

Studying and Developing Local Writing Cultures: An Institutional Partnership Project Supporting Transition in Eastern Europe's Higher Education



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Abstract This chapter reports on the LIDHUM institutional partnership project between a Swiss university and three Eastern and Southeastern European partner universities. The aim of the project was to improve our understanding of the role of writing at the respective universities and introduce new ways of teaching and learning writing. This was accomplished by such activities as developing new writing courses, creating writing center conceptions, initiating writing research, networking within the local universities, presenting joint research, and publishing research papers. Beyond the project-related activities, the program involved all participants in a personal learning experience in which intercultural learning was of equal importance to the training units offered and joint research activities. This chapter discusses what the process of transition means and what it takes to set out on a personal, intercultural, and organizational transformation process.

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1 Introduction

Writing at Eastern and Southeastern European universities is probably as omnipresent an activity as it is in all institutions of higher education around the world. It is not a topic that has received much attention in the past, similarly to Western European countries, which, however, started to pay attention to student writing one or two decades earlier. Compared to more urgent issues such as adapting study programs to international standards, introducing cutting-edge research technologies, and building new organizational structures, writing pedagogy ranked at a low level of importance for educational reforms.

When the Literacy Development in the Humanities (LIDHUM) project set out in 2011 as a Scientific Cooperation Between Eastern Europe and Switzerland (SCOPEs) partnership project between three Eastern/Southeastern European and one Swiss institution, few signs of a deliberate teaching of academic writing were visible, with the exception of some American-type universities and a few English departments (see Harbord, chapter “[A European Model for Writing Support](#)”). Even though the introduction of new educational measures by the Bologna Declaration (which many of the Eastern European countries adopted) had begun to change student writing by such measures as obligatory theses at all educational levels and the introduction of graduate courses or doctoral programs, there were no institutional discussions about the importance of the development of writing skills. It seemed that instructors and institutions as a whole did not yet recognize the need to explore issues such as providing writing support (for example, through writing centers), or considering the link between writing competences, learning, and critical thinking. Academic writing was still invisible, receiving almost no attention in the curricula of university studies.

The LIDHUM project was based on a thorough analysis of academic writing as a matter of high concern not only for teaching but for all academic transactions, including research, knowledge communications, and organization. Additionally, the pressures of internationalization forced the universities (both in the East and the West) to join international discourses and enter conversations across national borders. Getting acquainted with new publication norms, acquiring new genre conventions, and understanding the rhetoric of English as the new lingua franca became necessary. For this, the role of literacy in university development had to be re-considered, and, along with the teaching of writing, such issues as multilingualism along with publication and communication skills became matters of importance for all university members, not only students.

Participants of the LIDHUM project were

- the Faculty of Letters, History, and Theology at the West University of Timișoara, Romania
- the Faculty of Foreign Languages at the Ivan Franko National University of Lviv, Ukraine
- the Doctoral School at the National University of the Kyiv Mohyla Academy (which later had to withdraw from the project)
- the Institute of Macedonian Literature and the English Department at the Faculty of Philology of the Ss Cyril and Methodius University, Skopje, Macedonia) and
- the Language Competence Center in the Department of Applied Sciences at the Zürich University of Applied Sciences, Switzerland.

The funding source required the Swiss institution to be the coordinator of the project.

2 Background of the LIDHUM Project

The origin of this project was the SCOPES funding scheme of the Swiss National Science Foundation and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, aimed at supporting research partnerships with universities from Eastern European countries. The funding was explicitly devoted to supporting the transformational processes in higher education by developmental or research projects. According to the call for proposals, it served three purposes:

- Supporting transition: Projects have to be relevant for the modernization and transformation of higher education.
- Capacity building: Individual and institutional research capacities should be developed.
- Partnership approach: Projects should be built on jointly established objectives and shared responsibility as well as on accountability, transparency, non-discrimination, participation, and efficiency.

All of the partners mentioned above had a record of writing research or experience in the teaching of writing in the past, so were therefore invited to participate. The jointly written project proposal described the status quo in each of the participating institutions and defined developmental goals for each of them. Overall goals were defined as follows: (1) Building a shared knowledge base in writing and literacy development; (2) assessing and analyzing the situation in the four member universities regarding their writing practices, genres, and developmental needs; (3) introducing didactic means such as writing courses, writing-intensive seminars,

tutorial systems, or writing centers that will individually be designed for each university; (4) including faculty members and university leaders in writing/teaching development to secure institutional support; (5) evaluating and documenting all processes to preserve them for future use; and (6) including and integrating young researchers to secure sustainable development. In order to be flexible, the proposal left open what kind of a literacy development unit this would be for each university.

