D-SKILLS JEAN MONNET MODULE ACADEMIC REPORT

Implementation period: 2020-2023 Jean Monnet Action
Jean Monnet Module-621280-EPP-1-2020-1-RO-EPPJMO-
MODULE

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STRUCTURE OF THE ACADEMIC REPORT

The narrative report provides a detailed account of the various activities that were carried out during the implementation stage of the D-SKILLS Jean Monnet Module Project. It highlights the results achieved in teaching, research, and support activities and the numerous publications produced between 2020 and 2023. The report also sheds light on the dissemination process and the institutional initiatives that were launched as a direct outcome of the D-SKILLS Project. In conclusion, the report summarises the most significant results achieved during the project's implementation phase.

TEACHING ACTIVITIES

European Union Policies is a specialised mandatory course for second-year International Relations and European Union undergraduate students. It is one of the core disciplines in the International Relations and European Studies Curriculum. The current version of the course and seminar activities represents the perfect blend between policy analysis skills, a top-down approach(knowledge of the history and evolution of EU Policies) and bottom-up approaches (case studies on the member states) as well as consolidation of academic writing, research skills and digital competences.

Pedagogical approach:

- promoting active learning and student-centred pedagogies by using the problem-based learning method;
- implement the Digital Competence Framework 2.0, especially three key components out of the five key areas. The students will consolidate their digital competencies, especially in the framework of the team research on the evolution of Romania and Bulgaria after their accession to the EU.
- This course differentiates itself in the landscape of teaching practices by promoting a full menu approach in terms of academic content and pedagogical approaches.

One of the key features of the course was its co-teaching approach, which included guest lecturers(Dr. Goran Ilik) from the University of St. Kiliment Ohridski, Bitola North-Macedonia, who delivered an annual lecture online for the students enrolled in the European Union Policies Course. However, other EU Studies and Political Science students also attended his lectures. Additionally, Tatyana Dronzina, from the University of Sofia, Bulgaria, shared her insight on Bulgaria as a member of the EU. Particularly relevant was her lecture on Bulgaria on the topic of hybrid war and disinformation narratives employed by the Putin regime in the context of Russian aggression against Ukraine. The objective of the presentation was to familiarise students with the concept of hybrid war and how Russia utilises it to question Bulgaria's role in NATO. This co-teaching process by inviting guest lecturers proved to be beneficial for the students, especially as it allowed them to learn from country experts on the realities of North Macedonia as a candidate state and also to learn how Romania and Bulgaria are similar but how they contrast especially when it comes to the implementation of EU Policies.

Please consult the information below on the guest lecture topics of the guest lecturers.

GUEST LECTURER DR. GORAN ILIK, University of Bitola, North Macedonia: *The Problem of Modernism and the Foreign and Security Policy and Enlargement*, **May 31st, 2021-via Zoom**

This lecture presented the two diametrically opposite concepts installed in the European Union operational system – postmodernism and modernism – concerning the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and Enlargement and, thus, offered some ideas for the future advancement of the EU in a postmodern direction. This lecture's main intention was to present the European Union's inability to ensure a single foreign policy while taking into account the clash between modernism and postmodernism. Also, it is important to emphasise that coherence is the main precondition for setting and applying a single EU foreign policy. Therefore, I will stress "the coherence of preferences", which refers to the EU's capacity to establish a single foreign policy towards a particular international issue (e.g. Enlargement process with certain EU Candidate States) based on the Member State's ability to coherently to set up and to pursue transcendental (postmodern) objectives, harmonious with those of the EU.

More information on the event here: D-SKILLS Lecture Series (jmdskills.com)

GUEST LECTURER DR. GORAN ILIK, University of Bitola, North Macedonia: European Integration and the Constitutional Identity of North Macedonia, April 13, 2022-via Zoom

Prof Goran Ilik addressed the issue of the EU accession states from the Western Balkans by highlighting the case of North Macedonia. The presentation aimed to familiarise students with the constitutional changes North Macedonia has undergone in the last thirty years since gaining independence to meet the criteria for joining NATO and the EU.

The lecture has evaluated the reforms North Macedonia has embarked on, starting with the Ohrid Framework Agreement, which has redefined the Macedonian political system towards consociational democracy and a new consensus-orientated political culture. Also, a pivotal moment in the path towards EU membership was the Prespa agreement(2018). As a result, the county changed its name to North Macedonia, which led to Greece lifting its veto, and North Macedonia successfully joined NATO. In 2020, the EU invited North Macedonia to open the accession talks. However, a bitter disappointment followed, as Bulgaria vetoed the start of the accession negotiations with Macedonia, claiming that the Macedonian language has Bulgarian roots, which the government of North Macedonia failed to recognize in the Constitution. Although the dispute with Bulgaria halted the start of the negotiations with the EU, the Commission evaluated in favourable terms the moderate progress achieved by North Macedonia to meet the Copenhagen criteria. One of the conclusions of the lecture was on the disappointment of North Macedonia's citizens and how one country's veto power can keep the EU captive and prevent the EU from acting as a normative power. The lecture ended with a Q and A session with the students.

