

Overall appreciation of French philology study programs in Lithuania

French philology study programs are implemented in only three universities, Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas (VMU), Lithuanian University of Educational sciences (LUES) and Vilnius University (VU) in the capital. It is important that a provincial university is able to offer this possibility because if all the curricula were gathered in Vilnius, students who do not live in the capital could be discouraged, even though the territory of the country is not so large. Considering the low number of students who enrol in French philology - around 75 students has been admitted in 2011-2012- it does not seem reasonable to open new programs but it is crucial that the existing programs maintain at least the current number that has been stable for a few years, and, possibly, increase slightly this number. The three universities now accept students who have not learned French language at school ; thanks to this politics, more students can be admitted into French philology programs and thus respond to the needs of the country. French is not only a main component of humanist heritage, it is also a way to get access to science and technology. In fact, it is worth underlining that French is taught in 450 Lithuanian schools, and that more than 30000 pupils and students are learning French, but less than the half of the departments of the country give French courses ; it can be also observed that the number of French enterprises has been constantly increasing. So there is a good potential for employing French speaking graduates.

It could be observed that each university has been able to define its own profile and specificity : VMU puts the focus on practice in French business language to make the graduates able to work in business, culture and tourism enterprises in the EU and Lithuanian institutions, translation agencies and publishing houses ; LUES is specialised in didactics and the main objective is to train teachers in French ; VU maintains the tradition of European Humanities, and aims to train highly qualified specialists who will be able to continue in Master studies in the same subject area or related areas. This complementarity between the three universities makes a good balance in the academic landscape.

Many positive points have been pointed out during the visit of the experts. The description of the courses show a good understanding and use of the learning outcomes, with a good attention paid to the generic or transversal competencies, and the allocation of the credits is basically correct, even though it is not always clear if the feedback from student questionnaires is used to estimate correctly the workload, and if the assessment method is well adapted to the expected leaning outcomes. All the same, the curriculum designs respond to the

main standards of the Bologna process. As a whole the curricula are coherent and well designed, taking into consideration the character of study subjects and their interdisciplinary links, with a good balance between theoretical and practical courses.

The learning resources are quite sufficient ; most classrooms contain modern furnishing and up to date technical equipment, and thanks to the development of data bases students can find the documentation they need. However, students need some training for using the e. resources with benefit, and this training could be integrated in the curriculum design.

In most cases, the teachers involved in the programs are researchers in their fields ; they publish papers in Lithuanian (mostly) and foreign journals. They seem dynamic, motivated, sensible to ethical commitment ; students are generally satisfied with the quality of teaching. Because of the low number of students, the student to teacher ratio is more than sufficient, and students can be trained in good conditions. However, teachers should put more focus on the final work quality assurance, especially at Master level, and team work should be enhanced in setting standards of quality.

The study process is well managed : the admission criteria are clear and known by students ; surveys are made in order to track the quality of study process ; there are basic social, financial and informational support provided for the students.

So as to reach the highest standards of quality, three main recommendations can be made. The first one, is to reinforce mobility both for students and teachers. The potential of the different Erasmus programs is not fully exploited for student mobility, and more free time should be given for teachers to go abroad. In the same direction, internationalization of the curricula, especially at master's level, should be enhanced, for instance by developing joined programs. The second recommendation is to increase at the most the number of courses given in French, especially at master's level. The last, but not the least important, recommendation concerns research and the international influence of the academics. The scientific activities are real but seem too individualistic, and not all the papers are being published in international reviews. Team activities are absent, because research centers are missing. This is a crucial issue, especially to assure the quality of the master and doctoral programs. A solution should be that the three universities collaborate and merge human resources and funds so as to create a common research unit with specific programs.

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