3 Languages and Language Policy

One of the factors that needs to be considered in an international project is the language in which communication within the project will take place. A project across cultures in Europe has to rely on English as a communication language, even though this also bears some risks. As Pennycook (2013) states, “English and English language teaching seems ubiquitous in the world, playing a role everywhere from large-scale global politics to the intricacies of people’s lives” (p. 4). As a *lingua franca*, English enables effective communication across different linguistic cultures but also works like a filter, transporting only information that can be expressed in English and withholding any information for which English does not provide adequate terms or expressions. English is likely to promote concepts that are developed in one of the English-speaking countries and tends to transfer their respective teaching philosophies (Canagarajah 2002; Donahue 2009). Although European views as expressed in educational politics such as the Bologna Process have proper translations into all the members’ languages, the reverse, from national languages into English terminology and idioms, is not guaranteed. One of the project’s aims was to apply a methodology sensitive to the linguistic subtleties needed by the participating cultures of this multilingual continent, with its roughly 50 major languages and as many national educational systems (see, for instance, Foster and Russell 2002; Björk et al. 2003; Deane and O’Neill 2011; Castelló and Donahue 2012; Chitez and Kruse 2012; Kruse 2013).

According to Harbord (2010), most writing initiatives in Eastern and Central Europe are situated either at American-style English-medium universities or within the English departments such as the Lviv English Writing Center (Yakhontova 2011). Progress in teaching often goes along with English language instruction. Only a few initiatives have developed as spin-offs from these institutions in which writing is taught in the national languages. It was a main aim of the project to promote a bilingual or multilingual teaching approach (for an overview, see Veronesi and Nickening 2009) to writing as opposed to approaches preferring English-medium instruction only at the expense of national languages. We argue that universities today are multilingual institutions in which English has its firm place next to the national languages. We suggest that the teaching of writing has to be done in national languages and English alike in order to avoid both threats: the exclusion from international discourses and the restriction of discourses to the realm of minor

language communities. Therefore, when developing their literacy development strategies, the partner institutions considered how they could develop writing provision and initiate research in both L2 (English) and L1 (national languages).

4 The Situation of Research Institutions in Eastern Europe

Writing at the university is deeply rooted in the overall strategies for academic communities' research, teaching, and communication (see also chapters "[Introduction: Understanding Academic Writing in the Context of Central and Eastern European Higher Education](#)" and "[A European Model for Writing Support](#)"). In any research university, writing is not a detached way of teaching and learning but part of the literacy practices carried out by its members. At the latest, when students write their undergraduate theses or dissertations, they are expected to assume the role of a scholar or scientist and participate in academic discourse similar to their teachers. Academic writing always has to be research based, discursive, and critical. Empirical, rhetorical, and theoretical issues have to be solved equally, and there must be a demand for high qualification in writing as well as in instruction and supervision.

Successfully introducing new ways of teaching writing, therefore, was necessarily connected with the development of new ways of research, communication, and theoretical work among the participants. The project's focus was well connected with the aim of the funding scheme in that it also had to deal with the East-West gap in research capacities that resulted from the long seclusion of Eastern research institutions from international developments and to some extent is still related to the remains of organizational and social distortions in the communist regimes.

The political background was somewhat different for each of the three countries. While Ukraine was part of the Soviet Union and became a separate country only in 1991, Romania had its formal independence in Soviet times, but suffered from what was probably the most cruel and bizarre dictatorship in Eastern Europe, which ended in 1989. Macedonia was part of the comparatively liberal Yugoslavia (liberal in contrast to other countries of the Soviet sphere), which was less secluded from Western developments than the two other countries and had maintained closer relationships to the West. Macedonia gained independence from Yugoslavia in 1991. While Romania has become a member of the European Union (EU), both Macedonia and Ukraine are still in the state of negotiations with the EU. In all three countries, economic development progresses slowly but steadily while the overall national income still remains at a lower level than that of the Western European countries.