More information on the event here: D-Skills Lecture: The Constitutional Identity of North Macedonia (jmdskills.com)

GUEST LECTURER DR. GORAN ILIK, University of Bitola, North Macedonia: The Enhanced and Cooperation Mechanism: Constraints and Opportunities for the European Union, May 11, 2023-via Zoom

On May 11, 2023, Dr. Goran Ilik, University of Bitola, North Macedonia, was the guest lecturer for the course European Union Policies. He delivered a lecture and had a Q&A

session with students on the enhanced cooperation mechanism of the EU. Prof Goran Ilik addressed the EU decision-making instruments used by the European Union to advance integration. The lecture focused on the Enhanced Cooperation Mechanism(EnC) instituted as a flexible tool under the Amsterdam Treaty and further extended by the Nice and Lisbon Treaty to new areas such as the CFSP and defence sphere. The lecture has exemplified the areas where the Enhanced Cooperation Mechanism has been applied, such as the Patent or Divorce Law or establishing the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO). Prof. Ilik argued that the EnC can act as a foderator of the EU. The presentation used the "dynamic core federator" concept, advanced by Karl W. Deutsch in 1957, as a balancer between the federation units and protector of the whole from the domination of a single member or a group of members. Undergraduate students in European Studies attended the lecture and enrolled in the EU Policies and Multi-level Governance in the European Union classes. The online lecture ended with a Q and A session.

More information on the event here: D-Skills Lecture: The Enhanced and Cooperation Mechanism: Constraints and Opportunities for the European UnionD-Skills Lecture: (jmdskills.com)

GUEST LECTURER: Dr Tatyana Dronzina, Bulgaria in NATO and the Russian hybrid war against Bulgaria to question its geostrategic choice, June 6-2023

Professor Tatayna Dronzina(University of Sofia) delivered a lecture on the topic of hybrid war and disinformation narratives employed by the Putin regime in the context of Russian aggression against Ukraine. The objective of the presentation was to familiarise students with the concept of hybrid war and how Russia utilises it to question Bulgaria's role in NATO. The lecture commenced with an explanation of the characteristics of hybrid war, followed by an examination of the pro-EU and pro-Russian political parties in Bulgaria and concluded with an inventory of the main disinformation narratives surrounding the Russian war against Ukraine. Professor Dronzina's discussion shed light on the complex issues surrounding hybrid warfare and disinformation, providing valuable insights for the students. The lecture ended with a Q and A session.

More information on the event here: <u>D-Skills Lecture: Bulgaria in NATO and the Russian Hybrid War against Bulgaria to Question its geostrategic choice (jmdskills.com)</u>

The course European Union Policies incorporated digital tools as a key component of its pedagogical approach. This approach proved to be crucial during the COVID-19 Pandemic, as universities shifted to online teaching methods. The teaching staff, including Dr. Cugleşan, shared best practices with colleagues from the Department of International Studies and Contemporary History on how to adapt to this new environment. Dr Cugleşan recommended using open-access tools and online platforms to structure and deliver course and seminar activities in a virtual learning environment.

Particular attention to developing the students' research skills as part of the European Union Policies course was achieved through the team project case studies on Romania and Bulgaria and their response to EU Policies. Students were organised in groups, and by using the problem-solving method, students had to write a research paper on the Romanias and Bulgaria response to EU Policies. They had to identify a research problem, decide on the theoretical framework, and conduct a data collection and analysis process. The best reports were presented at the Politics and Policy student conference that was organised annually.

Main results of the teaching activities:

- The course was delivered in the academic years 2020-2021, 2021-2022, and 2022-2023 for students enrolled in the BA programme International Relations and European Studies from the Department of International Studies, Faculty of History and Philosophy.
- The D-SKILLS JM Module has also produced academic publications(book chapters and journal articles) that have been included as key readings for the students in the course syllabus. Particularly relevant are the academic works:
  -**Cuglesan, Natalia**. (2020, November 19). Romania and the European Union. In Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics. Oxford University Press.
  -**Natalia Cugleşan**, *Romania and Post-accession compliance with EU Environmental Policy*. Chapter published in Arpad Todor and Florenţa Helepciuc(Eds.), Europeanization of Environmental Policies and their Limitations, Springer, June 2021, pp.151-164.

- As part of the teaching activities, the D-SKILLS JM Module Leader has shared best practices from the experience of teaching the European Union Policies course: in Natalia Cugleșan, New approaches to teaching EU Studies Core Curriculum Courses through the use of ICT Means, 11th Biennal Conference of the SGEU, Luiss University, 8-10 June 2022.

RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

The D-SKILLS Jean Monnet Module also involved a research activity: *The new EU member states and the issue of digital technology in higher education: Evidence from the field of European Integration Studies.* This activity was implemented to its greatest extent in the third year of the D-SKILLS Project's implementation process and aimed to map the state of play of the digitalisation of higher education in the new member states. This activity was scheduled for the final year of the implementation process as a result of the COVID-19 Pandemic, which had a strong impact on the digitalisation of higher education for universities from Central and Eastern Europe by accelerating the process and with universities adopting the first-time Digitalisation Strategies.

The question of the digitalisation of higher education

Although addressed by a consistent body of scholarly works, the digitalisation of higher education is not explored sufficiently in single or comparative case studies of how universities have navigated their digital transformation, with the area of Central and Eastern Europe scarcely covered. Why Romania and Bulgaria? First, both countries share similar stories regarding digitalisation capacity, whether it is about the digitalisation of public services or the digital fluency of their citizens measured in terms of basic or more advanced digital skills, thus confirming their laggard reputation in the area of digitalisation. Second, they share similar educational systems regarding the quality of the teaching and research programs, with digitalisation impacting superficially the universities' policies and teaching and research programs. As a result, it deserves to investigate the response of the new joiners to the initiatives formulated by the European Union as the academic literature poorly covers these countries in the area of European policies.

Although there is a consistent body of scholarly research, empirical evidence from Central and Eastern European universities on the digitalisation of higher education focusing on teaching and learning is scarce.

