ERASMUS AND CAREER-EU CONGRESS AND EXHIBITION

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Venue:

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Organizers:

EAEC – European Association of Erasmus Coordinators, Cyprus

EACG – European Association of Career Guidance, Cyprus

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THEMATIC SESSIONS

ABSTRACT TS1:
EDUCATION 5.0: A POST PANDEMIC VIEW

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With Industry 5.0, the human factor is once again playing a major role and is once again moving to the center of the processes. According to this premise, technology must serve people and not the other way around. Therefore, the goal is to arrive at a scenario of complete collaboration between humans and machines. In other words, if Industry 4.0 is based on networking between machines and computer systems, Industry 5.0 aims to combine the roles of humans and machines to strengthen and complement each other.

The topics may include but are not limited to:
- Continuing Education
- Education 5.0 and Society 5.0
- Educational Technologies for HEI
- Academic Innovation

ABSTRACT TS1.1:
EDUCATION 5.0: IN SEARCH OF THE HUMAN FACTOR

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Education 5.0 focuses on the use of new technologies, such as artificial intelligence and internet of things, to provide a more humanized teaching, mainly focusing on a students' emotional and social development. The importance of gamification in education is based on enriching learning with the fun factor. How successfully digitization can be used in the future depends, among other things, on how students are prepared for it in higher education institutions today. Scalable game design is a strategy for bringing computer science education to higher education by means of game design and simulations. Students need to be supported to build competencies in computational thinking and to enable them to use this knowledge to solve business problems. The objective of this paper is to create a framework that can be used by educators to observe students in their acquisition of competencies.

ABSTRACT TS2:
EUROPEAN UNIVERSITIES: WHAT IS CHANGING IN EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION?

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A transformation wave impacting higher education and research is crossing Europe since 2018, mainly due to the ambitious European Universities initiative by the European Commission and the member states but also somehow due to the Covid-19 pandemic that suddenly pushed academics for online teaching and novel pedagogies.
These are times of deconstruction, reconstruction and innovation over traditional higher education that has been steady and crystallized for ages. It is time to act, to be part of this exciting transformation process and to take the best advantage of this lifetime opportunity.
In this session we will discuss novel approaches, models and methodologies being essayed by European University alliances to advance European Higher Education to unprecedent levels.

ABSTRACT TS2.1:
THE DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION OF UNIVERSITY EDUCATION

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The last two years have seen dynamic changes in teaching processes related to the functional capabilities of the digital learning environment. This called into question the applicability of popular learning methods in online learning platforms. The paper discusses the problems of digital transformation of the learning process, the behavior of the participants and the stakeholders. In the online learning environment, the variety of the teaching methods allows for the creation of unique learning activities tailored to the needs of the students. The choice of a combination of approaches and methods depends on the experience of the teacher, his commitment to the learning process and his attitude to communicate with students. Methods that are easy to apply and do not require special technological competencies of online learning platforms are proposed.

It is established that the digital transformation of university education is a process that provides fast and painless adaptability for learning and teaching in an unfamiliar context. In this particular situation, this can be achieved by involving all stakeholders, taking into account the leadership role of academic teachers - digitally literate leaders in their field of study. University lecturers have to adopt different learning and interaction styles based on the idiosyncratic nature of learners. Therefore, technologies must be able to adapt to the changing needs and situations of individuals. Developing a sense of community in learners is critical to the effectiveness of the online learning process.

ABSTRACT TS2.2:
FOSTERING CRITICAL THINKING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Critical thinking is one of the higher order skills that are not only important for today's job market, but also for achieving innovation in 21st century societies and economies. Critical thinking helps individuals not only in the job market but also in civic life. There are examples in national education policies of increasing interest in critical thinking skills. The paper does not examine systems for developing critical thinking in the schools, but focuses on the higher education system. Universities and the system of higher education should look for modern ways and means for its development in students.

The paper explores the concept of critical thinking, defining its key elements and links it with other important skills needed for employment, such as problem solving, analytical and digital skills. Statistical data from international studies showing the importance of critical thinking in various business sectors and spheres of activity are presented. The paper seeks to answer the question of whether employers would hire workers who possess critical thinking skills and whether they value these skills highly in job applicants. The literature on the topic is explored to find relevant contemporary approaches to teaching critical thinking at the universities. The report concludes with conclusions on the importance of the critical thinking skills. Suggestions are made about how critical thinking can be introduced into university courses and used in higher education teaching.

Erasmus+

ABSTRACT TS2.3:
THE DTAM PROJECT FACILITATES THE DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION IN ADVANCED MANUFACTURING

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Industry 4.0. covers the set of technologies that are allowing the leap to the digital and connected industry. Large companies already have innovation departments that allow them to integrate digitization, but small and medium-sized companies often do not have the resources to tackle such a major change and need the support of external agents to help them. The Digital Transformation in Advanced Manufacturing-DTAM project wanted to meet this skills gap. The DTAM initiative has defined an educational curriculum to train EU technicians to deploy and manage digital tools in Smart Manufacturing. The curriculum focuses on **deploying and managing digitalisation technology in the Advanced Manufacturing sector**.

The DTAM project will run until the end of 2023 under the coordination of Politeknika Txorierri (Spain) with a budget of almost 1 million euros linked to the European Union Erasmus+ programme. The DTAM consortium brings together 10 organisations from Spain, the Netherlands, Italy, Greece and Bulgaria representing different stakeholders sharing a common vision: vocational education and training providers, higher education institutions, digital transformation experts and sectoral representatives are collaboratively designing, testing, refining and exploiting an integral curriculum in digital transformation competence for mid to high level EU technicians, available in English and all 5 partner languages.

In this session, we will present the developed online modules on Cybersecurity, Sensorica, Machine Learning, Big Data and Soft Skills and their connected IoT labs for hands-on practical training.

