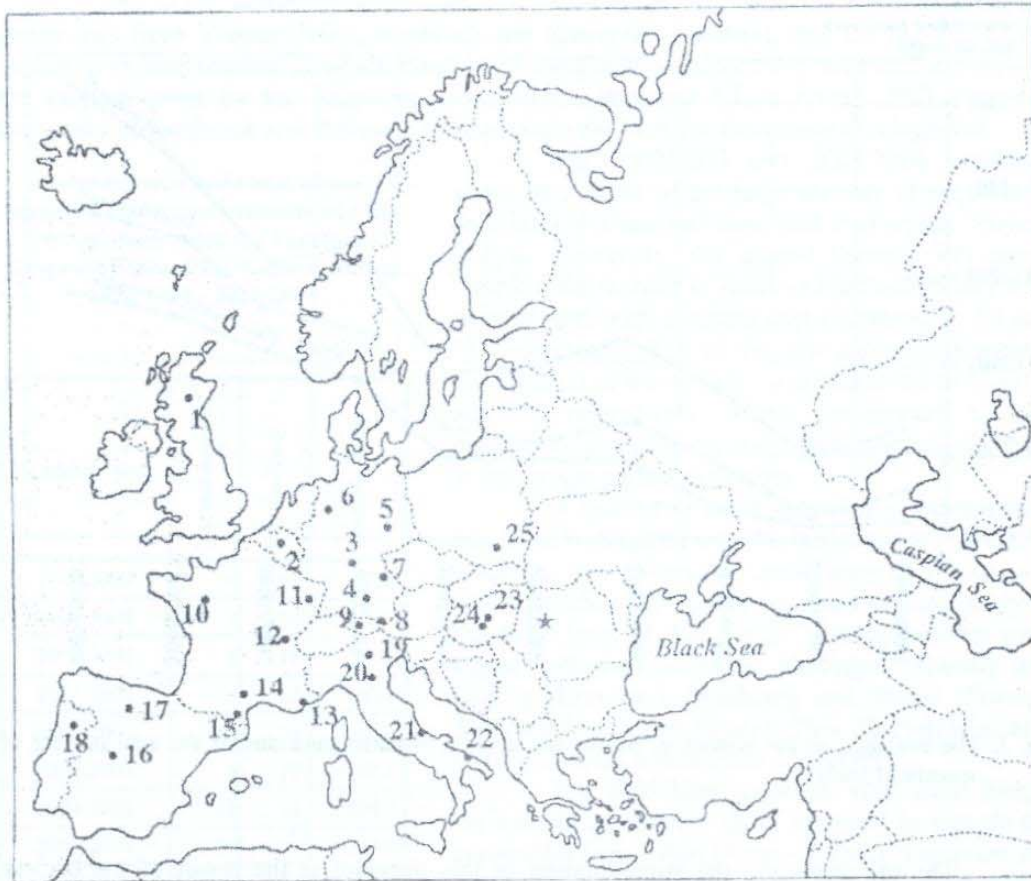


Fig. 2. Partner universities. * Cluj-Napoca; 1. Glasgow; 2. U.L. Brussels; 3. Würzburg; 4. Tübingen; 5. Leipzig; 6. Münster; 7. Nürtingen; 8. Klagenfurt; 8. Innsbruck; 10. Artoise; 11. Strasbourg; 12. Chambéry; 13. Nice; 14. Montpellier; 15. Perpignan; 16. Salamanca; 17. Leon; 18. Vila Real; 19. Verona; 20. Modena; 21. Pescara; 22. Bari; 23. Veszprem; Székesfehérvár; 25. Krakow.

Professor Klaus Frantz, PhD – Innsbruck University, Professor Dorian Castaldini, PhD – Modena University, Professor Franz Grimm, PhD; Professor Cristoph Waak, PhD - Leipzig University and Professor Horst Förster, PhD – Tübingen University. We should not miss out the support some other persons from the partner universities have given, in this respect, we should mention Mr. Johann Ivanovici – Würzburg University, Ms. Georgeta Breabăn – Artois University, Ms. Nadine Marmin – Savoie University, Mr. Sharne Procter - Glasgow University and Ms. Veronika Lapa Joukes - Vila Real University.

We should mention the fact that the program of cooperation with the University from Leon was signed by the Faculty of History (Professor Ioan Piso, PhD). An agreement with Leicester University was also signed, including only teaching staff mobilities, yet it was interrupted because of lack of reciprocal support.

The cooperation with the International Cooperation Center from "Babeș-Bolyai" University was a permanent and a beneficial one, even though the Center had three or four managers during these 10 year period and there were a similar number of vice-rectors.

The program has involved and is still involving a major informatics and bureaucratic effort, which is represented by a permanent mailing and communication with the partner universities and with the students involved in this program. Thus, annually, the partner universities receive the lists with the students that have been nominated to be included in the program, with administrative information concerning accommodation, the structure of the academic year, the curricula, as well as solutions for special problems of the students.

The number of the foreign students that have studied at the Faculty of Geography within this program was relatively low (they were coming from the following universities: Modena, Innsbruck, Leipzig, Tübingen, Würzburg, Artoise, Münster, Klagenfurt, Veszprem and Vila Real).

The predominance of the German-language universities can be explained through the inauguration of the German and Hungarian lines of studies, respectively.

Yet, a better information of the students studying Geography in German and in Hungarian, respectively should be done, as the low participation in occupying the places for the scholarships in Germany and Austria is also due to the lack of information.

Meanwhile, a solution should be found for the cooperation with Vila Real University from Portugal, as it did not adopt the credit transfer system, so the grades assimilation is done in the classical way.

Through the implementation of the credit transfer system, the students were encouraged to participate to the program. Because of the supplementary financial effort of the students that want to participate to the program, even though, at present, the faculty has over 3,000 students there is just one student who candidates for each of the scholarships at the partner universities. The universities from Great Britain are in a less number represented, thus reducing the chances of the English speaking students to participate in the program, and they do form a majority. We also should highlight the relatively low information of the students on the program, even though the program is made publish through the tutors of each year, through student leaders, through the professors that are involved in the program. We should also add the written publicity made for the program for each year of study. This is our only explanation of the fact that some of our potential candidates for the program find out about it only in the last year, when it is also the time when they succeed to know all their colleagues...

In the new context, of Romanian integration in the European Union, the main effort of the faculty will be oriented towards the supporting and the improvement of the information circulation on the program and towards an increase in the number of courses taught in an international recognized language, English, French and German, especially.

We consider that this new orientation would involve also universities from outside the borders of the European Union, in parallel with an increase in the number of mobilities within the present European Union.

The faculty faces a new and remarkable challenge that requires that in a short period of time, the major part of the courses to be delivered in an international recognized language. As a result of this urge, along the tutorials that are held today for the foreign students, in the case their number increases 20, a special program of courses and seminars is to be organized, together with appropriate bibliographic resources.

We should also insist further in signing agreements with famous universities from Great Britain, in parallel with carrying on an appropriate advocacy at the universities from Cernăuți, Chișinău, Kiev, Minsk, Moscow, Sankt Petersburg, Beograd, Ljubljana, Zagreb, Novi Sad and Skopje representing countries that are not in the EU.

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