What are the factors that contribute to the digitalisation process?

The issue of digitalisation of higher education is the focal point of several academic research streams, ranging from education, management, political science or EU studies. The academic literature's engagement with digital transformation has gradually increased over time. A simple Google Scholar search using the "digitalisation of higher education" criteria lists almost 34,000 publications. Nonetheless, starting with 2016, there has been a solid increase in the number of publications(Benavides et al. 2020, 8), and the COVID-19 pandemic has generated more scholarly publications due to its disruptive impact on higher education institutions.

The digitalisation of higher education has been analysed from different angles: social, organisational and technological(Benavides et al. 2020, 19). One of the important dimensions of academic focus has been the teaching and learning component. The literature preoccupied with explaining the crucial factors contributing to the digitalisation of higher education suggests several explanatory factors. A great deal of the digitalisation of teaching and learning literature points to the important role of the teaching staff. They examine the teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of digital technologies in teaching or the transition from face-to-face teaching to online teaching. By examining this variable, authors explain that the existence of the infrastructure influences the teaching staff's outlook on online teaching, understood as the availability of learning management systems or smartboards but also technical support(Glushenkova și Zagato 2023, 13) so that teachers do not feel they are alone in this process. Also, the experience of teachers with technology, their teaching style/pedagogy and digital competencies influence their attitude towards support or distrust towards digitalisation. The work volume can represent a discouraging factor(Jensen, Price, și Roxå 2020). This was particularly noticeable during the COVID-19 pandemic when the teaching staff had to adapt quickly to the new educational realities and spend more time creating teaching materials in a digital format, such as video lectures, learning how to use new digital tools or adopting new pedagogies suitable to the online environment.

A second important factor acknowledges the action of the academic leadership. The adoption of digitalisation strategies should enjoy the support of the teaching and administrative staff, which is mandatory to build "confidence and trust" in those driving the change(Khalid et al. 2018, 269).

Can the EU act as a game changer in digitalising higher education?

The EU benefits from support competencies in the area of education and, as such, has to rely on non-binding legislation to complement the member states policies in the area of education. In the last twenty years, it has adopted several strategies and soft legislation tools to tackle educational issues, from school dropout to enhancing the quality of educational systems, gaining substantial experience and expertise in the area of education. One of the most important initiatives established in the framework of the European Union was the set-up of the Bologna process, developed through the Open Method of Governance, which led to the creation of the European Higher Education Area. Despite the success of the Bologna process, measured by the growing number of countries that have joined this initiative since its establishment in 2004[1], coupled with the impact of digital technologies on today's society, it is a surprising issue that the Bologna process has remained void of a digital component. Orr et al. also emphasise the issue and highlight the lack of a structured integration of the digital dimension in education policy(Orr, Rampelt, și Knoth 2020).

However, with the digital transformation of the EU and digital policy becoming a key priority under the Von der Leyen Commission, the question of the digitalisation of education has also entered the agenda of the European Commission more systematically, with a focus on higher education. Adopting the Digital Decade Programme 2030, which represents the EU's vision guiding its digital actions, can strongly affect higher education institutions. Several arguments support this claim. First, the EU has set an ambitious digitalisation agenda by framing the Digital Decade as "everyone has the skills to use everyday technology….where no one is left behind."(„Europe's Digital Decade | Shaping

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[1] There are currently 49 countries part of the Bologna process.

Europe's Digital Future" 2023). To support this agenda, it has advanced clear targets for reaching the goal of digitally competent citizens. As such, it has set the objective of at least 80% of Europeans to acquire basic digital skills by 2030(„Europe's Digital Decade: Digital Targets for 2030" f.a.). This has implications for education, as universities must prepare a digitally skilled labour force and enable digital citizenship, with EU citizens capable of participating in democratic life and exerting fundamental rights such as the freedom of expression in the online environment. This is relevant more than ever, as the digital divide can exclude citizens from accessing public services, applying for a job or educational programs or participating as engaged digital citizens. Thus, universities contribute to closing the digital skills gaps and enable citizens to exert their digital rights. Second, in 2022, the EU adopted the D*eclaration on Digital Rights and Principles*, which recognises the right to digital education, an extension of the right to education enshrined in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. Including the right to digital education will create more pressure on the EU member states and universities to develop policies involving the use of digital technology in the teaching and learning process. Together with the Digitial Action Plan for 2021-2027, it represents a new turning point for the EU to contribute to the digitalisation of higher education institutions.

As such, it is unsurprising that the logical follow-up was for the European Commission to adopt an EU Strategy for universities to reinforce transnational cooperation among European universities. The Strategy plays several roles: to develop a veritable European dimension of education, support universities to adapt to changing conditions to be able to thrive, and contribute to the post-pandemic recovery(European Commission f.a., 6). The COVID-19 pandemic has fundamentally changed universities' teaching and learning programs and has accelerated the digitalisation process as academic institutions had to adapt and find digital solutions to the challenges raised by the global pandemic. The Strategy plays on the digitalisation card. It occupies a central role in the EU's plan of action. It understands the digitalisation of universities threefold: universities need to develop the digital skills of students and teaching and research staff to include digital technologies in the teaching and learning process in all educational programs, as digital skills are required in almost all sectors of the economy and develop specialised programs in artificial intelligence, cybersecurity or microelectronics(European Commission f.a., 17). These objectives should be materialised by transnational cooperation in line with other initiatives from the field, such as the Digital Action Plan, and by using financial programs,