Since the early 1990s, all three countries have been struggling to remodel their education systems and have committed themselves to the Bologna principles, which the countries of the European Union (and many additional ones) have all agreed on. The roughly 25 years that have passed since the end of the communist rule have led to innumerable changes in all three countries and in almost all areas of life, not only in economics and politics, but also in culture, education, mentalities, and social

relations. Eastern European universities are part of the European research area and are connected by many bi- and multilateral activities to universities from other parts of Europe and the world. A new generation of university scholars and researchers, many of them (at least partially) educated in Western countries, has developed, leading not only to new ways of teaching but also to a transformation of the minds, which is as essential for change at these institutions.

5 The Components of the Program

The program included several fields that are usually not connected in research projects or teaching arrangements, but which in this case proved to be a fortunate mix from several different skills areas, and targeted both the development of research capacities and the creation of literacy support within the participating institutions:

- Joint qualification and knowledge exchange: Creating a shared knowledge base and learning from each other
- Teaching: Developing and implementing writing courses in English and national languages
- Research: Collecting data to understand and compare one's own writing culture and that of others; strategies of data collection, statistics and basic SPSS
- Organizational innovations: Creating and realizing writing center conceptions
- Networking: Building stable networks at each of the universities and connecting internationally
- Organizational development: Changing local (institutional) writing cultures and writing curricula
- Building publication and presentation skills: Joint conference presentations and publications
- Participating in and initiating national discourses: Dissemination and transfer within each country

All activities were prepared jointly and discussed at the project meetings. Each of the fields allowed different activities and connected the participants with another field of academic performance. There was a distribution of labor within each of the three teams allowing for specialization in accordance with individual interests.

6 The Working Program

The activities were developed in a meeting program proposed and agreed on by all partners, which was a mix of several components in order to adapt to the varying needs of the heterogeneous group of participants (see Table 1).

Table 1 Working plan and schedule of LIDHUM meetings

Date	Meeting place	Main topics	Milestones
October 2011	Winterthur, Switzerland	Getting started and understanding the writing process	Kick-off meeting: Group is ready for work
January 2012	Timișoara, Romania	Essentials of the teaching of writing and constructing writing courses: Genre, feedback, and intertextuality	Designing writing courses for each university
April 2012	Coventry, UK	WiD principles, critical thinking, and writing center work	Visit to Coventry Writing Centre and conference on writing
October 2012	Skopje, Macedonia	Writing research and writing center conceptions: Data collection and statistics course including SPSS	Studying writing cultures at the participating universities
February 2013	Lviv, Ukraine	Evaluation of research and preparation of conference presentations/writing center concepts	Principles of writing center work
June 2013	Budapest, Hungary	Writing research/presenting results at EATAW Conference/participating in research workshop	Seven presentations at EATAW Conference
October 2013	Winterthur, Switzerland	Evaluation of program and preparing publications/construction of website	Evaluating and preparing publications
April 2014	Timișoara, Romania	Valorization Meeting: Conference on “Academic Writing in Eastern Europe”	Opening writing center in Timișoara

7 The Topics of the Teaching Units

Teaching units on writing and writing pedagogy were included in all meetings to create an equal level of knowledge among the participants. Teaching was done by some of the more experienced members of the group while some units were covered by invited guests. The topics were:

- Writing process and process-based teaching
- Intertextuality and discursive writing
- Genre and genre teaching
- Writing and critical thinking
- Writing in the disciplines
- Structuring and developing writing courses
- Writing-center work and writing-center conceptions
- Teaching writing online
- Writing provision for doctoral students
- Creating and supervising writing connected with a research project

The teaching units served a basis for the project members’ own writing and teaching. It was also considered an exchange of competences among members.

8 Development of Writing Courses

One of the first tasks for all teams was to develop new writing courses in both their national languages and in English. At the second meeting these proposals were discussed and optimized. After the first new courses had been developed and implemented, all teams developed new teaching offers. Obviously, the exchange on writing course construction and the experience of some essential exercises effectively stimulated the creation and innovation of more course offerings. Tables 2, 3 and 4 list the courses that had been realized at the end of the project.