ABSTRACT TS3:
ECOVEM Microelectronics – Education, Skills, Employment

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ECoVEM project brings together VET centres, polytechnics, industrial associations, social partners to establish European Cooperation platform of Vocational Excellence in Microelectronics to tackle the challenges of: digitalisation, artificial intelligence, green technologies, gender equality and technology, integration of migrants. ECoVEM builds on and complements the strengths of national VET systems in countries with more-advanced VET and supports the not so advanced regions to achieve VET excellence. ECoVEM implements innovative instructional approaches towards life-long capacity to self-regulate learning, hard skills and soft skills using the ecosystems-based theoretical models and performance support systems. In this session, colleagues active in the topic will present current developments in the microelectronics education, skills and opportunities.

ABSTRACT TS3.1:
METIS & ECoVEM: BEST PRACTICES AND SKILLS CERTIFICATION FOR THE FUTURE OF THE MICROELECTRONICS SECTOR

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METIS and ECoVEM are two EU-funded projects that combine excellences in microelectronics sector. Universities, VET providers, accreditation bodies and industries, cooperate with the common aim of developing a system that can answer to the continuous evolution of the microelectronic expertise within the European job market. Specifically, METIS foster the cooperation between a unique EU partnership establishing a framework to analyze global trends affecting the microelectronics sector with the aim of anticipating skills needs, identifying jobs and define related occupational profiles. On this basis, during the lifetime of the project, a modular and blended curriculum on the findings was formulated and designed. At the same time, ECoVEM has the aim to support policy reforms at national level, by tackling the challenges of digitalization, artificial intelligence, green technologies, gender equality in technology and integration of migrants. In order to do so, ECoVEM complements the strengths of national more-advanced VET systems and supports the not so advanced regions to achieve VET excellence. Within the two projects, we developed certificates to highlight the innovative contents of the training activities developed, aimed at tackling the skill gaps in the microelectronics sector. These were designed in compliance with the national education and training systems, on the basis of the recent EU Council Recommendation on Micro-credentials.

Erasmus+

ABSTRACT TS4:
Relation of Web3 and International Education (Erasmus+ and etc.) Processes

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Today's business world has started to take shape in accordance with Web3 technologies, which is seen as the new revolution of the internet. Inevitably, higher education institutions have to include these practices in a way that will lead the society through this process. It is important in this context that the academic world discuss the examples of these practices. In addition, when the European Union and Erasmus 2021-2027 priorities are examined, it is seen that digitalization and EWP (Erasmus without Paper) processes come to the fore. The concept of Web3 is used as a framework concept and this framework concept is embodied by applications such as blockchain, NFT, MetaVerse, Smart Contracts etc. In this session which innovative technologies will be discussed, it is planned to include studies on how these technologies can be used in Erasmus and Higher Education business processes, the contribution of these applications to the way of doing business, and the improvement of processes.
The topics may include but are not limited to:
- Web3 and International education
- Campus Mobility in Metaverse
- Educational Technologies for HEI
- Blockchain Use Cases in Higher Education
- Document and Data Sharing Between HEI
- Autonomous Campus Organizations

ABSTRACT TS4.1:
ARE ERASMUS SCOPES AND OBJECTIVES READY FOR NEW Web3 ERA TECHNOLOGIES?

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As we meet with Web3 technologies, many aspects of career planning for our employees and students are likely to change the way our living. The Web3 era represents a transformative era driven by blockchain and distributed ledger technologies, and could lead to significant changes in traditional business models, digital asset management, decentralized finance, digital identity and more. In this paper, we assess the role of Erasmus programs and objectives in preparing students for Web3 era professions, revealing the current state of education and preparation and suggesting strategies to improve students' preparedness. It also highlighting the importance of updating Erasmus programs and objectives to include training opportunities, collaborations, internships and entrepreneurship support related to Web3 technologies. With properly updated Erasmus programs and objectives, we can provide students with practical experience and exposure to different cultures and perspectives, equipping them with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively prepare for Web3 era professions.

Keywords: Web3, blockchain, defi, nft, metaverse, smart contrats, international student mobility, business management

ABSTRACT TS4.2:
ERASMUS IN METAVERSE: ENHANCING CROSS-CULTURAL EXCHANGE AND CERTIFICATION THROUGH VIRTUAL MOBILITY

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The Erasmus program has long been celebrated for its ability to foster international exchange and collaboration among students. However, the logistical and financial constraints of physical mobility can limit the number of students who can benefit from this transformative experience. In this paper, we propose a novel approach to augment the Erasmus program by integrating metaverse, a virtual reality-based environment, to facilitate virtual encounters and exploration of partner universities' campuses.

By leveraging immersive technologies, Erasmus students will have the opportunity to virtually meet and interact with their peers in a realistic metaverse environment, allowing them to navigate through digital representations of different university campuses. This virtual mobility initiative aims to complement face-to-face meetings and expand the number of cross-cultural exchanges, enabling more students to engage in meaningful international collaborations.

Furthermore, this paper explores the integration of blockchain technology to ensure secure storage and sharing of student data and certifications. A digitally stored certificate of participation, recorded on the blockchain, will be provided to participants in metaverse-based Erasmus program. This decentralized approach guarantees the authenticity and traceability of certifications, eliminating the need for manual verification processes across universities.

The proposed system not only addresses the challenges faced by students in physical mobility but also establishes a framework for efficient data sharing and collaboration between universities. By storing student information and certifications on a shared blockchain network, institutions can streamline administrative processes, reduce paperwork, and promote transparency and trust among partner universities.

Through the integration of metaverse and blockchain technology, the Erasmus program can transform into a more inclusive and accessible initiative. This paper discusses the potential benefits and challenges associated with this innovative approach, providing insights into how virtual mobility and decentralized certification systems can enhance international student experiences, promote cross-cultural understanding, and foster academic collaboration on a global scale.

ABSTRACT TS4.3:
DECENTRALIZED AUTONOMOUS ORGANIZATION MODEL FOR STUDENT SOCIETIES FOR ERASMUS STUDENTS

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Decentralized Autonomous Organization (DAO) is a governance model that allows for a group of individuals to make decisions and take actions in a decentralized and autonomous manner. This model has gained popularity in various industries, including the blockchain industry. However, with the rise of international students joining to student societies, particularly Erasmus students, in a foreign country, there is a need for a more efficient and effective way to participate in these organizations.