such as the Digital Europe Programme, Horizon Europe or the Erasmus + Action. The EU is prepared to allocate funding of 80 billion Euro(European Commission f.a., 11) This is a great opportunity for Central and Eastern European universities to join transnational alliances. First, it has the potential to connect universities from the new member states, such as Romania and Bulgaria, where the quality of teaching and research does not match the academic standards of Western universities, thus contributing to the improvement of the quality of the teaching and research programs. Second, it can drive change, especially by turning universities into more digitally conscious by learning through the exchange of best practices from more digitally mature and tech-savvy higher education institutions. Third, it has the potential to innovate by nurturing the creation of joint transnational programs and considerably impact students and teaching staff by using digital technologies in teaching and learning and equipping the students with the necessary digital competencies; it will also contribute to the professionalisation of the teaching staff, which also needs more training on the use of technologies and on the new pedagogies which involve the use of digital tools. Finally, the level of funding is another plus, as universities from Romania and Bulgaria suffer from chronic underfunding, and digitalisation has not benefited from consistent attention before the Covid-19 pandemic. It is a window of opportunity for Eastern European universities to become more competitive, keep up with the new dynamics, and have the capacity to make higher education more attractive and improve the quality of the teaching and research programs.

To sum up, the EU has the potential to act as a game changer. As discussed, the EU has not lacked leadership in the area of digitalisation of education. On the contrary, it has been productive and has set an agenda for digitalisation and appropriate tools, such as financial instruments. However, to reach its objectives, several criteria must be met. The main challenge that emanates is that the EU mostly operates with non-compulsory legislation, which can create implementation problems. Also, many new member states lag behind in digitalisation issues. According to the 2022 Digital Society Index, Romania scores last among EU countries, with only 20% of available digital public services(„Digital Public Services in the Digital Economy and Society Index | Shaping Europe's Digital Future" 2022, 6). These adverse realities will create serious implementation deficits for reaching the digital targets of the Digital Decade programme. This is also true in the case of the human capital factor. Romania and Bulgaria score last among European countries in all indicators of the Human Capital Digital Society Index published by the European Commission,

whether it concerns basic or more advanced digital skills of its citizens(„Human Capital and Digital Skills in the Digital Economy and Society Index | Shaping Europe's Digital Future" 2022). Thus, it pressures member states and higher education institutions to adapt to the EU digital norms and design policies and programs to respond to the digital imbalance, which will not be without challenges, keeping in mind the lack of experience with digital policies in the case of national authorities and universities.

This paper starts by arguing that the digitalisation of higher education is the result of a multi-level governance system, with a top-down regulatory approach: the EU, member states, and universities.

Main results of the research activities:

Presentation of research results in two academic conferences and publication of the research results in the special issue of Digitalisation of teaching:

- Natalia Cugleşan, The Digitalisation of the Field of European Studies. Mapping the State of Play, IEUSS Teaching and Researching the European Union Conference, 2022.
- Natalia Cugleşan, The digitalisation of higher education institutions. Evidence from the new member states, paper presented at UACES, 6-8 September 2023, Belfast, UK.
- It will be published in the special issue on the Digitalisation of teaching in the Journal of Legal and Political Education in 2024.

EVENTS:

The D-SKILLS Workshop: Digital Skills in Higher Education(May 2022)

In May(30 & 31, 2022), the D-Skills Jean Monnet Module held a workshop dedicated to the digitalisation of EU Studies. The workshop brought together 11 participants to discuss best practices and innovative teaching methods in EU Integration Studies, focusing on digital skills.

The first day of the workshop featured presentations from universities across Europe, including Romania, Germany, the UK, and South Africa. The speakers shared their experiences and emphasised the pedagogies and approaches to encourage digital skills-based teaching.

The second day continued the discussion on the digitalisation of higher education, with presentations from colleagues in European Studies and History. They shared their teaching approaches aimed at developing critical learning skills for students. The workshop also included practitioners who mapped the state of play of digitalisation during the COVID-19 pandemic, highlighting the Ministry of Foreign Affairs case.

More information on the event here: <u>D-Skills Workshop: Digital Skills in higher education (jmdskills.com)</u>

THE D-SKILLS LECTURE SERIES

● **Jean Monnet Lecture:** The Enlargement of the EU towards the Western Balkans
Guest Speaker: Mr John Howarth, May 19, 2021

The EP to Campus programme is organised by the <u>European Parliament Former Members Association</u>. Babeș-Bolyai University has participated successfully in it for more than eight years. It is a valuable programme that offers students the chance to connect with practitioners and learn from their experience and insights on EU policy-making or how to design a career plan in International Relations.

More information on the event here: <u>D-SKILLS Lecture Series (jmdskills.com)</u>

● **Jean Monnet Lecture: Democracy without liberalism. Dealing with populism in the EU, October 20, 2022.**
Guest Speaker: Alain Lamassoure, a member of the European Parliament(1989-2019)

Alain Lamassoure, a member of the European Parliament for four terms(1989-2019), was invited in the framework of the Jean Monnet project and part of the EP to Campus Programme on October 20, 2022 to discuss virtually with more than 50 students in Security Studies and International Relations and European Studies from the Department

of International Studies and Contemporary History on the challenges of populism and democracy in the EU. The lecture mapped the state of democracy in the EU. It advanced the remedies the EU should employ to respond to growing illiberalism and democratic backsliding in the EU.

