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Welcome

This has been an extremely dynamic year for the Utrecht Network!

Our annual meeting saw the introduction of a new item on the programme for new faces in which the work of the Steering Committee and Task Forces were presented in an informative and lighthearted way.

Themed “no sex – no future”, participants at the AGM got to know the principles and basic phrases of the Estonian language.

Plans for new areas of cooperation with REARI-RJ – a network of universities in the Brazilian State of Rio de Janeiro – are in the pipeline.

A new customer-friendly website has been launched and last but not least the Utrecht Network has a new Spanish member: Benvinguda València!

Sabine Pendl
President, Utrecht Network

The Utrecht Network welcomes the University of València

The Utrecht Network is delighted to welcome the University of València as its newest member.

The membership proposal was confirmed by a unanimous vote at the 2015 AGM. The University of València is the Network’s second Spanish member and is a modern University devoted to a wide range of teaching disciplines, cutting-edge research and culture. Internationalisation is a major focus of the University.

The University of València was founded over five centuries ago. Amongst its fields of studies the University offers, spread out over its three campuses, experimental sciences, engineering, health sciences, humanities as well as social, education and legal sciences. With more than 48,000 students, nearly 5,000 teaching and administrative staff, 18 Faculties and 92 Departments, the University of València aims to train competent professionals as well as fostering outstanding research at international level.

One of the most outstanding features about the University of València’s internationalisation strategy is its role within mobility actions. The existing consolidated partnerships in South and North America, China and Europe together with the recent expansion to the Asian countries, ensure a dynamic flow of both students and staff.

The institutional representative from the Universitat de València on the Utrecht Network will be the Head of the International Office, Carlos Pomer Monferrer – ‘we are glad to be part of such an international and active network, as the internationalisation actions carried out at the University of València fit with the Network’s profile. We are really looking forward to starting our active collaboration.’

The Network looks forward to working with Carlos and his colleagues in a long and successful cooperation.

University of València
Two dozen professionals from within the Utrecht Network came together to discuss researcher mobility issues, exchange ideas and network for 2.5 days. We were warmly greeted in Tartu by Martin Hallik, Vice Rector for Academic Affairs and got a taste of historical peculiarities in Tartu Ülikool’s main building’s student lock-up, which was used to detain students who had offended public morality and code of student conduct. Apparently it had been a bit of an honour to be detained there. We didn’t have that honour but did enjoy a nice walk around town followed by a great dinner with all our new friends. This set the tone for the whole event – full of interesting things and good care from our friends in Tartu.

The training itself started with a few speeches and introductions to the topic. With a good start, the two workshops on ‘must have’ services and ‘success stories’, were full of lively discussion and exchange of ideas. It was great to share ideas, learn more about some good examples and get useful tips on how to develop support services at our home institutions.

The following day we shared the outcome of both workshops. We also discussed expectation management and intercultural matters, both being important when attracting top talent. The participating institutions differed somewhat in the level or organisation of their support services but the main topics remain the same to all – how to attract the best minds to our institution and keep them happy, to help reach our institution’s goals. We finished the event with a refreshing boat ride on the river, Emajõgi, joined by some international staff from Tartu Ülikool.

It was great to share ideas, learn more about some good examples and get useful tips on how to develop support services at our home institutions.

For a participant’s view, read more here http://ddcwelcome.de/tu-dresden-welcome-center-on-a-training-in-tartu/
Utrecht Network goes Rio

For many years the Utrecht Network has been trying to establish a cooperation with a Latin-American consortium. At the 2014 EAIE Conference in Prague meetings with representatives of a Chilean and a Brazilian network took place.

The Brazilian network was REARI – RJ, a non-profit association that brings together managers, directors or those responsible for international affairs of HEIs in the State of Rio de Janeiro. This Brazilian group of 11 HE institutions invited the Utrecht Network President to use the opportunity of the FAUBAI (Brazilian association of International Education) conference to discuss possible ways of cooperation.

Through individual talks both in Rio, then alongside the FAUBAI conference in Cuiabá and especially during the bi-monthly meeting of the institutions in Rio, it became obvious that there is potential on both sides for formalizing further cooperation.