Erasmus students may struggle to share their ideas due to the fear of being an outsider in a foreign country. This can be exacerbated by local students' resistance to ideas coming from newcomers, which can create a challenging environment for sharing diverse perspectives. As a result, it is important to create a welcoming and inclusive atmosphere that encourages open communication and values the unique contributions of all students, regardless of their background. By fostering an environment of acceptance and understanding, we can help Erasmus students feel more comfortable sharing their ideas and enriching the experience for everyone involved.

By adopting the DAO model, student societies can benefit from a number of advantages, such as increased transparency, accountability, and efficiency. The traditional organizational structure can often lead to delays, inefficiencies, and rejections, which can be detrimental to the success of a student society. On the other hand, the DAO model allows for a more streamlined decision-making process that is based on consensus and democratic participation. Furthermore, the DAO model provides a platform for students to collaborate and contribute to the society's goals and objectives. With the DAO governance model, members can propose ideas, vote on proposals, and allocate resources effectively, ensuring that everyone has a say in the direction of the organization.

In conclusion, student societies for Erasmus students can greatly benefit from adopting the DAO model as it promotes transparency, accountability, efficiency, and collaboration to among members.

ABSTRACT TS4.4:
Web3 Identity and Student Mobility

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Cryptocurrency, smart contract, Defi, NFT and metaverse technologies that have entered our lives in recent years constitute the concept of web3 roof. Web3 technologies offer a decentralized, transparent and secure environment for internet users. With the development and spread of Web3 technologies, concepts such as web3 authentication and Self-Sovereign Identity have been frequently encountered recently. Education platforms for lifelong learning and higher education are generally centralized and managed in a closed manner. National and central data structures created in this way cannot provide sufficient international mobility. Using web3 technologies such as web3 authentication and Self-Sovereign Identity in education platforms will enable students to earn and transfer credits across national lines. Thanks to the provision of user authentication and identity management on education platforms with web3 technologies, students will be able to carry their credits and certificates between different platforms, and education platforms will be able to easily reach students' readiness levels. Moreover, centralized data structures are vulnerable to cyber attacks, political instability and wars, and as a result, refugee students come to European Universities without verifiable academic transcripts Web3 is considered as the most suitable option for the solution of this problem with the services it offers. This study focuses on how data such as national and centrally managed educational content, student loans can be managed with web3 technologies and how it will provide advantages.

ABSTRACT TS4.5:
ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE SUPPORTED ONLINE EXAM SYSTEM FOR DETERMINING FOREIGN LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY FOR ERASMUS EDUCATION MOBILITY: GAZI UNIVERSITY SAMPLE

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The experience gained by transferring the educational processes at all levels to online environments due to the global pandemic in recent years has brought to light realistic needs. In Turkey, as well as worldwide, education and assessment activities have been conducted through remote online processes. This year, due to the earthquake disaster in our country, higher education activities are being carried out remotely online. This situation has once again brought up the necessity of using online exam systems to assess the foreign language skills required for Erasmus exchange programs. To overcome this challenge, Gazi University Application and Research Center (GUZEM), has developed 4 skill-based (listening, speaking, reading and writing) online exam system supported by artificial intelligence in collaboration with the IT department. This system provides security measures through artificial intelligence applications such as browser locks, IP tracking, face recognition, audio monitoring, keystroke analysis, and biometric identity verification to detect suspicious behavior or violations of exam rules. It also offers remote proctoring capabilities. Artificial intelligence-based plagiarism detection tools have also been integrated into the exam system to prevent copying and plagiarism. The developed exam system also enables detailed analyses such as overall performance, question-level analysis, average time per question, and grade distribution to help educators and administrators identify areas for improvement and make data-driven decisions. In this study, the developed Online Exam System will be introduced, and discussions will be held regarding its use and to provide ideas to all universities.

ABSTRACT TS4.6:
INCLUSIVE INTERNATIONALIZATION: GAZI UNIVERSITY SAMPLE

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"Inclusive internationalization" refers to an approach or strategy that promotes the participation, engagement, and benefits of diverse groups and individuals in the process of internationalization. It emphasizes creating an inclusive environment that recognizes and values the contributions and perspectives of people from different backgrounds, cultures, and identities. Traditionally, internationalization has focused primarily on promoting global mobility, exchange programs, and international collaborations in higher education and business sectors. However, it has often been criticized for excluding certain groups or reinforcing existing inequalities. Inclusive internationalization seeks to address these issues by intentionally incorporating diversity, equity, and inclusion principles into the internationalization process. Key elements of inclusive internationalization include: diversity and representation, equity and access, cultural responsiveness, collaboration and partnerships, social impact and sustainability. By adopting an inclusive internationalization approach, institutions and organizations aim to foster a more equitable, diverse, and culturally sensitive environment that benefits all participants involved and contributes to a more inclusive global society. In this study we will talk about the inclusive practices of Gazi University in this respect.

SESSIONS – 60 minutes

ABSTRACT S1:
BARRIERS TO INTERNATIONAL STUDENT MOBILITY OPPORTUNITIES?

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What are the barriers that students face to access international opportunities? The campfire session will be organised as a focus group to reflect together on barriers to EU opportunities and fostering awareness on EU citizenship and the benefits that it brings.

ESN is currently running a large-scale project on the Erasmus Generation in Action, understanding why young people don't take part in EU opportunities is key- we will discuss the different barriers and how rights are transferred for mobile citizens.

ABSTRACT S2:
ErasmusCareers: HELPING STUDENTS WITH THE DESIGN OF THEIR LEARNING CYCLES

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Adela Smejkalova, Vice President for Development of Erasmus Student Network, Belgium

The session will reflect on the International Student Lifecycle to better support student experiences and improve the learning of International students. We will reflect on how their mobility experience impacts their learning experience and how to support the identification of skills, knowledge and attitudes gained abroad.

