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Bridges over the Odera river: A regional cross-border university

Key words: regional university, cross-border co-operation, higher education co-operation

Objective of the research: the introduction and analysis of the European University Viadrina as the university at the service of extension and improvement of European culture.

Results of the research: Frankfurt/Oder is a city with the population of 75000 people and is located on the left bank of the River Odera, directly at the Polish-German border. There is a bridge linking the city with its Polish counterpart, Slubice (population of 17000). The city, taking the exceptional opportunity at the German unification, reopened its university as European University Viadrina, which was closed 180 years earlier. This gave an excellent occasion for thinking in other dimensions. After the re-establishment of the university, it created its partner institution, Collegium Pollonicum in close co-operation with the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan. This was aimed to diminish actual borders between nations and facilitate the establishment of spiritual links between nations.

Today, the University has some 4000 students and has wide range of international relations. More than 40% of its students are from abroad, mainly from the neighbouring Poland (the University has relations with Hungarian universities, but it is confined to the relations with the University of Pécs and with the Central European University). With the aim of strengthening links between nations, the university intends to approach various disciplines by the improvement of transferability between its faculties, the Faculty of Law, the Faculty of Economics and the Faculty of Cultural Science. The university stepped on a completely new land when it launched its joint German-Polish law program in the spirit of the internationalisation of law studies. Interdisciplinarity and internationality are the two major attributes.

Research method: case-study and data analysis to complete data base, all activities performed on the spot.

Relevance of the research to educational policy: After the analysis of the general tendencies, applied methods and achieved results, the examination of their applicability to the Hungarian higher education context would be challenging. Hungary's approaching accession to the EU and in the virtue of it, the application of the Schengen border procedure, provides an excellent opportunity to extend cross-border cultural cooperation and to establish regional cross-border universities.