



NEO Newsletter
August 2020

International HERE events in 2018

The aim of the international Higher Education Reform Experts (HERE) events is to train HEREs on different topics related to the modernisation of higher education, keeping them up to date on the latest developments and showcasing good practice examples from European and Partner Countries (PCs).¹ The topics are defined in cooperation between the European Commission, the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) and the SPHERE team², taking into account specific interests expressed by NEOs and HEREs.

In 2018 five international events took place including one conference, one seminar and three study visits. The programme of the events was prepared in cooperation between SPHERE, the EACEA and the European Commission. External experts were invited to each of the events to make presentations on their special field of expertise. Many HEREs also contributed

¹ The partner countries participating in HERE activities are the former TEMPUS partner countries: Albania, Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Egypt, Georgia, Israel, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Libya, Moldova, Montenegro, Morocco, Palestine, Russia, Serbia, Syria, Tajikistan, Tunisia, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.

² Support and Promotion for Higher Education Reform Experts organize international events to train HEREs on different topics related to the modernisation of higher education

actively to the events, acting as speakers, workshop leaders or rapporteurs.

The five international HERE events are briefly presented hereafter and more detailed information on each event is posted on the SPHERE website.

Unfortunately, in 2018-2019 Turkmenistan was not represented by the HERE team in the events held, since the Turkmen NEO was closed from 01/01/2018 to 01/08/2019. However, the active interest of Turkmen HEIs administrators and academics to the Erasmus+ Programme activities and their wish to keep abreast of the HE progressive reform in EU and neighboring countries encouraged the NEO to publish the given newsletter. The publication has been done on the basis of the SPHERE consortium reports and conclusions. All photos were taken from the Internet sources to illustrate the exciting and fascinating atmosphere of meetings and places the HEREs visited.

Types of events

Three types of international training events are proposed each year. Study visits are aimed only at the HERE experts, while seminars and annual conferences are also attended by representatives of the National Erasmus+ Offices in Partner Countries, as well as by a limited number of Bologna Promoters from Programme Countries.

- **Study visits** present a ‘case study’ of an institution or a country, and feature both national and institutional practices.
- **Seminars** are theme-focused (for example, quality assurance, doctoral education, university-industry links) and provide both theoretical background to the issue, examples and cases from different systems (within the EU and in PCs), and engage speakers from different European and Partner Countries.
- **Annual conferences**, the biggest events in the annual training programme, usually tackle an umbrella topic, and serve as “bridging events” to probe new themes and ideas.

Themes

The HERE events organised in 2018 were the following:

- Study Visit - **The role of universities in developing entrepreneurial skills**, University of Montpellier – 19-20 April 2018
- Seminar - **Research-based teaching and learning: From national and institutional policies to practice** – University of Montenegro, 28-29 May, 2018
- Study Visit - **Learning and teaching: Professional development of staff in higher education**, King’s College London and London School of Economics and Political Science - 3-4 September, 2018
- Study Visit - **Joint degrees: Strategic and operational implementation: One size does not fit all**, University of Coimbra, Portugal, 2-3 October, 2018
- Annual Conference - **Capacity building for higher education reform: The impact of collaborative international projects**, University of Rome – Sapienza, 12-13 December, 2018

Study Visit to the University of Montpellier, France – Entrepreneurship

The HERE Study Visit hosted by the University of Montpellier on 19-20 April 2018, and was aimed to practical examples of university engaging in entrepreneurial activities and training students and staff in in the field of entrepreneurship. It tackled the aspects of research and innovation management, teaching, course design and student support, as well as outreach the activities and international collaboration. It also highlighted the role of universities in entrepreneurship “ecosystem” involving students, professors, administrators, investors, companies, regulatory bodies and legal frameworks.



The objectives of the study visit:

- Understand the process of defining and implementing university strategies for supporting entrepreneurship especially of young graduates and researchers
- Develop strategies for better defining and activating universities in entrepreneurship ecosystems
- Support curricular development and teaching innovation, oriented at fostering entrepreneurial skills
- Study and discuss the university support structures and services that work for the same aim

The study visit was attended by 33 participants, in addition to the staff from the host university.

This included 28 HEREs from 15 countries with very different profiles, including ministry representatives, rectors and vice-



rectors, administrative and teaching staff,



directors of doctoral and master programmes, heads of quality assurance departments and international relations units. Three participants, from Georgia, Kosovo and Montenegro, provided written case studies on entrepreneurship in their countries, specifically on the development of entrepreneurial skills for students, innovative system development and experimental learning. All three case studies were placed on the SPHERE website.