Table 2 New writing courses and workshops at the West University of Timișoara, Romania

Topic/Name	Time	Language
Academic writing/writing a research paper (1st year, American Studies MA, obligatory course)	Since spring 2012	English
Writing a diploma paper (3rd year, English Language and Literature undergraduates, optional course)	Since autumn 2012	English
Writing a diploma paper (3rd year, undergraduate)—included in proposal for new degrees at the Faculty of Letters, History, and Theology	Developed in 2011-2012	Romanian
Academic Writing (new MA programs in Romanian)	2013	Romanian
Workshop: What is a Symposium Paper?	2013	English
Academic writing for 1st year undergraduate students in the humanities (to be opened to students from other faculties)	2014	Romanian
Workshop: Plagiarism	2013	Romanian
At Ion Vidu High School: <i>Cum ne gândim la ce scriem? Procesul de scriere</i> (How do we think about writing? The writing process)	2012	Romanian
At Avram Iancu High School: <i>Cum scriem când nu ne gândim la ce scriem. Scrierea automată</i> (How we write when we don't think about writing. Free writing)	2012	Romanian

Table 3 New writing courses and workshops at Ss Cyril and Methodius University, Skopje, Macedonia

Course	Year	Language
Course in Academic Writing—optional course	Since September 2013	Macedonian
Institute of Macedonian Literature, Postgraduate Cultural Studies	2014	Macedonian
Course in Academic Writing for postgraduate students at the Institute and at the Doctoral School of the University		
English Department: Changes in the writing curriculum (stricter focus on academic writing, citing, argumentation, critical thinking) in Year 3 course	2013	English
Workshop: Academic Writing: Reliability of sources, revision of existing writing course materials, student paper assessment	2012	English

Table 4 New writing courses and workshops at the Ivan Franko University of Lviv, Ukraine

Course	Year	Language
English academic essay writing (taught as part of the EFL course for master's students in humanities)	2012	English
Ukrainian academic essay writing (taught as a series of workshops under the auspices of the CEAW to students of humanities)	2012	English
Distance academic writing course for students of the history department	2013	English
Ukrainian academic essay writing (taught as a series of workshops under the auspices of the CEAW to students of humanities)	2012	Ukrainian
Workshop: Ukrainian doctoral dissertation as a genre	2013	Ukrainian
Workshop: Language and style of Ukrainian doctoral dissertations in humanities	2013	Ukrainian
Workshop: A basic guide to essay writing	2013	Ukrainian
Workshop: Preparing for presentations: practical tips	2013	Ukrainian

The Romanian team was most successful in introducing new courses. The members were able to include the writing courses into their own study programs as regular offers for the students in the English and Romanian departments. They also developed courses for other faculties and held workshops in schools. This does not include offerings in creative writing, as they have a long tradition here and have been given in English and Romanian.

The Macedonian team had three members who were working in the Macedonian Institute of Literature Studies and had little experience in academic writing. They developed a new course for doctoral students, which was integrated into the study program. The fourth member became acquainted with the teaching of writing in her previous studies in the US and is currently teaching writing at the English department. She expanded the course offers for the advanced undergraduate Macedonian students majoring in English and offered a new workshop.

The Ukrainian team had already been offering writing courses before the project started, but only in English. Among the new courses there were more offers in Ukrainian than in English and most of them were addressed to other groups in humanities departments rather than the English Department, as they had been before.

The preparation of the workshops in Ukrainian appeared to be one of the most challenging and interesting tasks implemented by the Ukrainian team, as there have been no traditions of the explicit teaching of writing in the national language. To elaborate such courses, their authors had to borrow some elements of the rhetorical writing models developed within other educational systems and modify them with regard for the Ukrainian context. This practice of intercultural transfer and mixture seemed to work quite well and can be seen as a starting point for developing writing programs in former Soviet countries.

9 Joint Research

One part of the project was devoted to joint research. This was done for two reasons. First, it was meant to introduce participants to basic research activities in intercultural writing research and recollect principles of questionnaire research, including data processing and displaying results. Second, it served the purpose of providing data on writing skills and writing practices at the participating universities that could be used for institutional development and internal communication. Third, it was intended to provide materials for joint publications and research-based conference presentations.

To assess writing skills and practices, the student version of the European Writing Survey (EUWRIT; Chitez et al. 2015) was used. EUWRIT was created to systematically gather data on student writing in various institutional and disciplinary contexts. The final version used in the LIDHUM project included questions on personal and demographic data, general questions on writing in the study program, writing process and feedback, text genres and writing practices, self-evaluation (students) and appreciation (faculty) of the writing skills, conceptions of “good writing,” study competences, and writing support.

