International Master’s Program in Comparative Social Work

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BCBU in brief

- Barents Cross Border University (BCBU) is based on the cooperation between universities in Northern Finland and Northwest Russia.
- Altogether there are two participating universities in Finland and eight in Russia and three from other countries.
- Four Master's Programme:
  - Environmental Engineering (BEE)
  - Information and Communication Technology (GS3D)
  - Comparative Social Work (CSW)
  - Health and Wellbeing in Circumpolar Areas (MCH) (http://bcbu.oulu.fi/)
- A Steering board
The Barents Region and BCBU(1)

- The nature in these northern areas is ecologically sensitive and regenerates slowly.
- Long distances and scarce population make living in northern areas additionally striving causing e.g. social problems, and increasing needs for transportation of goods and people.
- Northern environment sets its own requirements in health issues, and in health care and services.
- Intensive industry and increasing needs to take the natural resources into use brings out a clear need to develop industrial processes more environmentally friendly.
- Additionally, it is important to find measures to prevent and diminish environmental damages and to restore existing damages.
The Barents Region and BCBU(2)

- During the last 15 years significant societal changes have occurred in the Barents Region
  - A gap of standards of living at border area between EU and Russia as well as income differences inside Russia exist.
  - Social and welfare problems have set new challenges for social work and employees dealing with these issues.

- Development of information systems and services is increasingly done in international and trans-boundary cooperation
  - International cooperation requires multicultural project skills in addition to systems and software development expertise
  - However, it is important to have clear procedures on how to treat information and collaborate with respect to information security
  - Also, mobility of labor force presupposes understanding of cultural backgrounds and multicultural skills.
CSW: Some aims and topics in planning and implementation

- Sustainable social and economic development in Barents Region; prevention of social problems; not only individual but also societal aspects
- Academic and scientific collaboration across the border; mobility of students and teachers
- Developing of expertise across border, focusing on the neighbouring collaboration program, northern dimension and the needs of labour force: cultural understanding and multicultural skills of social work
- Implementation of the Bologna process in Finland and Russia; transparency of curriculum and courses
Aims of Social Work curriculum

- Comparative Social Work is
  - a programme for students with a prior academic degree in social work or related field and interested in acquiring
    - social work professionals who understand cultural diversity and the special characters of peripheral EU region
    - focused on acquiring a better understanding of national and global social work through a comparative approach and multicultural understanding
    - advanced skills for different careers
    - right for Ph.D. studies in social work
    - working language is English
CSW: Partner Institutions and Responsible Units

- Full partner: Faculty of Social Sciences, Department of Social Work at the University of Lapland
- Full partner: Faculty of Social Work at the Pomor State University (NArFU= Northern Arctic Federal University)
- Karelian State Pedagogical University, Petrozavodsk State University, Northern State Medical University, Murmansk Humanities Institute, Murmansk State Humanities University, Murmansk State Technical University and the University of Oulu
First Master’s Degree in Comparative Social Work: A Pilot Programme (2009-2011)

- The university of Lapland: The intake of the students was 10, 5 approved and 4 started to study, in 2010 3 is still studying (1 from Pakistan and 2 from Russia)

- The Pomor State University: all the Russian students are from Arkangel, no students from Murmansk and Petrozavodsk, the intake was 10, in 2010 4 is still studying (done the practice in Finland)
Implementation of CSW 2009-2010

Structure of curriculum
2 years / 120 ECTS

(Possible alternative)

Pomor State University
Federal component 25 ECTS
Other studies 15 ECTS

University of Lapland
Studies 40 ECTS

Joint Studies

Language and Society of Neighbouring Country (3 ECTS)
Theory of Social work (6 ECTS)
Applying theories of Social work; elective courses (9 ECTS)
Research methods in Social work (15 ECTS)
International Comparative Practice (10 ECTS)

COMPARATIVE MASTER’S THESIS (37 ECTS)
Practice Training in Social Work

- Study material: intensive courses, recorded and online courses and practise
- Supervision in english, and working language is english => limits the training units => social work field units in multicultural setting are reserved to foreign students, what about basic students?
- Social work practice training in Finland (5 weeks) and in joint studies in Russia => financing problems
- Field placement
  1. Immigration Office of the City of Rovaniemi
  2. Refugee Reception Centre of Red Cross in Rovaniemi
  3. Friends of Youth (NGO/Oulu)
The agreement concerning implementation of CSW: content

- Partners
  - Responsibilities
- Background/Framework of Collaboration (general BCBU-agreement signed in 2007)
- Purpose/Objective/Scope of the Agreement
- Program/The Module within the Programme in Collaboration
- Degrees and Diploma Sublements (only faculties have the authority of awarding degree certificates)
- Design-making concerning the Content of Program/the Module
- Students (selection)
- Teachers
- Intellectual property rights

=> The Content of the agreement has to be very carefully planned and negotiated (shared understanding of aims)
Challenges in Collaboration

- Shared understanding of Social Work
- Shared understanding of doing research (methods, qualitative/quantitative, rules of scientific writing)
- Finance and resources (Kolarctic ENPI, Tempus, extra funding for development work)
- Commitment (staff changes, English language requirements for teachers, no extra salary)
- Confidentiality ("from speeches to action")
- Applicable rules and settlements of disputes
Nex Steps and Challenges

- Agreement on joint Master’s programs leading to joint/double degrees between BCBU agreement signed in 2007
- Study quide 2011- 2013
- Model for a copyright agreement
- Students rights for learning material
- Virtual campus? (ENPI?)
Next Steps and Challenges

- Quality assurance handbook (consolidation of study requirements, master’s thesis, grades)
- New round of marketing in autumn 2010
- Next selection of students spring 2011
- New beginning september 2011
- Joint/double degree
- Ph.D programme
- Stronger role of associate partners