The Brazilian colleagues expressed their interest in exchanging students and participating in staff trainings and summer schools. After Sabine Pendl and Svend Poller presented the Utrecht Network and options for collaboration, the Cariocas also officially declared their interest in negotiating a partnership agreement. The Utrecht Network could use this opportunity in bringing its overseas partner networks together and re/defining its policy towards its non-European counterparts.
Summer School ‘Liberty, Equality, Fraternity’ in Antwerp

From 5–11 July 2015 the last edition of a three-pronged summer school cycle was held at the University of Antwerp, Belgium. The summer school series asked how the ideals of the French Revolution ‘Liberty, Equality and Fraternity’, which are amongst the founding ideas of modern Europe, inspire politics, law and everyday life in Europe today.

Each edition of the summer school cycle, addressed one of these values in depth. The first summer school, held in Motovun, Croatia in 2013, asked how the notion of liberty had evolved in the last two centuries and how it influenced everyday practice of European citizens and politicians today. The 2014 summer school, held in Utrecht, sought to unpack the notion of equality and its contemporary political and social meaning. And this year’s summer school sought for an interdisciplinary understanding of how the notion of fraternity plays out in modern Europe.

The notion of fraternity has had several meanings over the past two centuries, ranging from an expression of feelings of community to a justification for nationalism of various kinds. This summer school sought to answer from different disciplinary perspectives what we understand as fraternity, whom we feel fraternity towards, and what the implications (social, political, legal) of this emotional attachment of a certain community are. In doing so, docents also actively engaged with the growing attention for the issue of socio-economic inequality and asked how to address these inequalities, thus also linking this edition back to the previous editions and ensuring substantive consistency.

Through interactive teaching methods (theatre workshops, group works, community visits, experience-based and problem-oriented learning), a group of 37 international students from Utrecht Network and other European universities but also from South Africa, South Korea, USA and 9 docents explored together how and if the concept of fraternity can be used as way to restore faith in democratic politics based on commonalities between group.

Students evaluated the school as a great experience:

What really added to this summer school, was the diversity among nationalities that were represented. This made the group discussions and social activities really interesting.

The summer school was eye-opening; I’m glad that it offered the course to people studying for varied degrees; this allowed for shared and differing perspectives which assisted in the learning process.

It was an amazing experience which gave us the opportunity to discuss and evaluate a broad range of pressing issues and get an overview of different disciplines.

It was a great week with an amazing group which really made me change some of my point of views.

I really enjoyed the summer school and learned here more than expected, not only on an academic level, but also on a human and personal level. All lectures and teachers were very nice and had great presentations.

I gained experience and different perspective thanks to diversity of topics and people. I am grateful and hopefully it wasn’t my last time in Antwerp.
The Utrecht Network participates in ERASMUS+ projects

For the first time the Utrecht Network has been involved in collaborative EU funded projects not only as an associate but also as a full partner, covering important roles in the development of projects’ activities.

Within the call for proposals ERASMUS+ 2015, the Network was invited to be a partner in four projects covering all the three Key Activities of the Programme (KA1 Learning Mobility of Individuals – Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees; KA2 Cooperation for Innovation and good Practices – Strategic Partnerships and Capacity Building; KA3 Support to Policy Reforms – Forward Looking Cooperation Projects).

Out of the four projects, three have been selected for funding by the European Commission and will start their activities in Autumn 2015. The Steering Committee is excited about this new adventure and wishes the best of luck to the Network members who will directly contribute to the projects.

Description of the projects

1. KA1: Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degree: ASC: Advanced Spectroscopy in Chemistry.
   - The European Master in Advanced Spectroscopy in Chemistry was developed by six Utrecht Network universities in 2001 and in 2007 was labelled as an Erasmus Mundus Master Programme. After having graduated hundreds of international students, in 2014 it was revised and was successfully re-submitted under the Erasmus Mundus call 2015. The Programme is coordinated by the University of Lille and now involves the University of Leipzig, the University of Bologna, the University of Helsinki and Jagiellonian University, Krakow. The Utrecht Network is included in the project as associate partner and is part of the stakeholders board invited to the annual meeting of the project.

2. KA2: Capacity Building: IMPALA: Internationalisation and Modernisation Programme for Academics Leaders Administrators
   - The objective of the project is to support the internationalisation process of the less advantaged South African Universities. This is through developing and implementing a capacity building project made of study visits, teaching and learning activities such as thematic workshops and trainings, and the development of studies and reports on good practices in internationalisation taken with an holistic approach.