The EUWRIT questionnaire was translated into Ukrainian, Romanian, and Macedonian. Translation problems were discussed at a regular project meeting. Data were collected in selected study programs of the humanities departments, were statistically processed, and results were presented at the EATAW 2013 conference in Budapest. Results were published in the *Journal of Academic Writing* (Bekar et al. 2015). In the chapters “[Academic Writing in a Russian University Setting: Challenges and Perspectives](#)” and “[Perceptions About ‘Good Writing’ and ‘Writing Competences’ in Romanian Academic Writing Practices: A Questionnaire Study](#)” of this volume, results of the implementation of EUWRIT in different contexts are presented.

10 Conference Participation and Publication

Funding for conferences is not available in abundance to Eastern European researchers; therefore, the LIDHUM project provided means for meetings in connection with writing conferences. One such conference was EATAW 2013 in Budapest, where several presentations by members were given and a symposium was offered with results from the EUWRIT study. Another event where the LIDHUM project was jointly presented by all participants was the “Academic Writing Theory and Practice in an International Context” Conference, held by the Centre for Academic Writing, Coventry University, UK, in 2012.

Apart from the above-mentioned 2015 publication, several participants of the projects published reports on writing situations in their countries (Borchin and Doroholschi 2016; Yakhontova et al. 2016). The reports investigated and generalized

major features of their educational contexts and also included some reflexivity on writing issues developed as a result of discussions held in the course of LIDHUM implementation.

11 Writing Center Conceptions

The University of Lviv group revised their existing writing center, the Timișoara team actually created a new writing center according to their plan, and the Macedonian team created a concept which has been sent to the rectorate of the university and the Ministry of Science and Education for discussion (so far without a positive result). For the Macedonian team it was crucial to try to broaden the capacities of a small number of trained staff to teach writing to all university units. The need for improving the writing of academic texts/papers both of students and staff was more than obvious. The Writing Center was conceptualized to partner with all institutions that offer studies in the field of humanities and in that way to help other institutions realize their long-term objective of improving the general situation of academic literacy in Macedonia.

12 Writing in English and in the Local Languages

As mentioned above, project meetings and communications took place in English, but all institutions involved considered academic writing both in English and in their local languages. Project teams, therefore, were formed as a mix of English-language specialists with teachers and researchers working in the national languages of Macedonian, Romanian, and Ukrainian respectively. As a result, writing course offers were made in English, but also in the local languages. The participants' design of writing support units considered the particular needs of their institution with regard to writing development and the extent to which it needed to be done in the local language, in English, or both. All eventually decided on using both, in proportions that suited each particular context. In all three cases, participants felt that there was a simultaneous need for (1) developing the teaching of writing in L1, given the lack of institutional traditions in writing support and development in these countries; (2) developing the teaching of writing and the availability of support in English as a language that facilitates intercultural communication and integration within the scientific community; (3) fostering dialogue between specialists who teach writing in different languages; and (4) developing an instrument for data collection that will succeed in all languages involved in the project.

The work on the joint research project—translating the EUWRIT questionnaire and comparing responses between countries—highlighted both the limits and the benefits of working through a common L2 (English). This helped connect different cultural realities, but the process also involved a lot of rephrasing and explanation

and led to the questioning of long-held assumptions in order to achieve successful and precise communication.

In addition to the multilingual genre research undertaken by means of the EUWRIT questionnaire, some of the participants took advantage of the multilingual teams created within the project and undertook further research, e.g., in the case of the Romanian team, which published several papers comparing genres in English and Romanian (Băniceru et al. 2012; Borchin and Pungă 2014; Pungă and Borchin 2014). This research also fed into the Romanian participants' design of writing courses and workshops, which addressed aspects of multilingual literacy and aimed to raise students' awareness of the culture-specific aspects involved in writing.

13 How the Participants Saw the Project

Learning and professional development within LIDHUM was largely realized as a mentoring process even though this term had not been spelled out in the project proposal. Mentoring is usually defined as a form of informal learning in which a less experienced person learns from a more experienced one. This definition may also apply to a team with members of different levels of experience. A specific feature of mentoring in LIDHUM was its intercultural character, offering an open forum for negotiating collaboration and cooperation. The participants' feedback provided below illustrates a number of aspects of mentoring built into the project, such as focusing on disciplinary and personal development, getting guidance, encouragement, insider knowledge and support, and being mediated by a group.

