

## **SOME HINTS TO BECOME SUCCESSFUL INTERNATIONAL LAW SCHOOL IN EUROPE BASED ON EMPIRICAL EXPERIENCES**

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In the context of internationalisation of legal profession, Tallinn Law School has 14 years of experiences of building up an international law school. TLS aims to teach lawyers to be able to work effectively in the international level as well as multiple jurisdictions. These aims have presented unique advantages and disadvantages which will be shortly analysed.

### **ADVANTAGES OF THE INTERNATIONAL LAW SCHOOL:**

- prevailing comparative and European approach, unique curricula in the region; multilingualism and effective synergy between the programmes;
- emerging identity and recognition from professional associations and comparable institutions; existing tradition and practice of contemporary legal studies;
- balanced curricula (different schools of thought represented by lecturers from different regions);
- international cooperation and networking (ELFA, Erasmus, summer schools, strategic partners);
- ability to respond rapidly to the changing needs of target groups;
- flexibility and student-centric approach, advantageous student – teacher ratio;
- motivated and active faculty, stronger interest in teaching positions as the potential pool is larger;
- attracting public and EU funding (specific research centres, Jean Monnet programme, etc);
- Interest in cooperation from government, law firms, society;

### **Main risks and threats**

*Regulatory action and protectionism, which ignore international trends and practices.* Tallinn Law School operates in the international and national markets. Success in the international market depends also on the local educational laws and regulations, which can restrict competitiveness in the international and European markets.

*Quality and accreditation requirements.* The quality requirements can be arbitrary and interpreted by the regulators in a way which does not allow to compete in a level playing field. Regulatory action does not always take into account the international dimension.

*Difficulties in integrating English and local language studies which are based on the same licences.* This includes the differences in tuition fees, teaching staff, etc.

*Discrimination of graduates in a specific labour market.* This applies both to geographic and professional markets.

*Not being able to attract high quality permanent faculty.* This depends on the financing and quality requirements.

*Not being able to attract high quality students.* This applies both to the local market (demographic situation) and finding new markets abroad.

*Not enough research activities to survive as a “serious” academic institution.* Depends on permanent faculty and cooperation activities.

*No sufficient support for activities of the international law school.* The support services (finance, marketing, human resources, IT, etc) are not providing adequately for the needs of international students.

*Insufficient usage of the facilities for virtual study.*

## **Recent activities**

### **Development of international networking, cooperation and new areas of synergy with other law schools in Europe and elsewhere**

- Continuation and better promotion of joint summer programmes
- Joint diplomas (e.g. ERASMUS Mundus)
- Increase the compatibility of international, European and comparative law courses with the curricula of other faculties of law in the region
- Establishment of an international advisory council for the Law School, which makes recommendations and suggestions on the curricula.

## **Innovative teaching methods**

- One law school, two or more languages: introduce system where student can make a la carte programme
- All courses are taught at the same semester, regardless of the form of study or language
- Recognition of Prior Academic and Professional Experience
- Expanded use of modern teaching methods
- Flexible systems of lectures, seminars and individual class-work
- Public presentation and scrutiny of seminar-papers;
- Use of technology for teaching (audio-video equipment etc.);
- Operative electronic communication;
- Close communication between professors and individual students, as study groups are small;
- Accessibility of electronic teaching materials and databases on the Internet.

An increasing number of courses require even more **active input from the students** by way of oral presentations, group work, and project oriented work inside and outside the classroom. Seminars, workshops and simulation exercises provide students with opportunities for integrated work on an individual basis or in teams.

In all courses **critical and analytical thinking**, and **independence of mind**, in combination with **excellence in written and oral presentation**, is emphasised over memorisation.

The **weaknesses** of the teaching practices are:

- Uneven levels of instructional materials;
- Inadequate proficiency of some students in English;
- Low percentage of written papers that could develop the skills of comparative study and the expression of original ideas;
- Insufficient usage of the facilities for virtual study;
- The unification of certain academic requirements for different language groups is not completed.

**Plan of action** to remedy weaknesses:

- Encouraging lecturers to prepare more instructional materials;
- Updating the library with new publications;
- Developing methods and preparing instructional materials for web-based instruction.

**Positioning the law programmes in the light of the Bologna Declaration**

- Intensify the exchange of faculty members via the ERASMUS programme in addition to current practices
- Encouraging the mobility of students
- Increase the capacity to accept students from EU countries

**Synergy with programmes offered by other schools in the University (business, international relations)**

- Pooling of resources for offering common courses
- Ensure better choices of interdisciplinary courses for students
- Develop joint modules or interdisciplinary programmes

**Use of innovative teaching methods**

- Increase the quality and use of virtual courses through participation in E-university

**Finding additional resources for the Law library**

- Improving and expanding access to online legal databases
- Adding relevant periodicals in the field of law

**Encouraging further academic research in the Law Faculty**

- Advanced dialogue with society through non-profit activities
- Expanding activities through the creation of the Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence
- Find further opportunities for the member of faculty to share their knowledge as experts

### **Strengthening the realisation of the principle of Academic Freedom**

- Further increasing the role and responsibilities of the Chairs
- Developing the efficiency of the management of the Law School and study-management

As the *espace juridique* is changed, the borders are open, there is more and more need for internationally oriented **lawyers capable of acting in different legal societies**. Independence from any kind of constraints for international education can be strengthened by:

- international advisory board for the law school, consisting of eminent professors and practitioners
- establishment of stronger link with different interest groups and professional associations
- further participation in open discussion on contemporary legal education