Internationalization, Digitalization, Innovation and Quality of Education in COVID times: The case of Medical University-Varna

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The main challenges, faced by the international departments of the European universities during the COVID-19 pandemic, result from the need for fast adaptation, entirely online interaction with national and international partners, the huge amount of work, the every week changing guidelines and information about the procedures for acting under the unknown circumstances.

During the coronavirus crisis the university international departments adopted a key role of communication centres with the world outside and turned into hubs for information exchange.
Main accents of international communication in times of COVID-19:
- information about the current conditions in the countries, from which the international partners come, about the stage and the course of the disease, the changes in the training process and the state of the mobility;
- contact with the universities with which activities are planned in the framework of bilateral agreements for academic cooperation and “Erasmus+” programme;
- participation in online international events;
- training and exchange of good practices for university partnerships and mobility management.
The team of the International Relations Department participated in over 50 online trainings, virtual meetings and conferences, organized by partner organisations, whose member Varna Medical University is, including:

- Increased knowledge
- Exchange of Information and working practices
- Effectiveness and high quality of educational, clinical and research process

- European University Association;
- Black Sea Universities Network;
- European Health Management Association
- World Health Organization, etc.
Digitalization during times of pandemics has proved to be crucial for the modernization in all fields of public and social life.

It is a tool for sharing our experience and ideas, meeting the new challenges of sustaining partnerships and achieving a better quality of education, treatment and science.
Digitalisation at Medical University – Varna covers all processes, places, formats and objectives of teaching, learning, researching and working in higher education.

This digital transformation includes:
- development of new infrastructures;
- increasing use of digital media;
- technologies for teaching and learning, research;
- university support services, administration and communication;
- new digital skills for students and staff for their current and future workplaces.
Medical University – Varna has set up the following priorities for its Digital Education Action Plan:

- to make a better use of digital technology for teaching and learning;

- to develop relevant digital competences and skills for the digital transformation;

- to improve education through better data analysis and vision ahead.
The electronic platform is a part of the university infrastructure and a tool for digitalization of education.
The International Center for Electronic and Distance Learning was established in 2014.

Its mission is to organize the training for teachers and assistants in preclinical and clinical disciplines and to assist the development of e-courses, e-exams and additional materials.
Currently, over 1700 separate disciplines are built and operate in BLACKBOARD, covering all specialties at the Medical University of Varna.

Total number of users at the end of 2020: 10326
Teachers: 755
Students, PhD students, postgraduates and staff: 9571
Installed courses, lectures, videos, tests, etc.: 180 GB
➢ All teachers have an individual account for access to the disciplines they teach.
➢ From the moment of enrollment, all students, doctoral students and postgraduates receive an account for access to the disciplines they study.
➢ Students have the right to access all subjects they study until graduation.
➢ The deans of all faculties incl. postgraduate studies have their own space in the platform for communication and administrative services for students.
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60 Years of Building Sinergies:
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