As an informal evaluation, participants were asked to write a personal reflection in which the positive and negative aspects of the projects should be mentioned. The reflections showed that the learning process was significant for most members. A series of illustrative quotations from participants' reflections addressing various aspects of project's activities is listed below without any further comments.

- “[The project] contributed to building a network of colleagues and experts from different European countries, which will be of great professional benefit for all our further activities in the field of academic writing and literacy development” (Republic of Macedonia).
- “I feel that the biggest gain is that the members of the Macedonian team themselves, those who come from the area of Literature, have become aware of the existence of fields such as first and second language writing at an academic level and that the concept of genre is understood differently by different camps.” (Republic of Macedonia).
- “What I learned was mostly of a very practical nature, which means I could actually use the information with my students and colleagues during lectures and workshops. LIDHUM became the framework for opening the first writing center in Romania, at our faculty, which is another big plus (most probably, if we had not been involved in this project, we would not have thought about opening a writing center)” (Romania).

- “Also, the training sessions organized during the project’s meetings were like a ‘school’ for me. Learning about writing genres, critical thinking, about how to do research in academic writing, how to use online tools, how to design AW courses, the structure of a writing center or basic statistics and other things have all been exceptional opportunities for me to develop...” (Romania).
- “This project brought together two teams that had not communicated much before (the English and the Romanian departments)... Before the project, I had problems understanding the Romanian context for academic writing and now I have a better overview on AW in my country.” (Romania).
- “It has also meant an intense learning experience. Learning was one of the main personal reasons that made me embark on the project in the first place, and I gained more out of the experience than I thought was possible...” (Romania).
- “All in all, to me, being involved in the project felt almost like doing a new university degree, or at least an intensive course, that helped me specialize in a new field” (Romania).
- “Due to the LIDHUM project, I started to think more about writing in a native language and especially about multi-literacy as a concept” (Ukraine).
- “I became fascinated by the idea of the questionnaire that we distributed as a research tool for investigating.... I think such empirical methods (as part of the genre mapping procedure) can tell us much about the things we as teachers and researchers do not know or even never think about. I am inspired and plan to conduct an empirical study of the same type among the graduate students of sciences...” (Ukraine)
- “I also enjoyed many other aspects of LIDHUM: its general format with workshops marked by lively discussions and democratic atmosphere, the meeting in Coventry, joint presentations in Budapest and the speakers invited to our workshops” (Ukraine).

14 Discussion and Conclusions

Institutional partnership projects, as the one reported on here, are by no means ordinary formats of research funding. The format, as conceptualized by the Swiss National Science Foundation administration, is tailored to the special needs of the Eastern European countries and reflects the necessities of cooperation between partners with different backgrounds and developmental needs. Though built on jointly established objectives and shared responsibility, the project also had some mentoring qualities leading to an exchange of knowledge and competencies.

Research in this project was connected with various ways of intercultural learning through meetings, conferences, training events, and joint publications. This combination made the project not only beneficial for the participants but also led to sustainable developments. Results cannot be measured at the level of research results only but also on the level of personal experience, growth, and a gain in

research capacities, which all feed into the way in which the institutions involved adapt to the transformational processes they are undergoing.

As conclusions, we would like to highlight some results which bear significance for the region and might be useful to similar initiatives in the future:

- The need for communication between neighboring or near-neighboring countries in Eastern Europe is great. Problems and developmental potentials in these countries are very similar and joint learning proved to be beneficial for them. Funding opportunities thus should not be directed towards research only (as in the H2020 funding scheme) but also support such cooperation and exchange programs. This situation has improved due to the effective Erasmus+ exchange programs, which give opportunities to students and scholars to start some collaborative work.
- Mentoring proved to be a very effective way of collaboration, as it establishes an unobtrusive and non-hierarchical relationship.
- Genres used in research and teaching—this was the result of the questionnaire study—are fairly similar in the countries studied. Academic cultures turned out not to be as different as might be imagined, even when the countries had historical and cultural backgrounds as different as those of Ukraine, Romania, Macedonia and Switzerland.
- A matter that is certainly of high importance for every career in academic contexts is interaction with the international community of scholars and provision of access to the never-ending resources a large, international disciplinary community can provide to its members. Learning through joint publishing and conference presentation proved to be a very useful way of personal growth.
- Developing new writing courses for various disciplines, study programs, and levels of study proved to be the most productive way of innovation, especially when the courses could be included in the curricula and become regular teaching assignments.

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