Furthermore, the project will discuss how to reflect on these topics to offer better support to students and ensure this is reflected in their career progression.

ABSTRACT S3:
GREEN ERASMUS - HOW TO MAKE THE ERASMUS PROGRAMME MORE ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY?

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The Green Erasmus project strives to improve the environmental sustainability of the Erasmus+ Programme by raising awareness across the European Higher Education sector and empowering student organisations to be the agents of change. We will introduce some of the material that is in development for universities:
a handbook and an educational framework for sustainable internationalisation,
Educational material for students and a petition for young people.
toolkits and activities for sustainable practices by and for students are the ambitious outputs of this project that aim at offering a holistic approach to the complex challenge of aligning internationalisation with sustainability.

ABSTRACT S4:
INTERNATIONAL STUDENT HOUSING: HOW TO IMPROVE THE SITUATION OF MOBILE STUDENTS BY FOSTERING HEI/ESN COLLABORATION?

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The housing situation of international students is one of the main problems in exchanges. Following the latest snap survey done by ESN and ESU, we now have a better picture of the main challenges faced by students, and it is now time to move to action! In this session, we will learn more about the findings of the housing survey and work together on initiatives to improve housing for exchange students in Europe.

WORKSHOPS – 20 minutes

ABSTRACT EWS1:
THINGS TO REMEMBER WHEN ORGANIZING A BIP

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The workshop will offer a comprehensive and informative session on organizing and sending participants to BIP, introducing a valuable tool created for this purpose. The workshop will consist of three parts, with the first part focusing on a detailed case study of a BIP, covering mistakes made, best practices, and ideas for before, during, and after the program. The second part will delve into the Erasmus Blended Mobility Handbook (https://wikis.ec.europa.eu/display/NAITDOC/Higher+Education+Mobility+Handbook), highlighting lesser-known but crucial aspects of the guide, such as the ability to transfer unallocated BIP financing to other categories, and the option to mix students and staff despite BM regulations. A source link will be provided for further reference. The third and final part will introduce www.erasmusbip.org, a database of BIP opportunities for staff and students, exploring how to use it effectively and the benefits of accessing STA experts from other universities to teach during the BIP. A Q&A session will be held during the workshop to encourage discussion and provide answers to any queries or concerns. Overall, the workshop aims to equip participants with the necessary knowledge and tools to effectively organize and send participants to BIP, ensuring a successful and fulfilling experience for all involved.

This workshop relates to Erasmus Good Practices and is aimed to help organize or participate in Blended Intensive Programs.

ABSTRACT EWS2:
KEY ACTION 2 PARTNERSHIPS FOR COOPERATION - THE NEW THE LUMP SUM FUNDING MODEL

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The workshop aims to offer by a practical approach a methodological guidance on how to interpret and correctly follow the new rules of the Cooperation Partnerships and Small-scale Partnerships actions, as described in the Erasmus+ Programme Guide, under 'Erasmus+ Key Action 2 – Partnerships for Cooperation' managed by National Agencies (decentralised actions). It provides indications covering the entire project life-cycle, from the preparation and presentation of the application to the management of the project, reporting and controls. This workshop is intended for future applicants of projects and partners who want to understand better the new rules driven by the lump sum criteria as well as for current beneficiaries running projects who wish to have clarified the numerous doubts arisen by the first months of application of the new rules.

ABSTRACT EWS3:
WOMEN IN TECH: LET'S BREAK THE SILICON CEILING!

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According to a study that was conducted by McKinsey in 2015, companies that have a bigger diversity have a possibility that is 35% higher of producing better profits. And despite the fact that research backs up the significance of the aforementioned, the cold, hard facts demonstrate that the engineering sciences, and more specifically microelectronics, are fields in which there is a relatively small percentage of women working. As a result, Europe underutilizes women's skillsets and ways of thinking in these sectors, while industrialists in the area are weak in skills and have a huge number of employment openings that are difficult to fill.

Ensuring the continuous flow of highly skilled women from STEM education to the deeptech sector through a new long-term European Action Plan and based on partnerships between key stakeholders will increase the industry's ability for innovation due to their differing perspectives on management, growth development concepts and methods. Extraordinary ideas are more likely to emerge in environments that are diverse and feature a wide range of identities, experiences, and points of view.

Bringing more women into the sector will raise levels of creativity and employee engagement. A DEIS environment in microelectronics to support more collaborative working environments, assisting women and young people in their immediate surroundings, increasing the number of women in decision-making positions to assist businesses in transforming themselves and achieving "deep impact".

ABSTRACT EWS3:
ERASMUS+ INTERNATIONAL CREDIT MOBILITY: AN OPPORTUNITY AND A CHALLENGE FOR CYPRIOT HEIS

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Erasmus+ International Credit Mobility offers opportunities for higher education institutions to participate in student and staff exchanges with partner universities located outside the 27 EU and the third countries associated to the programme. The program provides financial support to facilitate these exchanges and to promote collaboration and networking between institutions. For over 35 years, Europe has funded the Erasmus programme, enabling over three million European HE students to study, train, and gain experience abroad. European Commission recognises the importance of opening up these opportunities. As such, in the framework of the current programme period 2021-2027, the international activities cover Higher Education (HE), Vocational Education and Training (VET), Youth and Sport. In this framework, International Credit Mobility, as a form of cross-border education, has so far proved to be one of the most significant innovations of Erasmus+, in Higher Education, as it offers a new model and challenge to improve HE quality. However, there are a number of gaps and limitations to its practise that need to be further addressed. On the one hand, ICM enables a transparency system for recognition and strengthens accountability of HEIs, it redefines the processes of internationalization, and it empowers the building of bridges with partner countries and vice versa through cooperation. On the other hand, the current ICM structure shows a number of significant limitations, which inevitably limit its full potential. Building sustainable academic relations and achieving systemic effects is hindered by high bureaucratic burden, especially concerning visas, lack of proper institutional involvement and often little or no involvement of the respective IROs in the management of ICM. What is more, little experience of local staff in the application and selection procedures, in line with national regulations and EC transparency requirements, add to the limitations of the mobilities. Taking to account the responses of the submitted Participant Reports, on behalf of the incoming and outgoing beneficiaries from/to Cyprus HEIs, as well as the feedback received from the IRO staff of the Cypriot HEIs, we aim to provide a framework for further understanding of the limitations and gaps in ICM, while focusing on its potential opportunities. We expect to find the following limitations both at a macro-level and at a micro-level: Cypriot HEIs are currently concentrating in implementing the novelties brought about by the current framework of 2021/2027, namely inclusion and digitalization that are connected to the Erasmus Charter and are considered pressure points. The technical

