

2016 IPB ICM annual report

April 2017

Project Erasmus+ KA107 2015-1-PT01-KA107-012870

1. About ICM

The major aim of the International Credit Mobility (ICM) project is the consolidation of the ongoing cooperation between the Polytechnic Institute of Bragança (IPB) and the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) outside EU, particularly to promote student mobility for double diploma (DD) and staff development on the European HE best-practices, and to improve the management and operation of partner HEIs in international relations capacities.

IPB is recognized as one of the Portuguese HEIs with best performance in international cooperation and multiculturalism in HE. The project enhances this experience and shares these best-practices outside EU, reinforcing the role of IPB and Portugal in the Erasmus+ Programme, and contributing to a sustainable development of partner countries in the field of HE.

The ICM project foresees incoming and outgoing flows of both students and staff. Emphasis is placed on the incoming flows, with the following purposes:

- a) **Incoming student mobility:** apart of the expected international mobility with credit recognition at the partner HEI, priority is given to mobility for double diploma projects;
- b) **Incoming staff mobility:** IPB organizes intensive programmes (IP) joining the staff of the partner HEIs. The IP introduces the EU and the Portuguese HE systems, the ECTS, the mobility tools and the recognition procedures, and supports the ongoing double diploma projects, including meetings with students and teachers, seminars and co-supervision activities;
- c) **Outgoing staff mobility:** the mobility of the IPB staff is used to spread the project at the partner HEIs and to support the application of the best-practices for the selection of participants, the correct use of the mobility tools, and the recognition of their mobility periods;
- d) **Outgoing student mobility:** priority is given to the international mobility of IPB's master students, for a 5-month period, including co-supervised research activities as the first attempt for reciprocal double diploma programmes.

The project is designed also for partners outside the Erasmus+ ICM funding, as the result of bilateral cooperation agreements for double diploma.

2. 2015/2016 ICM Partners:

Eastern Partnership:

Armenia: National Polytechnic University of Armenia (NPUA)

Azerbaijan: Qafqaz University (QU)

Belarus: Belarus State Economic University (BSEU)

Georgia: International Black Sea University (IBSU)

Georgia: Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University (TSU)

Moldova: State Agrarian University of Moldova (SAUM)

Ukraine: Lutsk National Technical University (LNTU)

South-Mediterranean:

Algeria: University Hassiba Benbouali of Chlef (UHBC)

Morocco: Institut Agronomique et Vétérinaire Hassan II (IAV)

Tunisia: Institut Supérieur de Biotechnologie de Monastir (ISBM)

Latin America:

Brazil: Universidade Tecnológica Federal do Paraná (UTFPR)

3. Monitoring

IPB and ICM partners agreed to monitor and to evaluate the ICM project outcomes, using performance metrics, evaluation and satisfaction surveys to IPB and partners' students and staff, as well as visits by IPB staff to partners HEIs.

Table 1 presents the different issues monitored and evaluated, followed by a resume about the main conclusions and recommendations for future corrective and improvement actions.

Table 1. Issues and tools for monitoring and evaluation.

Issue	Metrics	Surveys	Visits
Student selection			
Staff selection			
Gender parity			
Disadvantaged and special needs participants			
Language support			
Students' academic success			
Impact of co-supervision			
Recognition at home HEI			
DD awarding			
IPB ICM meeting training			
Support given by IPB's IRO			

3.1. Student selection:

Partner HEIs were responsible for the selection of their students, following the agreed criteria: a) students should be enrolled in the partner HEI in the area and study cycle defined in the agreement; b) have finished the number of curricular years and credits requested for mobility, mainly for DD programmes; c) be proficient in Portuguese or English (B2 level). The IPB's visits generally confirmed the transparency of the selection processes and that the students' curricula, their academic record, and their motivation for mobility were valued in the selection process. Nevertheless, some partners referred the short time given for the selection process (EU report on ICM project for the Azerbaijani partner). IPB proposes the results of each annual application to be published earlier so the student selection process can be carried out accordingly and all support to be given before student mobility to IPB.

3.2. Staff selection:

Partner HEIs were responsible for the selection of their staff representatives at the 2016 IPB ICM Meeting, following the agreed criteria: a) the grants for teaching mobility should be awarded to professors with co-supervision activities at IPB within the ICM project, the partner professors will also participate with seminars to ICM and Portuguese students in the same area of the double diploma project; b) the grants for training mobility should be awarded to deans, professors or non-teaching staff in charge with the ICM project management at the partner HEI, particularly the mobility tools and recognition procedures. The IPB globally confirmed that the staff selection processes at partner HEIs followed the agreed criteria, and it should be fully applied to all partners in the ICM upcoming editions. IPB also confirmed that partner HEIs recognized the staff mobility within their professional activities and career development.

3.3. Gender parity:

55% of students selected for ICM mobility were women. 40% of staff selected for ICM mobility were women. The correspondent values for the partnership outside the Erasmus+ ICM funding (with Brazil in 2015/2016) were 78% and 45%, respectively. These values ensure gender parity. Nevertheless, some countries presented unbalanced numbers in what relates the gender parity in student mobility (Algeria) and in staff mobility (Algeria, Azerbaijan, Morocco). The partners are suggested to balance these numbers in the upcoming ICM editions.