More information on the event here: <u>D-Skills Lecture: Democracy without liberalism. Dealing with populism in the EU (jmdskills.com)</u>

OTHER EVENTS

- **Global Model European Union: April 10-11 and April 17-18, 2021-Virtual Edition**

The <u>Global Model European Union (GLOBALMEU</u>) is a simulation of the European Union organised in partnership with universities worldwide. The 2021 edition, held virtually for two weekends in April due to the Covid-19 pandemic, reunited 128 participants. The Department of International Studies and Contemporary History has participated with a delegation of **eight students** enrolled in the undergraduate programs of Security Studies-Romanian and English line(**Codruța Vârlan, Daniela Nițucă, Daniel Coca, Andi Todoruț, Cătălin Filip and Andreea Florescu)** and two students from the undergraduate programme International Relations and European Studies(**Ariana Baciu**) and the graduate programme History, Memory and Orality(**Gabriel Zvîncă)**. The students were organised in individual(Netherlands) and transnational delegations(Sweden and Cyprus) with Jamestown Community College and LeMoyne College, US. The simulation programme was a highly productive learning experience on the preferences and contributions to the EU project of states like Cyprus, Greece and the Netherlands but also the current challenges faced by the EU: reducing the EU knowledge deficit or rebuilding the EU economy) or foreign relations(relations with Saudi Arabia and the Alliance of Small Island States).

- **Global Model European Union: January 13-15, 2022**: **Virtual edition**

The <u>Global Model European Union (GLOBALMEU</u>) is a simulation of the European Union organised in partnership with universities worldwide. In odd years, the simulation meets

in Brussels and New York. The 2022 edition was organised virtually between 13 and 15 January due to the COVID-19 pandemic and reunited participants from fourteen universities. Luiza Ganţă and Luca Urda, first-year students in the English line Security Studies programme, Department of International Studies and Contemporary History, have represented the delegation of Netherlands and discussed for three days with fellow delegates in the Foreign Affairs Council and European Council the current challenges facing the EU. The simulation was a valuable learning experience on EU affairs.

More information on the 2021 and 2022 editions here: Global Model European Union (jmdskills.com)

The two editions provided a wonderful opportunity for students specializing in EU Studies, Security Studies, or those pursuing a Master's degree to connect with fellow students from the US and gain valuable insights into EU decision-making processes and state preferences. This non-formal educational setting has been an enriching experience that has broadened their horizons and provided them with a deeper understanding of the EU's political and economic landscape.

- **Globe Exercise-Virtual simulation: 5-8 December 2022**

GLOBE is a mix of a traditional simulation game and crisis management exercise where students virtually navigate through a simulated conflict scenario in the Sahel region, focusing on Mali's security and humanitarian situation. The programme, run by the Ostbayerische Technische Hochschule Regensburg(Germany), has involved, for the first time, participants from Babeş-Bolyai University. The UBB team(**5 students**) played the Institute of Sahel Security Policy role and, in partnership with students from the University of St. Gallen, had to draft a report on the non-state armed groups and the various actors involved in the conflict. The analysis supported the ECOWAS's work in the region, played by the Ostbayerische Technische Hochschule Regensburg(Germany). During the three days of the simulation exercise, the students conducted research activities which allowed them to apply the knowledge acquired in the field of

International Relations. At the same time, it was an excellent opportunity to enhance their transversal skills and practice real-life scenarios.

More information on the programme here: GLOBE SIMULATION (jmdskills.com)

● **Globe Exercise Summer edition-Virtual simulation: 12-15 June 2023**

GLOBE is a mix of a traditional simulation game and crisis management exercise where students virtually navigate through a simulated conflict scenario in the Sahel region, focusing on Mali's security and humanitarian situation. The 2023 summer edition has involved **22** participants from several European Universities: OTH Regensburg, Babeş-Bolyai University, Dublin City University, University of Trento, and University of Glasgow. The programme, run by the Ostbayerische Technische Hochschule Regensburg(Germany), has involved, for the second time, participants from Babeş-Bolyai University. The UBB team played the role of the Institute of Sahel Security Policy and, in partnership with students from the University of Trento, had to draft a report on the non-state armed groups and the various actors involved in the conflict. The analysis supported the ECOWAS's work in the region, played by the Ostbayerische Technische Hochschule Regensburg(Germany). During the three days of the simulation(12-15 June) exercise, the students conducted research activities which allowed them to apply the knowledge acquired in the field of International Relations. At the same time, it was an excellent opportunity to enhance their transversal skills and practice real-life scenarios.

More information on the event here: GLOBE SIMULATION (jmdskills.com)

● **Student conference Politics and Policies(November 6-2021, November 2022, November 2023 editions)**

Politics and Policies is an academic conference that has reached its ninth edition in 2023. The conference allows students in International Relations and European Studies to showcase their research and engage in in-depth discussions on their theoretical and methodological approaches. It is open to students who have taken the European Union

Policies course and those from other undergraduate and graduate programs at Babeș-Bolyai University and other academic institutions.

Due to COVID-19, the conference has been held twice on-site and once virtual over the course of three annual editions. A total of **38 students** have participated and presented their research, receiving valuable feedback on their methodological design. In addition, the conference format included a roundtable discussion on the use of technology in teaching, with participation from colleagues at several Romanian universities, including the University of Iași, the National School of Political and Administrative Studies, and Târgu Jiu University. The 2023 edition of the conference also presented the results achieved by the D-SKILLS Project.

More information here: MEDIA (jmdskills.com)

PUBLICATIONS

The Jean Monnet Project Director has achieved significant milestones during the project's implementation stage. Specifically, the Director has published multiple studies with prestigious publishers such as Oxford University Press, Springer, and Bloomsbury Politics and International Relations Section and research articles published in peer-reviewed journals.