   The project is addressed in particular to the whole academic community, including academics, university leaders and decision makers and administrative staff. The project is coordinated by the University of Antwerp and involves four additional European partners (University of Graz, University of Bologna, Utrecht Network and ACA) and four South African Universities (University of Fort Hare, University of Limpopo, University of Venda, Cape Peninsula University of Technology).

   The Utrecht Network, as full partner, will be actively involved in the coordination of project’s activities and in the development and implementation of the learning programme on internationalisation.

   - The objective of the project is to develop the infrastructure for setting-up multi-dimensional tests to compare students’ performance in Europe. The outcomes of the tests will offer institutions useful information to verify whether their students are achieving internationally defined standards of generic and subject specific learning outcomes, and will provide the students themselves with important information to understand better the competences they will gain, becoming proactive in the learning process.

   The project is coordinated by the University of Groningen, former coordinator of the TUNING project, and involves a large number of partners and stakeholders such as European universities, student’s associations, Quality Assurance and Accreditation Agencies and Network of Universities. The Utrecht Network is a member of the Advisory Board of the project.
The staff training, or seminar, was organised by Utrecht University in June 2015. The participants exchanged not only examples of good practice in research funding support but also examples of practice that hadn’t worked so well. As well as these experiences from the various universities, more detailed information was given about the support structure at Utrecht University. Part of the programme coincided with the Utrecht University Research Funding Days, as a practical showcase.

The topics and discussions at the seminar ranged from the call identification stage to post-award support and from Research Support Offices to the role of Technology Transfer Offices.

The seminar succeeded in bringing together representatives from 17 European universities, who do not regularly meet on this topic. Also there was participation from various members of staff from Utrecht University Corporate Offices and the Faculties. They not only presented but also learnt about good practices from others.

The 3 days seminar laid the foundation for a network of experts, mainly but not exclusively, within the Utrecht Network. Some participants took the lead to arrange this follow up.

The seminar clearly showed that staff training events also, or maybe especially, have an added value for staff who don’t work with international colleagues frequently. To quote another participant: “It was very strange to see that we all are facing similar problems. The variety of provided solutions for these problems was the most surprising.”

Some topics for follow up that were mentioned several times during the event were Horizon 2020 financial aspects, such as budget definitions and cost calculations (especially for personnel); data management; internal communication; and ethics, pre-award phase.

The staff training also offered a good opportunity to act like a Dutchman and exercise bike skills!
Utrecht Network website

The Utrecht Network’s website has recently been relaunched. The website, which can be found at www.utrecht-network.org has been redesigned to reflect the active and contemporary nature of the Network. Any comments or suggestions regarding the website should be sent to info@utrecht-network.org.

NAFSA Conference

It has become a tradition that get-togethers between UN participants and partners from our MAUI and AEN institutions take place alongside the NAFSA conference. This year the venue for the NAFSA conference was Boston. Anouk van der Vorst from AEN organised a wonderful lunch with our Australian colleagues. Liz Shabani from MAUI organised a fantastic networks’ meeting with our US partners; at the meeting her colleague Emily Hassenstab from the University of Nebraska at Omaha was present. A warm-hearted and big THANK YOU goes to Anouk, Liz and Emily!

2016 Annual General Meeting

The 2016 Utrecht Network Annual General Meeting will be held on 28–29 April 2016 and will be hosted by Queen’s University Belfast. The AGM will be preceded by a workshop on how to maximize the intercultural experience of outgoing students. This workshop will be directed at IRO staff working with outgoing students as well as young academics who act as Erasmus+ coordinators or work with outgoing students within joint programmes.

Professional English Summer School

The University of Hull welcomed Utrecht Network participants onto their bespoke Professional English Summer Programme for the second year running this June. The two-week programme saw the arrival of 32 delegates from over 13 participating institutions.

The programme involved a series of lectures in different academic areas, grammar and language workshops, pronunciation classes and guidance on academic writing. A series of social events took place throughout the two weeks and we were lucky to have fantastic weather!

The University of Hull will be running the programme next year from 27th June to the 8th July.

If you would like details, please contact us at pesp@hull.ac.uk

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