complications of EU tools delaying efficient management, in addition with the shortage of Staff of the IRO office, as well as the absence of a top down, long-term strategy on the part of National Authorities, result in the difficulty of absorption of the available budget related to the action and a limitation of actual mobilities. The significance and implications of this study will further enable us to push for a more flexible National approach, especially with reference to entry permits and EU protocols. The support of a flexible budget management during project- implementation, with the option for shorter blended mobilities (5-30 days) to individuals with fewer opportunities, the opening up of traineeships to recent graduates, as well as the availability of flexible format for doctoral candidates, are expected to further increase the mobilities under ICM.

References: (2023) Erasmus+ EU programme for education, training, youth and sport **https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/**

ERACON PRESENTATIONS

ABSTRACT EP1:
ARE VIRTUAL MOBILITIES FOR STUDENTS STILL AN OPTION IN A POST-PANDEMIC WORLD:
CASE STUDY OF UNITA EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY ALLIANCE

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In the context of the current Covid-19 pandemic and beyond, Higher Education Institutions are experimenting with and developing more and more new forms of mobility. Among these, virtual mobilities have gained serious ground during the past months. However, the virtual mobilities for students have encountered a drawback in the European University Alliance UNITA.

My presentation will focus on presenting the results of the pilot phase of the initiative "UNITA Virtual Mobility" developed within the UNITA European University Alliance, an alliance of 6 universities from 5 European countries, located in rural, mountainous, and cross-border regions of the Romance language. With the results gained after the first round of selection, I will try to focus on the current status quo of virtual mobilities and explain the fluctuations in the number of applicants.

The presentation will display a twofold perspective analysis. On the one hand, it will focus on the student experience during virtual mobility with conclusions drawn from the cohorts of UNITA students who pursued virtual mobility during the 2020-2021, 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 academic years. On the other hand, it will bring to front the Higher Education Institutions perspective in organizing the initiative, trying to focus not only the opportunities but also the challenges that surfaced during the 3-year period of implementation of the "UNITA Virtual Mobility" initiative.

ABSTRACT EP2:
ERASMUS STUDY MOBILITY – AN OPPORTUNITY FOR STUDIES OR A STRUGGLE FOR EQUABILITY?

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Over the centuries education has evolved and strived for its improvement and wider accessibility and so has the EU Erasmus+ programme for the last thirty six years of its existence. Being the EU's most successful flagship programme for education, training and sports, it can boast of its most recent refinement i.e. the Erasmus Dashboard, which is to help individual student mobilities and to "save our environment, save our future."

Laudable as such changes are, the most fundamental pillar of the programme, which is student exchange, still gives rise to certain questions or even controversies amongst its participants and Erasmus coordinators alike. The Erasmus+ programme promotes equality and inclusion as well as it teaches its participants transparency and fairness. The discrepancy in allotting a number of ECTS points in the policy of particular universities and even countries for the same modules leaves many Erasmus+ successful applicants in astonishment and a feeling of injustice.

This paper attempts to compare and contrast the same courses with a number of ECTS points awarded for them from some selected Universities participating in the Erasmus+ programme with a view to eliciting an answer to the question whether such inconsistencies exist sporadically. Should it prove to be a universal problem, the paper will attempt to look into possible remedies that can be applied in order to make the Erasmus+ programme fairer and more equitable.

Erasmus+

ABSTRACT EP3:
PEER-IR-VIEW PROJECT – AN EFFICIENT SOLUTION FOR INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS OFFICES (IROs) TO RETAIN THEIR EXPERTISE AND DEVELOP COMPETENCES

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The internationalization is at the core of most universities' strategy and related activities are believed to lead HEIs to international renown. This goes hand in hand with demands for quality in education, research, services, and management. In this context, the emergence of new tasks and the need for new competencies/skills oblige universities to (re)train permanent staff, or to rely on competencies-based recruitment. Given this context, Peer-IR-View project has two main objectives: 1) preserve knowledge at the university in the field of International Relations (IR) by developing knowledge management tools, and 2) gain the skills necessary for efficient internationalization by developing a peer-assistance system in order to retain and improve the quality of activity and project management. Peer-IR-View project is improving the capacity of International Relations Offices (IRO) by developing IR competence and preserving IR knowledge, thus building new skills and capabilities to support the necessary organisational transformations, to meet expectations from funding bodies, and to improve knowledge retention. It let IR experts improve the capacity of IROs to overcome their challenges. The partners involved in the project are members of the EUNICE European University - alliance which consists of 7 universities from Finland, Poland, Belgium, Spain, Italy, Germany and France. Peer-IR-View project activities can easily be transferred and adapted to other structures within an organization. Guidelines developed serve other partners to reuse and implement them in their own institution. The results of the project and developed solutions will be available to a wider audience to exchange experiences and support IR activities globally.

ABSTRACT EP5:
INTERNATIONAL SIGN AS A LINGUA FRANCA: A WAY TO PROMOTE INCLUSIVE EDUCATION OF DEAF STUDENTS IN INTERNATIONAL SETTINGS

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Sign languages are visual-spatial languages that emerged from the natural interaction between deaf people. Despite they share common characteristics they are different from each other. Thus, creates significant barriers in communication between deaf from different nationalities. Deaf students are a special group in European higher education that is strongly affected by these barriers and thus are excluded from the globalized world and international education and mobility. International Sign is a signing system recognized as a lingua franca between deaf people who do not share a common language. Raising awareness and promoting preliminary contact with International Sign, at an early age in a school environment might be a significant contribution to open the global world of education and mobility to the deaf community. This paper discusses International Sign as a lingua franca to promote inclusive education of deaf students and presents to our knowledge the first International Sign course developed based on the CEFR framework.