The papers were published as a single author or co-authored with other members of the implementation team(dr. Goran Ilik) or other Jean Monnet professors.

November 2020

Cuglesan, Natalia. (2020, November 19). Romania and the European Union. In Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics. Oxford University Press. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.013.1117

May 2021

Natalia Cugleșan, *Romania and Post-accession compliance with EU Environmental Policy*. Chapter published in Arpad Todor and Florența Helepciuc(Eds.), Europeanization of Environmental Policies and their Limitations, Springer, June 2021, pp.151-164.

December 2022

Natalia Cuglesan, Goran Ilik*, The Romanian Presidency of the Council to the European Union. Great expectations*?Article published in JILA, Vol. 8, No.3, 2022, pp.459-474.

2023

Natalia Cugleşan, *The right to have digital rights in the European Union. A step towards digital citizenship?* Chapter published in Mihai Alexandrescu(Ed.), Citizens of the European Union. Status, Identity and Beyond, Presa Universitară, Fall 2023, pp.39-66.

Buonanno, L., Ceesay, A., Cuglesan, N., Nugent, N., Peters, T., Rabb, G., and Smith, D. (Eds) (2023). IEUSS Guide to the SUNY Model European Union (17th ed.). Institute for European Union Studies at SUNY.

2023

Natalia Cugleşan, What has the EU learned from crises?, in Participation in Europe" by Monica Baldi and Michael Hindley.

- Monica Baldi and Michael Hindley's book Participation in Europe, published in 2023, is an FMA_HAEU collaboration. It explores ways to enhance civic education and envisions a European landscape where citizens are not just spectators but active architects of their democratic future.

Information on the publications here: D-SKILLS PUBLICATIONS (jmdskills.com)

Forthcoming publications:

- Natalia Cugleşan, European Union Digital Policy: The European Union as a normative digital power, in: L.Buonanno and C.Dudek(eds.), The future of European Public Policy: Challenges, Trends and Opportunities, 2025.

- Natalia Cugleşan, chapter on Romania: EU Affairs Coordination Systems, in Heidebreder and Kassim(eds.), The National Coordination of European Policies, Oxford University Press, 2025.

- A special issue on the digitalisation of teaching will be published in the Journal of Legal and Political Education in 2024.

  About the Special Issue: **How do students from the new member states learn?**

The special issue examines how the digitalization process has entered the EU Studies curricula(and connected fields) in universities in the new member states to boost students' critical competencies. It aims to map the state of play in universities from the new member states(Romania and Bulgaria) and explore the pedagogies employed to enhance students' transversal and professional skills.

PARTICIPATION IN ACADEMIC CONFERENCES

- Natalia Cugleşan, The digitalisation of higher education institutions. Evidence from the new member states, paper presented at UACES, 6-8 September 2023, Belfast, UK.

- Natalia Cugleşan, " How did the new member states and their citizens respond to the reform of the Conference of the Future of Europe? " 2023 IUESS Teaching and Researching the European Union Conference, Institute for European Union Studies at SUNY, SUA, 30-1 Aprilie, 2023.

- Natalia Cugleşan, New approaches to teaching EU Studies Core Curriculum Courses through the use of ICT Means, 11th Biennal Conference of the SGEU, Luiss University, 8-10 June 2022.

- Natalia Cugleşan, The Digitalisation of the field of European Studies. Mapping the State of Play, 2022 IUESS Teaching and Researching the European Union Conference, SUNY Buffalo, SUA, 8-9 Aprilie, 2022.

- Natalia Cuglesan, The Romanian Presidency of the Council of the European Union. Great expectations?, UACES, 6-8 September 2021.

INITIATIVES RESULTED FROM THE D-SKILLS PROJECT

The Digital Education Workshop in Humanities and Social Sciences has been established as part of the D-SKILLS Project. This workshop provides a platform for students to acquire and develop digital pedagogies and tools relevant to their learning and research process. By engaging in this program, students can enhance their digital skills, become familiar with the latest digital tools, and adopt modern learning practices incorporating technology.

There are multiple factors that drive the need for this initiative. The European Union(EU) has been heavily invested in promoting digitalisation in various sectors, including education and higher education. This has led to a push for universities to adopt these new approaches to improve the quality of education. One significant problem identified at the European level is the low level of digital proficiency among young people. According to the Digital Economy Index(DESI) reports, Romania is ranked last among EU member states regarding digital skills. This is particularly concerning for the age group of 16-24, where 56% of young people in Romania possess only basic digital skills, which is far below the European average. One explanation is related to the perpetuation in pre-university education of teaching methods based on rote memorisation and reproduction of information, with minimal critical and analytical effort and without embracing new pedagogies that include the use of technology.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that while students are adept at utilising technology, they may not necessarily possess the same level of proficiency when it comes to incorporating technology into their learning process. Additionally, a noteworthy suggestion at the EU level proposes implementing flexible study programs, including hybrid and fully online options, even in the post-pandemic era. The efficacy of such endeavours, however, is contingent upon the digital literacy of both educators and learners.

Furthermore, although the COVID-19 pandemic has created a series of challenges for students and teachers in the learning process through the forced transition to online education, for which students and teachers were not fully prepared, the pandemic has also opened new opportunities for learning and contributed to accelerating the digitalisation of education.

As such, academic departments must establish policies and strategies for the digitalisation of education. This can involve developing human capital, whether teachers or students, by organising training sessions or including them in informal learning contexts (seminars or workshops).

