

STUDENTS CAN LOOK AROUND THE WORLD

What is internationalization?

Internationalization is one of the main goals of the University of West Bohemia and is divided into two parts.

1

"Domestic" internationalization is the preparation of the UWB environment to be able to welcome foreign students and employees. A bilingual campus and the so-called Welcome Centre are gradually being built (for more details, see page 38); not only teachers, but all staff of dormitories and catering facilities through to the Helpdesk and the Library are increasing their language skills; the most important documents and service information are being translated from Czech into English.

2

"Outward" internationalization is the support of student/staff mobilities and international research/scientific projects. All measures serve to enhance the prestige of the University, not only from a foreign perspective, but also from Czech students' point of view: even for Czech students, the University is more attractive when they know that it has a good reputation in the world and cooperates with prestigious organizations.

Nowadays, students of the University of West Bohemia can do things their predecessors had never dreamed of, namely find education or internship opportunities literally all over the world. They just need to want to and know how to.

What helps students most? Especially the ERASMUS+ and the INTER programmes. They are coordinated by the International Office of the University of West Bohemia, which is responsible for the international relations of our University.

The ERASMUS+ and the INTER programmes send students to internships or study stays. The main difference between the two programmes is that ERASMUS+, which can also be used by recent graduates, affects only the EU Member States and is covered by European money, while thanks to INTER, a programme of the University of West Bohemia supported by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, students can go outside the EU. Under ERASMUS+, study travels are at least three months long, although they usually last for a whole semester, as students have to earn the required number of credits during their stay. The INTER programme, through which students become so-called free movers, to whom the EU borders do not apply, is designed for shorter stays of at least 30 days.

However, there are exceptions even in programmes with precisely defined conditions, such as ERASMUS+. The EU can, through credit mobilities, the so-called credit travels, support also travels outside the Member States, most often to so-called third countries. Faculties or Departments wishing to send their students there must have partners in the given country and apply for such travel; if they succeed, ERASMUS+ will then arrange travel outside the EU too. Thanks to credit travels, the University of West Bohemia has already sent students setting off for Morocco, Serbia, Belarus, Ethiopia, Iran and Israel.

In the last three years, almost 1,200 students have travelled from the University of West Bohemia abroad. According to Jana Ovsjanniková, Head of the International Office

of UWB, the programmes ERASMUS+ and INTER were most often used, but other programmes were also helpful. "Students also travel abroad thanks to the support of the Bavarian government, the Norwegian Funds and programmes such as DAAD, Aktion, CEEPUS or Faculty projects. The International Office mediates these programmes and, unlike ERASMUS+ or INTER, where we deal with organizing selection procedures up to paying out finances, we do not manage the other programme," she says.

Although there are no dramatic figures, the number of students going abroad has declined in the last three years. In the academic year 2016/2017 there were 407, in the academic year 2017/2018 there were 391 and in the academic year 2018/2019 there were 368 students going abroad. Why? Perhaps because of the demographic curve. "There are generally fewer students now than a few years ago, so the percentage of travels has not decreased so much. One of the reasons may be today's technically advanced society, when students click once and chat with a colleague from Taiwan or Australia," continues Ms. Ovsjanniková.

In the academic year 2018/2019, students were most attracted to stays in Germany, Spain, Italy, Poland and France. They also went to countries like China, Kyrgyzstan, Iran or Oman. Student mobilities are promoted by UWB, for example, at International Day and Erasmus Night events, which you can read about on the next two pages.

In contrast, unlike for outgoing visits, the number of students who come to the University of West Bohemia to study or intern is increasing. In the academic year 2016/2017, there were 386; in the academic year 2018/2019, already 421 most students came from the Russian Federation, France, Poland, Turkey and Spain. ●