Participants highlighted the points below as the main takeaways:

1) Entrepreneurship is feasible in all higher education institutions and systems. However, interpretation of entrepreneurship is quite different.

2) There are diverse benefits of entrepreneurship depending on the environment and the mission of the institution.

This can include:

- Stimulating inter- and multidisciplinary research, conducted in collaboration with diverse partnerships (large and small businesses, state agencies and municipalities, NGOs, students, etc.), which can also improve its application and dissemination.

- Facilitating transformation of education in all study fields and promoting interdisciplinary student-centred learning as well as innovative learning and teaching concepts to give students a good framework for experiencing success and failure in real-life situations.



to give students a good framework for experiencing success and failure in real-life situations.

- Contributing to transformation of institutional management and governance and supporting the collaboration in research and teaching across faculty and department structures which help to develop structures for channeling interaction with outside parties at regional, national and international levels.

3) Entrepreneurship is a responsibility of the university and should be part of the institutional strategy

- To be successful and go beyond the initiatives of individual staff and students, the entrepreneurship requires structures and investment at institutional level strategy.

- The institution and its members are responsible for the quality, legality and ethical integrity of all services and initiatives

- Entrepreneurship ecosystem development must be pursued through data collection, and formal and informal consultation of internal and external stakeholders.

Event site:

https://supporthere.org/montpellier_2018

Outcome Report:

https://supporthere.org/sites/default/files/report_study_visit_montepellier_-_april_2018-3_0.pdf.

Seminar in Podgorica, Montenegro – Research-based Teaching

Research-based teaching is a topic of growing interest in Europe and in Partner Countries. It touches upon the key questions that



HEIs and systems are facing with regards to the mission of universities through research-based teaching and research-oriented learning.

During the study visit to the University of Milan in 2017, HEREs explored approaches of a research-intensive university to the concept of research-based teaching. The visit left a number of open questions continued to be explored through Technical Assistance Missions (TAM).

The seminar was hosted by the University of Montenegro on 28-29 May 2018.

The objectives of the seminar:

- Clarify terminology and approaches to different aspects of research-based teaching



to better explore the institutional strengths and weaknesses on the topic in HERE countries

- Explore good practices in institution-driven, strategic approaches on integrating research and education missions
- Generate ideas for building capacity of faculty members to implement research-based teaching and create a research-based learning environment
- Analyse national frameworks, policies and funding that may help or hinder the development of research-based teaching in diverse types of institutions

The event offered plenary and break-out sessions devoted to the following topics:

- Institutional missions
- The disparities between research and teaching career pathways
- Research-based learning
- Supporting academic staff in course design, with particular focus to internationalisation, ICT, and three Bologna cycles specificities
- National policy approaches



The seminar was attended by 62 participants, including seven from Montenegro: HEREs (mainly academics) from 17 countries, representatives of 15 National Erasmus+ Offices (NEOs), guest speakers and members of the SPHERE team. In addition, for the first time, the seminar also welcomed seven Bologna Experts from five European countries, who contributed extensively to the discussions.

Six HEREs were invited to make presentations at the event, based on the case studies submitted and also on the pre-survey results. Drawing examples from both EU countries and Partner

Countries were important features of the seminar Programme.

The main conclusions of the seminar:

- The participants were able to gain a clear view of the potential benefits of re-thinking the relationship of research to learning and teaching
- The participants noted the distinctions between learning as research-based, research-led, research-tutored and research-oriented. It was suggested that “**research inclusiveness**” should become all institutions’ basic aspiration.
- Clearly, a number of institutions would also remain research-intensive. However, the modes of research-based learning and teaching can create an embedded culture.

These conclusions are further elaborated in the event outcome report.

Event site:

<https://supporthere.org/montenegro2018>

Outcome report:

https://supporthere.org/sites/default/files/report_seminar_in_montenegro_-_final_version_with_annexes.pdf

Study visit to Kings’ College London and London School of Economics and Political Science, UK– The Staff Professional Development

The study visit (3-4 September, 2018) was the first to examine the topic of professional development of HEIs’ teaching staff. The visit was organised in cooperation with two globally-renowned

institutions – the Kings’ College of London (KCL) and the London School of Economics and Political Science



(LSE). It demonstrated KCL and LSE experiences for teaching staff development in the field of with quality assessment, student services and student centred teaching approaches.