In this context, the Digital Education Workshop initiative aims to respond to these transformations. Students enrolled in the undergraduate and graduate programs in

International Relations and European Studies, History, and Security Studies, as well as doctoral students enrolled in the Doctoral Schools of the Faculty of History and Philosophy, are invited to participate in the workshop sessions, which are structured as bi-monthly meetings.

During the academic year 2023-2024(first semester), three editions of the event were held, and 20 students participated.

- **First edition: 8 November**, 2023-The role of artificial intelligence in education
- **Second edition: 22 November** 2023-The use of wiki tools in the dissemination of research
- **Third edition: 6 December 2023**-The use of technology in the research process.

More on the event here: <u>Atelier de educație digitală în științele umaniste și sociale (jmdskills.com)</u>

DISSEMINATION STRATEGY

Throughout the implementation stage of the D-SKILLS Jean Monnet Module Project, the team employed a range of strategies to share the project's progress and outcomes with stakeholders, including the use of diverse tools and channels for dissemination.

a. The D-SKILLS Project Website

Ongoing dissemination through the Jean Monnet D-skills website, which attracted around 5000 visitors;

b. The Jean Monnet Community platform

The Jean Monnet Community on Microsoft Teams has been used to promote the events organized as part of the Jean Monnet Module, attract participation in the Jean Monnet workshops, and engage with wider audiences.

c. The use of well-established academic networks(UACES AND ECPR)

Participation in these networks of excellence was crucial in disseminating the research activities results and teaching approaches used by the D-SKILLS Project.

- UACES 2023: Natalia Cugleşan, The digitalisation of higher education institutions. Evidence from the new member states, paper presented at UACES, 6-8 September 2023, Belfast, UK.

- Natalia Cugleşan, New approaches to teaching EU Studies Core Curriculum Courses through the use of ICT Means, 11th Biennal Conference of the SGEU, Luiss University, 8-10 June 2022.

- Natalia Cugleşan, The Digitalisation of the field of European Studies. Mapping the State of Play, 2022 IUESS Teaching and Researching the European Union Conference, SUNY Buffalo, SUA, 8-9 Aprilie, 2022.

d. Dissemination by using the EUSA and UACES transnational channels to reach more transnational audiences.

To ensure that a diverse range of academic audiences have the opportunity to participate, calls for workshops and papers have been disseminated through multiple channels, including EUSA X's Twitter and Facebook pages and the EUSA/UACES mailing list. This approach has allowed for a wider reach and increased engagement among potential participants.

e. Dissemination of D-SKILLS activities and results via social media platforms

The D-SKILLS Project has a Facebook page with **330 followers**, a LinkedIn page with **123** followers, and a Twitter account with **62 followers**. Meanwhile, the Faculty of History and Philosophy has a substantial social media presence, with a Facebook page boasting 6.2K followers and an Instagram account with 500 followers. Additionally, the Department of International Studies and Contemporary History's social media accounts have promoted the activities and results of the D-SKILLS Projects.

All these social media platforms channels have been used in the dissemination process.

f. Jean Monnet newsletter-D-SKILLS Gazette

The D-SKILLS Project's annual newsletter provides an overview of all the project's activities. It showcases the progress and achievements made throughout the year and offers a great way to stay informed and up-to-date on all things D-SKILLS.

g. Dissemination also through the members of the Jean Monnet team at their home universities.

The strong links created with the University of St.Kliment Ohridski(Bitola), North Macedonia, have led to joint publications and stronger cooperation. For example, a special issue on the digitalisation of the field of EU Studies will be published in the Journal of Legal and Political Education, published by the Institute for Research and European Studies, Bitola, North Macedonia.

h. Erasmus Teaching activities in Lublin(2023)and Lithuania(2022)

Finally, a great opportunity to disseminate information about the teaching activities of the D-SKILLS Project was also in the context of the Erasmus Teaching mobilities the D-SKILLS project leader carried out at the University of Kaunas(2022) and Lublin(2023). The teaching content focused on the new member states(Romania and Bulgaria), but it also involved discussions with teaching staff on the pedagogies and the use of digital tools in teaching and research. It was a great opportunity to share the approaches used by the D-SKILLS project.

ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED IN THE IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS OF THE D-SKILLS JEAN MONNET MODULE

The Jean Monnet Module D-SKILLS project faced several obstacles during its implementation. The COVID-19 pandemic was one of the biggest challenges as it brought about several difficulties in the teaching and events components of the project. Due to the

pandemic, the academic dropout rate among students enrolled in the BA programme International Relations and European Studies increased, decreasing the number of students enrolled in the European Union Policies course. The students who started their undergraduate studies in the academic year 2020-2021 faced many challenges, as they were limited to experiencing access to education only in a virtual setting, which was not very engaging and impacted their participation and motivation. Regarding the organisation of the workshop(D-SKILLS Workshop: Digital Skills in Higher Education), it was also challenging to attract participants. In the first year of the implementation, due to the uncertainty brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic and social distancing measures in place and with the universities closing their physical doors, it was impossible to organise it on-site. As a result, the first edition of the workshop took place in May 2022 in a hybrid format, and it brought academics from Romania, Bulgaria, Georgia, the UK and South Africa. In spite of the efforts to organise the Workshop virtually and to use transnational channels for the dissemination of EUSA, UACES or the Jean Monnet Platform on Teams for the call for papers, it was difficult to attract a substantial number of participants. One of the explanations is that the issue of the digitalisation of teaching and learning in the field of EU Studies does not seem to be a strong research agenda for Romanian scholars and not only, and with few teaching staff showing interest in the digitalisation of the field of EU Studies as a research area. To overcome this challenge, the D-SKILLS JM Module Leader has participated in the Panel *New Approaches to Teaching EU Studies Core Curriculum Courses through the Use of ICT Means. Best Practices and Lessons Learnt* part of the 11th Biennal Conference of the SGEU, Luiss University, 8-10 June 2022 or in 2022 IUESS Teaching and Researching the European Union Conference, SUNY Buffalo, SUA, 8-9 Aprilie, 2022. These transnational events were a great opportunity to engage with other scholars interested in teaching and learning in the field of EU Studies.