Erasmus+

ABSTRACT EP6:
SCIENCE DIPLOMACY AND INTERNATIONALIZATION: A CASE STUDY FROM İZMİR INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

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Science and technology have been progressively incorporated into global challenges including climate change, health, and security in recent years, making the function of science diplomacy more crucial. The idea of science diplomacy places an emphasis on using research and technology as a means of developing international collaboration and advancing diplomacy between nations. The American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) elaborated on the three usages of science diplomacy in their "New Frontiers in Science Diplomacy" Report published in 2010: i) informing foreign policy objectives with scientific advice (science in diplomacy), ii) facilitating international science cooperation (diplomacy for science), and iii) using science cooperation to improve international relations between countries (science for diplomacy). This paper will discuss how İzmir Institute of Technology (IZTECH) operates science diplomacy and internationalization in all of these three dimensions. With the aim of working towards the solutions of global challenges such as food, energy, and water crisis, IZTECH has announced the renewable energy, biotechnology, nanotechnology, and architecture & design as priority research topics in its strategic plan. IZTECH has strong memberships in global networks working for these priorities. IZTECH is a Center of Excellence in UNESCO-TWAS (The World Academy of Sciences) that allows the distinguished visiting researchers from the developing countries to visit for doing research at IZTECH. The Institute also holds a UNESCO Chair of Biotechnology and Innovation for Sustainable Development. IZTECH has been granted Special Accreditation for UN Water Conference 2023 and is member of EERA-European Energy Research Alliance (with its Geothermal Joint Group and Energy Storage Joint Group). Thanks to the strategy of internationalization focusing on science diplomacy, and the effectiveness of activities conducted under that strategy, IZTECH has received the "Internationalization Strategy of the Year" Award of the Times Higher Education Awards Asia in 2022.

ABSTRACT EP7:
ERASMUS WITHOUT PAPER: FROM DREAM TO REALITY - HOW LESSONS LEARNED STRENGHTEN THE WAY FORWARD

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After years of work, 2022 was the year in which Erasmus Without Paper (EWP) became a concrete reality. Many Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) transitioned to digitally exchange Inter-Institutional Agreements (IIAs) and Learning Agreements (LAs). An assessment report published in November revealed that EWP works for the overwhelming majority of HEIs connected to the EWP network. Since then, almost all remaining interoperability issues have been resolved through testing with the systems in question.

Much has been achieved since the beginning of 2022. The EWP+ Consortium focused on putting in place adequate support, governance, and technical measures. This to ensure EWP can meet both the needs and expectations of the higher education community. Understanding where we came from, and how the EWP+ Consortium addressed some of the hurdles that became apparent in early 2022, adds to our collective understanding of the state of play of the EWP ecosystem. At the same time, it is essential to not lose sight of the needs of the HEI community.

Crossing over into 2023, the question arises what is next? What are the lessons learned of digitising the exchange of IIAs and LA? This session will look back at the successes of 2022 and the lessons learned. This is essential as we look to how our shared experiences can reinforce the key goal: To ensure that no-one is left behind. The EWP+ Consortium aims at effectively addressing the problems HEIs may still be facing, while at the same time, paving the way forward.

ABSTRACT EP8:
ERASMUS+ MOBILITY BAROMETER 2023: A REPORT
ABOUT ERASMUS+ MOBILITY IN THE YEARS 2021-2022
INCLUDING SUMMER OF 2022

Emma Zeniou, Vice president of EAEC-European Association of Erasmus Coordinators, Cyprus
Panel guest: Vito Borrelli, European Commission, DG Education and Culture Erasmus+ Higher education Team leader

2022 marks the 35th years of existence of Erasmus+, the EU flagship programme for education, training youth and sport. With a budget of some €26 billion, Erasmus+ 2021-2027 offers more mobility and cooperation opportunities than ever before.

A survey questionnaire has been developed in cooperation with the ERASMUS+ Unit of the European Commission, addressed to the Erasmus+ officers in the Universities and HEIs that manage the Erasmus+ mobility activities and has covered the mobility period from September 2021 to August 2022, as follows:

- mobility within the programme countries (KA131)
- international outgoing mobility o partner countries (KA131)
- mobility between programme and partner countries (KA171)
- blended mobility and
- Erasmus goes digital

The Barometer results seek to represent the experiences and challenges identified in the management of the Erasmus+ mobility activities, by the International Relations offices of the Universities, and tries to outline some recommendations and good practices based on what we have learned so far. In the years to follow, the annual results will be compared to previous years.

ABSTRACT EP9:
26 YEARS OF ERASMUS IN ROMANIA

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Changing mentalities is no easy task! To aim at this, education seems to be by far the most effective way. But educators are often preys of their own mentality. So, first you should change educators. Educators can be changed by widening their field of knowledge. It is, indeed, a slow process.

Since 1987 the Erasmus Programmes provided the best conditions for acquaintance of new living and learning environments. Romania started this process in 1997, shyly at first, but with obviously better results each of the following years. And, indeed, what could be more efficient than finding out how other people do: how they live, how they learn, how they spend their money, how they earn their money, what organisation patterns they have...?

In Romania, interest in the Erasmus+ program is constantly maintained at high levels, well above the European average. According to the monitoring data of the European Commission, our country has the highest ratio between the number of submitted applications and the number of financed projects (3 to 1) among all the EU states participating in the program.

For 2021-2027 the program aims to boost the development of strategic approaches among organizations with a view to digital transformation, the inclusion of people with limited opportunities, as well as the integration of "green" sustainability principles.