The event targeted senior academic staff, senior university administrators of programme development and quality assurance, student HEREs and national policy makers.

The objectives of the visit:

- Learn approaches and good practice of academic staff professional development at KCL and LSE
- Understand the external and internal contexts of KCL и LSE professional development centres
- Locate professional development in the contexts of quality assurance and quality enhancement

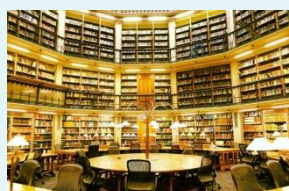


• Investigate how far practices at KCL and LSE are transferable to other national and institutional contexts.

The main plenary sessions of the event were dedicated to the topics of:

- 1) Institutional missions and the link to teaching staff development
- 2) Support programmes for teacher development
- 3) Support for research-based teaching
- 4) Quality assurance/enhancement

LSE and KCL provided complementary speakers and case studies for each session and also involved students and diverse staff members in related break-out discussions.



The study visit was attended by 31 HEREs, in addition to staff members from the LSE and KCL, notably from the King's Academy, a centralised unit that supports staff development and the LSE Teaching and Learning Centre, which provides a similar function.

The HERE participants represented 16 countries and were mostly from universities, including rectors, vice-rectors, professors and PhD students. Two ministry representatives attended as well as one representative of a national quality assurance agency. Two HEREs were asked to provide presentations based on case studies they supplied for the event, notably on research-based teaching and also on quality assurance (Egypt and Ukraine, respectively).

The conclusions of the study visit:

- Institution leaders should promote staff development and training that aligns to the institutional missions and values
- Work within a **strategic framework** to link learning and teaching with research and to reinforce the staff development
- Review resources, streamline processes, improve support levels, and **build reward and recognition** for those who teach and lead on education
- Centralised units for institution staff development can function in different ways: **guide and support teaching, enabling exchange of good practice, instead of imposing rigid procedures.**
- Basic research skills should already be introduced at Bachelor level. **Students should understand the importance of research skills in the labour market, beyond just research and academic careers.** The key in this respect is the interdisciplinary approaches to teaching research skills.

The participants highly appreciated the student intervention: there was a complementary presentation between a student and a professor on the theme how research-based teaching methods could be integrated in the Bachelor level.

Event site: <https://supporthere.org/london2018>

Outcome report:

https://supporthere.org/sites/default/files/report_here_study_visit_london_-



[september 2018 v3.pdf](#)

Study visit to University of Coimbra, Portugal – Joint Degrees



This study visit to the University of Coimbra, Portugal, held on 2-3 October 2018, was a follow-up of HERE seminar at the University of Novi Sad, Serbia in 2016. The growing interest in joint academic programmes is confirmed by requests for TAM seminars. Moreover, a number of national legislations have been changed to develop joint programmes, while in the Bologna Process the significant efforts have been made to facilitate the joint degrees quality assurance and accreditation. Therefore, the visit was relevant to re-explore this theme via a study visit and consider a particular institutional case.

The visit objectives:

- To understand the main strategic planning of the University of Coimbra (UC) and its vision and missions of internationalisation in education and research
- To learn via UC example the ensuring process of joint degrees and the process of quality assurance through strong and supportive management and administration
- To learn the different UC joint degree models

Joint degrees were included in the UC Strategic Plan of 2011-2015 and 2015-2019. During the study visit, participants gained an overview of UC's strategic planning process and learned how joint degrees contributed to the development of cooperation and international programmes. HEREs were able to appreciate how UC maintains quality standards for the full life-cycle joint programme, knew about different joint degree models, financial and legal implications,

as well as the need to comply with specific requirements and formal procedures.

With the exception of the three members of the SPHERE Team and the representative of the Executive Agency, all 33 participants were HERE. They came from 19 countries.

In terms of feedback received, participants highly appreciated the opening session on “UC Strategic Planning: development of cooperation and internationalisation of education and research through joint degrees”, as this framed how joint degrees fit into the institutional strategy and profile. Participants also valued the case studies on specific joint programmes: development of joint degrees, reasons, and modalities of cooperation.