3.4. Disadvantaged and special needs participants:

No occurrence in the 2015/2016 edition. IPB Campus is being adapted to special needs students and a tutor will be appointed when needed. Partner students from disadvantaged backgrounds or with special needs are encouraged to participate.

3.5. Language support:

All programmes used in the ICM project are lectured in English. Free intensive (first week of mobility) and semester Portuguese courses are offered to all ICM partner students at IPB. ICM students can also attend English courses during both semesters at IPB. 60% of the ICM students attending the Portuguese courses considered it “Excellent” and 33% “Very good”. 91% of the ICM students considered their English language competences were enough for mobility (data available at the annex “IPB 2015/2016 ICM Student Mobility: satisfaction survey”).

3.6. Students' academic success:

The academic success of the ICM double diploma project was attained for all the students involved (see Annex I on “Global performance metrics”). When needed, extra pedagogic support and assessment was implemented during the mobility period at IPB. Additional issues have been evaluated by the ICM students: 100% consider the access to IPB libraries and study materials, as well as the access to IPB’s e-learning platform as “Excellent” or “Very good”. The degree of integration with the other Erasmus and international students at IPB was also evaluated and considered as “Excellent” or “Very good” by 95% of the ICM students. This value was of 76% concerning the integration with the Portuguese students.

3.7. Impact of co-supervision:

The students’ study plan for DD at IPB includes a bachelor final project or a master dissertation, with co-supervision of one professor at each HEI. This is the most important and innovative characteristic of the IPB’s ICM project, which clearly enhances the international cooperation at both academic and research levels. Co-supervision is promoted through electronic communication as well as through the participation of partner co-supervisors at the IPB ICM annual meeting (teaching mobility grants). The IPB visits to partner HEIs are also particularly devoted to this issue; the IPB staff agenda is used to present the research interests of IPB professors and researchers and to promote and planning future shared work plans for master theses and bachelor final projects.

Even being the first year of the ICM project (and the second year for DD programmes with other partners not funded by EU; i.e., with Brazil), the obtained outputs are clear and promising: 41 co-supervised master theses concluded (and 17 with Brazil), 12 joint publications in international papers (at Scopus or WoS; 10 with Brazil) and 22 joint communications at international conferences (30 with Brazil). Additional outputs are still expected as the result of the ongoing projects with the ICM and Brazilian 2015/2016 students and partner co-supervisors. This remarkably confirms the success of the project, where double diploma promotes much more than just student and staff mobility; it enhances a deeper cooperation between partner HEIs at both education and research levels. For complete information and open access to the project outputs, please see Annexes IV and V on “Joint publications in international journals and conferences”, for both the ICM and the Brazilian projects.

ICM master students also evaluated their supervisors. 85% consider the supervision by IPB professors as “Excellent” and the remaining 15% as “Very good”. The co-supervision

by the partner professors was considered “Excellent” by 53% and “Very good” by 21% of the ICM students. The partners' STA grants should be fully attributed to the master theses and bachelor final projects' co-supervisors so these joint research projects can be even more enhanced.

3.8. Recognition at home HEI:

This is the more challenging issue due to the short experience of partners in international student mobility (at least compared with the positioning met by European partners at the consolidated Erasmus student mobility programme). Credit recognition has been deeply discussed and promoted with partners during the 2016 IPB ICM Meeting (held in Bragança at 28th February – 12th March 2016) and during IPB visits to partners (between April and June 2016). Generally, all partner university administrations confirmed the fully recognition of the credits obtained at IPB; however, some students noticed difficulties in full credit transfer. Nevertheless, it could be concluded that the design of the student international mobility as double diploma projects promoted this credit recognition at partner institutions. The metrics collected by IPB show significant credit recognition: 92% for the ICM project and 84% for the Brazilian DD project. Additionally, it should be stressed out that the main differences between the ECTS credits approved at the host HEI (IPB) and the ECTS credits recognized at home HEI were due to the compatibilization of study plans for DD awarding, being the extra ECTS credits at IPB accepted as extracurricular by the home HEI (see Annexes II and III on “Student performance metrics and co-supervised master theses” – ICM and Brazil).

Credit recognition at partner HEIs will be again one of the main topics of the upcoming 2017 IPB ICM Meeting to be held in Bragança at 15-19 May 2017, particularly, through the workshops for partner staff, underlining that the best practices for recognition of periods of study should be focused on the assessment of learning outcomes, rather than a formal comparison of curricula.

3.9. DD awarding:

Besides the usual advantages of international mobility, partner students have the opportunity to obtain a double diploma at IPB, as the result of the specific agreements signed between IPB and partner HEIs. DD awarding is the heart of the IPB ICM project, clearly enhancing the cooperation between partners at both academic and research levels, promoting student co-supervision and joint publication in international journals and joint communications at international conferences. As the results of the 2015/2016 edition, 59 IPB double diplomas will be awarded to ICM partner students (and 18 to Brazilian students).