ABSTRACT EP10:
THE IMPACT OF ERASMUS PROGRAMS ON UNIVERSITY IBN ZOHR IN MOROCCO

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Education is one of the tools to promote human values and to foster understandning between ethnic groups, religious gatherings and between nations. Education unites where politics divides, education is built on accepting difference whereas politics seeks ideological concensus.

Cooperation between European Union (EU) and non-EU universities seems very important and can take many forms, including joint research projects, student and faculty exchange programs, joint degree programs, and collaboration on academic conferences and publications.

One of the key benefits of such cooperation is the exchange of knowledge and expertise, which can help to enhance the quality of education and research at both institutions from different backgrounds. It can also provide opportunities for students and faculty to gain international experience and develop new skills, which can be valuable in their future careers.

Our study focuses on the impact of interntional cooperation namely Erasmus programs on teaching and research activities at the University Ibn Zohr in Morocco with EU universities in the last dacade.Besides the quantitative analysis, the multiplier effect as an outcome of the erasmus programs is highlighted wether in terms of programs regenerated or any other partnership actions that resulted from this exhange.

In addition to academic benefits, the study tries to go beyond the academic impact to overview the openness on the other and personel development of the benificiaries.

ABSTRACT EP11:
ERASMUS GENERATION PORTAL

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ESN is bunding all information about mobility opportunities on Erasmus Generation, a portal for students, by students, that has testimonials, in depth stories and a grant simulator for the students. We will present shortly what the portal is currently holding and what can be added in the future.

ABSTRACT EP12:
HOW TO USE STUDENT DATA TO IMPROVE EXPERIENCES?

Adela Smejkalova, Vice President for Development of Erasmus Student Network, Belgium

Gathering student impressions and analysing how the students perceive their mobility experience, but also understanding why students might be less motivated to participate in mobility are key. ESN will discuss some of the findings of ESNsurvey, a research project that has been running since 2005 and has collected over 250.000 student answers. In 2023 the XVth edition will be running over the summer, and we want to discuss the current priorities for 2023.

ABSTRACT EP13:
STEAME-ACADEMY: STEAME Teacher Facilitators Academy

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As one of the key factors that can develop competences and skills in school students, especially in grades 6-12, is the known multidiscipline and multi-science project based learning activity. In the last 15 years we have seen the development from STEM to STEAM and now to STEAME (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Mathematics and Entrepreneurship) becoming the subject set that through project based learning activity of school students, is considered the kinetic energy for producing the creators and innovators of the future.

This project will develop a model through a STEAME Teacher Facilitators Academies networked through a European Federation of such Academies at the local level, which will support the change to the future schools with main actors the teacher facilitators as the future professionals and experts of learning change and facilitators of competence and skills development in youth.

The main innovations to be delivered by this project are:

1. STEAME Teacher Facilitators Competence Framework for student and serving teachers
2. STEAME Teacher Facilitators Learning Modules/Workshops
3. International Sharing Observatory for STEAME Learning Facilitators
4. Development of the STEAME Facilitators Community of Practice/Mentoring and Certification Programme
5. Policy Recommendations – European Federation of STEAME Teacher Facilitators Academies

The 5 innovations listed above will serve the continuous professional development of teachers enhancing also the European Dimension and internationalization of teachers, facilitating the European wide mentoring to support mobility of teachers and place teachers in the path to Education 3.0 and 4.0, all for producing the creators of the future.

ABSTRACT EP14:
EVALUATION AND QUALITY ASSURANCE IN A EUROPEAN DIMENSION: FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS FOR THE ACADEMIC WORLD

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In a competitive global transnational context, the role of evaluation and quality assurance of Higher Education Institutions is increasingly relevant for Education providers, economic actors and policymakers, as well. An integrated approach that can provide synergies among Higher Education Institutions self-assessment methods and accreditation measures, which appear redundant and overlapping, can create the condition for synergies among different instruments as well as a solid base for their further application and enhancement. The paper provides an in-depth reflection on quality assurance measures and instruments that already exist and are used by Higher Education Institutions within the European Higher Education Area. Starting from the main research results of national experimentations, the aim is to illustrate how the European Peer Review methodology can be considered as an agile methodology for the different Higher Education settings since it adapts swiftly to diverse training and education needs and provides quality learning opportunities for those that use it alike. Finally, placing a strong focus on the flexibility of the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG 2015), the paper reinforces the idea to further explore the existing European tools for refining their adaptation in order to improve Higher Education Institutions evaluation and guarantee a continuing development of quality assurance, in line also with the digital and green transitions that affect all the European Education systems.

Key Words: evaluation, quality assurance, higher education.
The abstract is linked to the following main themes of the Congress:
- *Track 1: EU 2030 Strategy*
- *Track 2: Academic Innovation*

ABSTRACT EP15:
THE ECOLHE ERASMUS + PROJECT AND THE UNIVERSITY TO THE TEST OF DIGITAL TEACHING AND LEARNING: THE ITALIAN CASE

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The increase in the use of online training determined by the pandemic highlights as never before the need and the urgency for the university to deal with the digital revolution, which has been supported by European Community for more than twenty years. The study is a part of the output of a larger research project on e-learning in the European Higher Education Area, performed by an international strategic partnership co-financed by ERASMUS + (ECOLHE, Project Code: 2020-1-IT02-KA203-079176), aiming to investigate the way universities promote innovation and digital challenge in their learning-teaching processes. For this reason, the project realizes *multiple case studies* in order to reconstruct the experiences, practices and skills of teachers, researchers and university staff, with the aim of promoting a digital culture, through a multi-stakeholder approach, capable of taking into account the systemic complexity introduced by ICT, transforming social and organizational practices, contexts and learning models. The research hypothesis is based on the idea that the availability of the technological infrastructure is not sufficient to guarantee a correct use of learning and knowledge technologies among professors, learners and researchers. The preliminary results of the Italian case show the lights and shadows of a process that has actually been running for a long time but is bound by a stop and go and double speed process.