The visit conclusions:

- To develop joint programmes an institution must have a clear idea of its **context, mission, and practical implementation strategy**
- The support services (the International Relations Office and the Administrative and Quality Assurance Offices) must be proactive and fully **participant in the design and delivery of joint programmes**
- Without strong teamwork within consortium, it is impossible to guarantee effective planning and develop practical approaches to the **sustainability** of the joint programme
- It is evident that successful joint programmes are most likely to emerge from existing research collaborations.
- Course design will depend significantly on the volume of external funding: to ensure sustainability (in the **framework of the institutional strategies**) once this funding is reduced or exhausted
- From the bottom-up perspective, proposals for joint programmes may vary widely in conception. At the same time, institutional support services tend to function better where there is uniformity
- Joint programmes **vary in their degree of**



integration. Course planners should consider whether, in their particular institutional contexts, it is better to aim for full integration or to approach it in a series of steps

Event site:

<https://supporthere.org/coimbra2018>

Outcome report:

https://supporthere.org/sites/default/files/report_coimbra_study_visit_october_2018_final_01.pdf

Annual conference in Rome, Italy – Capacity Building in Higher Education



The 2018 Annual Conference on the issue of capacity building covered the concepts and concrete impacts

of CBHE projects within the Partner Countries. It became an important follow-up of the 2017 HERE Annual Conference that examined the HERE initiative as a diplomatic tool and policy dialogue channel.

The 2018 conference, hosted by the University of Rome – Sapienza on 12-13 December 2018, explored and show-cased specific collaborative, international projects involved HEREs, who contributed to capacity building both at the policy-making and institutional levels. These were higher education and research projects funded by the EU, under the Erasmus+ and Horizon 2020 programmes, and other international projects.

The objectives of the conference:

- To examine models of international collaboration and specifically structural impacts on higher education institutions and national education policies
- Compare and seek synergies between projects that have similar objectives and address similar reform themes such as quality assurance, recognition, employability,

governance, autonomy, mobility and internationalisation

- To allow HEREs to share results of projects, and also discuss ways of maximising impact on policy reform
- To demonstrate the role of projects in contributing to the Bologna Process implementation
- The plenary sessions examined the following topics:
 - Capacity building – the perspective of the EU versus the perspective of national governments and higher education institutions
 - Capacity building projects to implement the Bologna Process
 - The added value to EU partners in capacity building
 - Capacity building in university autonomy and governance



The four plenary panel sessions featured speakers from Austria, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Egypt, Georgia, Germany, Italy,

Moldova, Russia, Serbia, Uzbekistan and the European University Association. They were policy-makers, project funders, policy analysts and project practitioners, drawn from governmental and nongovernmental organisations and universities. The Italian minister for development cooperation also participated in the event.

Thematic break-out groups were held on the topics of mobility, quality assurance, recognition and teaching and learning reform, moderated by experts that had previously also participated in TAMs for the Partner Countries. In addition, as a means to pre-empt the 2019 work plan, regional break-out sessions on **social inclusion** in higher education were held.

To complement the conference programme, a **poster session** was held on relevant EU funded capacity building projects from Partner

Countries.

The conference visited 146 participants – including academics, administrators, and policy makers from 22 partner countries.

Seven EU Member States were represented, most notably Italy:



colleagues from the host university Sapienza were joined by academics from ten other Italian universities. Participants came primarily to be acquainted with good practice, to discuss and exchange experiences, but also to network more generally with colleagues working in different national policy environments.

The event had a number of conclusions, both regarding how to utilise capacity building projects to sustain impact in systems, but also on how to shape the Erasmus+ Capacity Building in Higher Education (CBHE) action in the future. These are outlined in the outcome report.

The participants highlighted the most useful topics for the diverse HERE audience:

- The strategic goals in Erasmus+ CBHE and the future of the programme
- Capacity building and social inclusion in the

higher education sector

- The impact of projects on stakeholders, the institution and on student mobility
- Institutional ownership of projects and the related sustainability of results

Event site: <https://supporthere.org/rome2018>

Outcome report:

https://supporthere.org/sites/default/files/report_rome_conference_december_2018_with_annex_final_1.pdf

FOR MORE INFORMATION

National Erasmus+ Office (NEO)
in Turkmenistan

Visiting Address:

182, 1958 (Andalyp Ave.)

744005 Ashgabat Turkmenistan

E-mail: info@erasmusplus.org.tm

Website: www.erasmusplus.org.tm

