



Case Study no. 3

Title of Case study / Good practice	Developing Student Soft Skills with Emphasis on Intercultural Communication and Leadership Skills												
Keywords (meta tag)	HE policy implementation, intercultural communication, competence development across countries, leadership, soft skills, DECIDE decision-making tool												
Provided by	University of Economics – Varna												
Language	ENGLISH												
Case study													
<p>Need identified: bridging the gap in soft skills development in higher education (HE)</p> <p>Assignment: You work at the International Office of your university and you are responsible for further internationalisation and digitalisation of the university programs with view of improving the students' employability prospects in a continuously globalised job market and in particular developing intercultural communication skills and leadership. You have several ideas along these lines. One of your priorities is to work with other Erasmus+ universities (using EU project funding) in order to multiply the effect and provide structured opportunities for work in international teams (students/lecturers/administration staff). You have to take into account collaboration with the business with view of better employability options for students.</p> <p>Put down your ideas in bullet points.</p> <p>Share your ideas with your colleagues in a brainstorming session. Then take a group decision, using a chosen decision-making method, e.g. DECIDE:</p> <table border="1"> <tr> <td>D</td> <td>Define the problem</td> </tr> <tr> <td>E</td> <td>Establish the criteria</td> </tr> <tr> <td>C</td> <td>Consider all the alternatives</td> </tr> <tr> <td>I</td> <td>Identify the best alternative</td> </tr> <tr> <td>D</td> <td>Develop and implement a plan of action</td> </tr> <tr> <td>E</td> <td>Evaluate and monitor the solution</td> </tr> </table> <p>Finally compare your proposal with the practise-based example in the suggested answers.</p>		D	Define the problem	E	Establish the criteria	C	Consider all the alternatives	I	Identify the best alternative	D	Develop and implement a plan of action	E	Evaluate and monitor the solution
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Reference Link	<p>PROMINENCE OERP:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • https://www.prominenceproject.eu/index.php/prominence-interactive/study-guide/study-module/interactive-lessons/ <p>PROMINENCE surveys:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students' Survey – Intercultural Competences: Importance, Self-assessment and Instruments of Development, written by Stéphane Ganassali, IAE University Mont Blanc Savoie • Survey on European Companies, written by Stéphane Ganassali, IAE 												



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	<p><u>University Mont Blanc Savoie</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <u>Intercultural Competence, An Academic Perspective, written by Diana Miteva, Kristana Ivanova, Petar Petrov, University of Economics - Varna</u> <p>Three Intensive Training Programmes for over 120 project partner university students from Europe, Africa, Northern and Southern America:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <u>Different Worlds, Different Languages: Getting to Grips with Cultural Diversity</u>• <u>Managing and Leading in Different Cultures</u>• <u>Practising Cultural and Business Intelligence across Cultures</u> <p>Sustainability is ensured through more internationalization and collaboration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <u>Dukenet Membership for University of Economics - Varna</u>• <u>https://ue-varna.bg/en/news/gold-medals-for-university-of-economics-varna-students-in-dukenet-spring-markstrat-challenge-2021/1021</u> <p>Source for DECIDE decision-making tool:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Kristina Guo, The Health Care Manager, April 2008, Vol 27/2, p.118-127
Type of material	CASE STUDY

(Suggested answers on p. 3)



Suggested Answers

Defining the problem: Bridging the gap in soft skills development by putting an emphasis on intercultural communication and leadership skills development, achieving results such as higher motivation and higher employability of graduates in a continuously globalised labour market.

Establishing the criteria: internationalisation, digitalisation, structured cost-effective opportunities for international collaboration, scientific approach to skills shortage identification (focus on intercultural communication and leadership), sustainability.

Depending on the group member input, you will have probably identified several alternatives, choosing the best option and plan of action as well as establishing mechanisms for evaluating the results.

Compare your results with the following real life **practice example**:

Brief description

PROMINENCE (Promoting Mindful Encounters through Intercultural Competence and Experience, 2017-2020) is an international project co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme Strategic Partnerships in Higher Education. The strategic partnership project strengthens links between partner universities, students and SMEs as potential employers. It offers deliverables that help develop intercultural competence, business skills and leadership skills of SMEs employees, business students and faculty members. The PROMINENCE teams from seven EU universities: Aschaffenburg (Germany), University of Economics in Bratislava (Slovakia), Debrecen (Hungary), Katowice (Poland), Mont Blanc Savoie (France), Seinäjoki (Finland) and the University of Economics - Varna (Bulgaria), completed the project, which is an excellent example of higher business education **internationalization**.

It is a **research-led initiative** (i.e. it meets the scientific approach criterion) targeting to improve student engagement through experiential learning while enhancing their employability prospects. The research involved **3 large-scale surveys** (with the business, students and lecturers from the 7 EU countries. (See the reference section).

Developing student soft skills in a meaningful way is ensured by using: 1/ **PROMINENCE Interactive OEPR** (open educational resources platform), which ensures cost-effectiveness and 2/ student international workshops (3+ Intensive Programmes), which provide **structured opportunities for work in international teams**.

Key activities and forms of support of soft skills and employability in HE:

Career days at the partner universities; specialised IPs (Intensive Programs) – involving representatives from all 7 partner universities (students and academic staff) within the project framework (See the reference section for IPs); new courses introduced at universities, e.g. 'Intercultural Communication and Leadership', using PROMINENCE Interactive as a primary source (cost-effectiveness and multiplying effect in the 7 universities); soft skills courses offered to SMEs.

Sustainability has been further ensured since the project was over by using other opportunities, e.g. Dukenet annual international events or using the format of the most



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successful online PROMINENCE Intensive Program 'Practicing Cultural Intelligence across Cultures'. Dukenet is a consortium of 17 EU universities, providing several international student events annually: structured opportunities for students for developing various skills: real/disperse teamwork, problem solving, cultural and emotional intelligence applied in business context, creativity, decision making, negotiations, presentation skills.

Outputs and outcomes: Highly positive feedback. Close interaction between HE and SMEs.

Key success factors in implementing this initiative: Ensuring sustainability is key for providing regular Intensive Programs, developing students' employability skills. Inviting presenters from businesses. Practical skills development.