Also, the D-SKILLS Workshop for Junior Scholars was organised as part of the academic event Politics and Policies by organising a round table with the junior scholars, which were PhD students or early career academics(teaching assistants). When the D-SKILLS Project was selected for funding in 2020, the Politics and Policy event was at its 6th edition and had already built a community of young academics around it.

A final challenge related to the composition of the Jean Monnet team. Unfortunately, Dyliana Pavlova, from the University of Sofia, Bulgaria, switched jobs and left academia after August 2020. The D-SKILLS Project had to select a new member who could assume her responsibilities. Tatyana Dronzina, a lecturer at the University of Sofia, was selected instead.

In spite of these challenges, the D-SKILLS Jean Monnet Module has achieved its objectives and managed to establish new partnerships and links with other Jean Monnet Modules and Chairs, contributing to the internationalisation process of the home university, has organised additional academic events for various audiences and suceeded to consolidate also the publication record in contributing with book chapters or journal articles.

SUMMARY OF THE MOST SIGNIFICANT RESULTS

PARTNERSHIPS AND COOPERATIONS

1. **Consolidated cooperation with SUNY Buffalo State-Jean Monnet Module EU-Africa Relations**

- Participation in two editions of the SUNY MEU 2022(Buffalo) and 2023(New York), which involved more than 200 students from US colleges.

- Keynote speaker at the SUNY MEU Opening Ceremony(2022 edition) for more than 100 students.

- 2022: The D-SKILLS Jean Monnet Module leader delivered teaching activities for Political Science and Public Administration students on the new member states of the European Union(Romania) and their contribution to EU Policies.

- Board Member of the Institute for European Union Studies at SUNY since June 2022.

2. **Initiation of a new partnership with the University of Magdeburg-Jean Monnet Chair Multi-level Governance in the EU**

- Invitation to join the editorial project(May 2023) coordinated by the Jean Monnet Chair(Eva Heidebreder) together with Hussein Kassim on the EU Affairs National Coordination systems of the EU member states which will be published with Oxford University in 2025. The D-skills Jean Monnet Module director will contribute with a chapter on Romania EU Affairs National Coordination Systems.

3. Links with Ostabayerische Technische Hochschule Regensburg, Germany

- The GLOBE Exercise provides students with additional opportunities to participate in extracurricular activities and further consolidate their knowledge and digital skills, as it is organised as a virtual programme.

- Also, dr. Cugleșan has initiated the signing of an Erasmus agreement between OTH and Babeș-Bolyai University, thus contributing to the internationalisation process of the university and opening new opportunities for student mobility.

4. Consolidation of the links with the Association of the Former Members of the European Parliament

- Participation as a guest speaker in the roundtable event: *Challenges of teaching EU topics organised in the framework of the event Celebration of the 15th anniversary of the EP to Campus Programme*, December 2021.

- Participation as a guest speaker in the roundtable: *Can the EU learn from experience? organised by the Former Association Association* in Florence, June 2023.

5. The Constitution for Europe Network

- <u>Network bringing together 163 Jean Monnet Professors</u> and other distinguished academics from 22 EU member states and 17 non-EU States.

- In 2023, our network participated in the call for proposals for the Erasmus Plus Programme, specifically for the JM Policy Debates. Unfortunately, the research proposal, "The European Constitutional Process as a Model for Regional and

Global Governance," was not selected for funding. Nevertheless, we remain determined to resubmit our proposal in the future Jean Monnet calls.

TEACHING & RESEARCH

- The publication of the research results in the Journal of Legal and Political Education
- Teaching the course European Union Policies for 45 students for the three academic years 2020-2023

PUBLICATIONS

Throughout the implementation stage of the Jean Monnet Project, several publications have been the outcome of the D-SKILLS Project:

a. **Three academic** papers published with Oxford University Press(2020), Springer(2021) and in the JILA Journal(2022)(listed in several international databases)

b. **One chapter** published in a national publisher(Presa Universitară Clujeană)-2023

c. **Two forthcoming book** chapters with Bloomsbury EU Studies Series and Oxford University Press(2024/2025)

d. **Forthcoming Special Issue on the Digitalisation of education(the field of EU Studies)** will be published in the Journal of Legal and Political Education(2024).

e. **Non-academic papers**
a. Contribution to the book *Participation in Europe* published by the FMA
b. Co-editor of two editions of the SUNY MEU Guide for the 2022 and 2023 editions

ORGANISED EVENTS

The D-SKILLS Project has successfully organised various events catering to diverse target groups, such as BA and MA students, doctoral students, and early career researchers. These events included EU simulations through GlobalModelEU and crisis management simulations via GLOBE Exercise, as well as student conferences like Politics and Policies and the D-SKILLS Lecture series. It is worth noting that these events, which were open to students, reached a direct target group of around **140 individuals**. They included students enrolled in Romanian universities but also from prestigious universities(Oxford University and the University of Glasgow).

NEW INITIATIVES

- The set-up at the Faculty level of the Digital Education Workshop in the Humanities and Social Sciences in partnership with other colleagues from the Faculty of History and Philosophy.