3.10. IPB ICM meeting training:

The 2016 IPB ICM Meeting was held in Bragança, 28th February – 12th March 2016, receiving deans, professors or non-teaching staff in charge with the ICM project management at the partner HEI, as well as partner professors with co-supervision activities at IPB within the ICM project. The meeting, organized as an intensive

programme, introduced the EU and the Portuguese HE systems, the ECTS, the mobility tools and the recognition procedures, and supported the ongoing double diploma projects, including meetings with students and teachers, seminars and co-supervision activities. The 2016 IPB ICM Meeting was very appreciated by all partners (see annex on “IPB 2016 ICM Meeting: satisfaction survey and suggestions”).

3.11. Support given by IPB's IRO:

The support given by the IPB's International Relations Office (IRO) was very well assessed by all actors; i.e., the partner students and staff, and the IPB staff (see annexes on “IPB 2016 ICM Meeting: satisfaction survey and suggestions”, “2016 visits of IPB delegations: assessment and suggestions”, and “IPB 2015/2016 ICM Student Mobility: satisfaction survey”).

93% of the ICM students considered the IRO support as “Excellent” and the remaining 7% as “Very good”. The support given by the partner HEIs was considered by these ICM students at IPB as “Excellent” (45%), and “Very good” (31%). The accommodation in Bragança was considered by the ICM students as “Excellent” (40%), “Very good” (48%), and “Good” (12%).

4. Conclusions:

The overall assessment of the ICM project is very positive. EU monitoring reports refer as best practice the *“good organization of participants, including timely signing of all necessary documents and providing needed support to the participants”* as well as *“all of the graduates have been awarded a full certificate for their studies and their credits were consequently recognized at home institution. While study certificates for credit mobility is a general practice, through this project, the Polytechnic Institute of Bragança has awarded a full diploma to graduates at the end of their one-year studies. Effective management and coordination between partners were observed throughout the implementation of mobility”*.

The overall assessment of the visits to ICM Partners was also very positive, including their commitment with the project, the use of best-practices in student and staff mobility, as well as on the recognition procedures at the Partner HEI and double diploma at IPB. Nevertheless, corrective and improvement actions can be implemented during the upcoming editions of the project, as it has been noticed by IPB and partner staff.

ICM students globally evaluated the mobility at IPB as “Excellent” (79%) or “Very good” (21%) (see annex “IPB 2015/2016 ICM Student Mobility: satisfaction survey”). Besides the internal surveys carried out, the surveys collected by the Mobility Tool also provided valuable information: according to the 2015/2016 surveys sent to incoming students, 98% of students were satisfactorily satisfied or very satisfied with the academic mentoring and administrative support arrangements in place at IPB. Also, 96% of the incoming students stated that their integration into the IPB's everyday life was good or very good.

4.1. Corrective and improvement actions:

For the upcoming ICM editions, it is suggested:

1. To improve the cooperation between the professors and researchers of IPB and partners HEIs, the programme directors and scientific committees of the IPB's master and bachelor programmes should coordinate and promote the proposals for master theses and bachelor final projects with co-supervision (one supervisor from IPB and one supervisor from the Partner HEI). A procedure to match similar supervisors' research interests should be implemented before the arrival of partner students;
2. The recognition of credits awarded by IPB at the partner HEIs' study plans should be checked and measured at the end of each mobility period (to be assessed by IPB, with partners HEIs and the students involved). Best practices for the recognition of periods of study should be introduced and focused on the assessment of learning outcomes, rather than a formal comparison of curricula;
3. The use of video conference at the IPB's public master defences and bachelor final projects should be guaranteed to ensure their recognition at the partner HEIs' study plans;
4. The partners' STA grants should be attributed to the master theses and bachelor final projects' co-supervisors. The upcoming IPB meetings should continue to include seminars and supervision activities by these professors;
5. The partners' STT grants should be attributed to the deans, professors or non-teaching staff in charge with the ICM project management at the partner HEI, particularly the mobility tools and the recognition procedures;
6. From 2017 onward, the IPB ICM Meeting will be held together with the IPB Erasmus Week, an annual event that joins more than one hundred teachers and non-teaching staff of more than 15 different EU countries (www.ipb.pt/erasmusweek). The simultaneous attainment of these two events will enable the ICM partner HEIs to enlarge their international relations capacities and to become directly acquainted with the Erasmus+ programme European context.

4.2. Dissemination actions:

Emphasis was devoted to the dissemination of the project outputs, within partner ICM students and staff, as well as within other European and non-European partners, enhancing the impact of the project outside the organisations and individuals directly participating in the project at local, national and international levels.

The project website (www.ipb.pt/icm) was fully updated, including what concerns the meetings workshops and documents (www.ipb.pt/go/h517), the monitoring (www.ipb.pt/go/k970) and the dissemination (<http://www.ipb.pt/go/h711>) actions.

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