ABSTRACT EP16:
MASTER IN SMART TRANSPORT AND LOGISTICS FOR CITIES - SMALOG

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The analysis carried out in cooperation with Local Universities (LU), city and national authorities, stakeholders, during ah-hoc meetings, highlighted the need to improve transport services in Georgia (GE) and Ukraine (UA), benefiting of the new opportunities offered by telematics. But a lack of experience on planning, management and control of these services emerged in GE & UA,also due to inadequate academic paths for supporting exploitation and dissemination of smart transport culture, including the limits of their research and their limited international relationships.Then, SmaLog aims to transfer to GE & UA the most recent knowledge and good practices developed within the European Countries in the field of smart urban transport and logistics, holding the challenges supplied by new technologies. LUs are the key-actors to start and consolidate this process.

Therefore, the proposal aims to:
- develop and test in GE&UA 2-year University Masters (120 ECTS), both for Engineering and Economics faculties;
- support LU in defining and delivering the Masters;
- support the implementation in LU laboratories dedicated to smart urban transport;
- disseminate through the newsletters, events, workshops, seminars the importance of research in urban transport and logistics exploiting the new technologies;
- set up national coordinated networks of UNIs, public bodies, private companies and NGOs involving them in the wider European network of research centres on smart urban transport and logistics.

These aims will be achieved thanks to a mix of activities such as: education, training, conferences and public events, web based dissemination and exploitation activities.The main outputs are:
- masters in smart transport and logistics for cities formally approved;
- internationalization of research on smart transport and logistics for cities;
- urban smart transport and logistics networks in GE and UA;
- implementation of local laboratories on urban smart transport and logistics

ABSTRACT EP17:
RURAL SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN TRANSYLVANIA ERASMUS BLENDED INTENSIVE PROGRAM

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The spring school program entitled Rural Sustainable Tourism in Transylvania lasts for working 5 days spent in Cluj-Napoca and in rural areas of Transylvania and consists of lectures, workshops, and case studies concerning rural tourism, economics, innovation, and competitiveness, all in view of sustainable development. Both the students and professors participated in workshops organized in cooperation with local entrepreneurs, take sightseeing tours, and discovered successful business examples in rural destinations that have managed to capitalize on the natural and cultural heritage. The goal of the program is to foster collaboration and exchange of ideas among students and professors in an intercultural and multidisciplinary environment. Students learned more information about Transylvania and its rich history and multicultural heritage.

ABSTRACT EP18:
INNOVATIVE COMPETENCE IN ONLINE HIGHER EDUCATION - INCOMP

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The InCompEdu project tackles the common challenges in the sudden switch to online teaching at the HEI in the EU, due to COVID-19, by identifying and sharing the good practices, knowledge and experience gained at the partner universities and beyond. The challenges include both mastering of new digital skills and the methodologies of creating and conducting online courses. The project consortium involves 6 academic partners from 6 different countries, that is, Croatia, Finland, Italy, Poland, Romania and Slovenia, led by the University of Gdansk, Poland.

The target groups to be addressed are the community of academic teachers and HEI Authorities responsible for study programmes. These groups have been forced to make rapid changes in course programs and teaching methods. The project's activities will focus on two aspects, that is, digital competence of academic teachers, and the development of new competences in creation and implementation of online/hybrid courses and innovative curricula.

ABSTRACT EP19:

Building Up Digital Strategists – BUDS & Procurement: digital Tools for sustainable Goals - ProcToGo

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The wider context for both projects is determined by the impact that Digital Transformation and Green/Sustainable Transition will have on the economic growth of Europe, highlighting in one hand the role of the Management Consulting industry as a key enabler of digital transformation processes and in the other hand the role of the public and private procurement as a powerful driver for change.

In both areas there is a relevant gap between the strong demand coming from the job market and the limited availability of training opportunities for students in higher education institutions. Moreover they are focused areas where a micro-credential approach can be effectively deployed to identify and certify relevant skills.

BUDS and ProcToGo have both designed, developed and launched open access e-learning contents relevant to their topic. These contents can be accessed either as an integrated course on an open-edX platform or as individual lectures on Youtube.

BUDS and ProcToGo have carried out blended experiential-based intensive trainings relevant to their topic. These training include an initial online module on the platform to create a common background, then a one-week residential summer school with classes and a group project simulating a real consulting/procurement assignment.

Both projects include relevant guidelines: in the case of BUDS, guidelines for the design of blended courses and design format; in the case of ProcToGo, guidelines for a micro-credential framework.

As a result, these two projects are providing learners with the skills required by the labour market as well as are providing higher education instructors and administrative staff with new open access contents for their course as well as guidelines for the design of innovative courses.

CAREER-EU PRESENTATIONS

ABSTRACT CP1:
EMPLOYABILITY AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT IN STEM EDUCATION

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Purpose
In the age of artificial intelligence and ChatGPT, STEM educational institutions and universities have a crucial mission to equip their students with future career skills. Accordingly, this study assesses the employability skills perspective of employers and STEM students. Additionally, it evaluates the impact of career development education in STEM educational institutions on students' capability to construct their careers.

Design/methodology/approach
This study adopted a longitudinal comparative mixed-method research approach. The quantitative data were collected using a survey to assess employers' and STEM education students' perspectives on employability and future career skills. Besides, the researchers qualitatively analyzed employers' mock interviews of STEM students to assess the effect of career development education on STEM students' career construction capabilities.

Findings
There is a gap between employers and STEM students' perspectives on employability skills and future career skills. Additionally, equipping STEM students with career education positively impacts their capabilities in constructing their careers.

Practical implications
This paper represents a guide for all higher education stakeholders on dedicating more resources to developing career development educational programs. Additionally, it is a call for them to construct career development programs to narrow the employability skills gap between employers and students, which will narrow the gap between graduates' competencies and job market requirements.

Originality/value
This paper narrows the gap between employers and STEM students' perspectives on future career skills. Moreover, it evaluates the impact of career development education on STEM graduates and highlights the current gaps in career development education that exist in STEM educational institutions internationally.