

## „OMNINO“ - A COMPREHENSIVE DEVELOPMENT IN EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

Lívia Nemcová<sup>1</sup>, Viktória Šoltéssová<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Matej Bel University, Faculty of Education, Ružová 13, 974 11 Banská Bystrica, Slovak Republic

### Abstract

Developing the all-round competences of university students by applying the principle of credit recognition for the implementation of relevant extracurricular activities (EA), case studies and recommendations for practice (e.g. in the Service Learning programme, in teacher-oriented programmes and training in the preparation of future teachers, as well as in non-formal education in parachurch organisations in the case of students of theology, etc.). The starting point is Directive No. 11/2021 on the recognition of ECTS credits for extra-curricular activities at Matej Bel University (MBU) and its implementation in practice. The paper is an output of the funded project VEGA 1/0409/21 (National Agency of the Slovak Republic). The theoretical basis is the required learning outcomes of university students in selected fields of study and their expected competences. These outcomes are compared with learning outcomes in selected educational extra-curricular activities implemented outside the university of which they are students. This is a set of case studies of selected educational programs that are not courses in higher education but have the potential to provide specifically beneficial learning outcomes for college students whose completion may also earn them credit for extra-curricular activities. We conclude with recommendations for practice regarding the comparison of learning outcomes in parallel curricular and extra-curricular activities that are expected to yield the development of transversal competencies for college students in selected fields of study.

Keywords: „omnino“/universal, extracultural activities, non-formal education, tertiary education

### Abstrakt

#### „OMNINO“ - VŠESTRANNÝ ROZVOJ V EXTRAKULIKURÁLNYCH AKTIVITÁCH ŠTUDENTOV VYSOKÝCH ŠKÔL

Rozvoj všestranných kompetencií študentov vysokých škôl uplatňovaním princípu uznávania kreditov za realizáciu relevantných extrakulikulárnych aktivít, prípadové štúdie a odporúčania do praxe (napr. v programe Service Learning, v programoch a vzdelávaniach orientovaných na učiteľské kompetencie v príprave budúcich učiteľiek/ov, ako aj v neformálnom vzdelávaní v paracirkevných orga-

nizáciách v prípade študentiek/ov teológie apod.). Východiskom je Smernica č. 11/2021 o uznávaní ECTS kreditov za extrakurikulárne aktivity na Univerzite Mateja Bela a jej implementovanie v praxi. Príspevok je výstupom financovaného projektu VEGA 1/0409/21 (národná agentúra SR). Teoretickým východiskom sú požadované vystupy vzdelávania študentov vysokých škôl vo vybraných ŠO a ich predpokladané dosahované kompetencie. Tieto vystupy porovnávame s výstupmi vzdelávania vo vybraných vzdelávacích extrakurikulárnych aktivitách realizovaných mimo vysokej školy, ktorej sú študentami. Jedná sa o súbor prípadových štúdií vybraných vzdelávacích programov, ktoré nie sú kurzami vo vysokoškolskom vzdelávaní, ale majú potenciál poskytnúť špecificky prínosné výstupy vzdelávania študentom vysokých škôl, ktorým môže ich absolvovanie priniesť aj kredity za extrakurikulárne aktivity. V závere chceme priniesť odporúčania do praxe týkajúce sa komparácie výsledkov vzdelávania v paralelných kurikulárnych a extrakurikulárnych aktivitách, ktoré by mali priniesť rozvoj transverzálnych kompetencií študentom vysokej školy vo vybraných študijných odboroch.

Kľúčové slová: „omnino“/všestranne, extrakurikulárne aktivity, neformálne vzdelávanie, terciárne vzdelávanie

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Global challenges bring the need for lifelong learning, which brings the opportunity for lifelong learning. The great challenge in the field of education is to sustain learning as cooperative, continuous, self-directed, active, broadly focused, applicable and positively oriented, all of which sustain a person's capability and employability in terms of employability as well as public engagement (Collins, 2009).

Meeting global challenges already requires changes in the way we prepare professionals and women professionals in education today (e.g. in tertiary education in the so-called helping professions). Matej Bel University also responds to this challenge in its scientific research as well as in the educational practice of students of study programmes with application in the helping professions (Educating for the future: a collection of scientific and professional studies, 2019).

## 2. OBJECTIVES

In our paper we present a system of support for extra-curricular activities at Matej Bel University, which have been / or will be implemented outside the compulsory curriculum of tertiary education, as non-formal education or informal learning activities.

### 2.1 Lifelong Learning

Lifelong learning takes place through three basic categories of learning: formal, non-formal and informal learning (Memorandum on Lifelong Learning, 2000). In particular, non-formal learning plays an important role in lifelong learning

alongside formal learning. In the National Programme of Education and Training for 2018–2027, non-formal education is seen as one of the platforms of education, alongside formal education and informal learning (Novotná, 2017). The development of non-formal education, as part of lifelong learning, is perceived as an underdeveloped aspect of learning in Slovakia. In the vision and global goals of the Memorandum on Lifelong Learning (2000), non-formal education and informal learning are emphasized as another supported form of meaningful human learning. The education and training system has complex impacts on social and economic phenomena of society-wide significance. Within the framework of the planned measures classified under the relevant strategic and specific objectives, the systemic links through which these measures contribute to addressing complex social and economic phenomena must also be perceived and planned.

Non-formal education gives people the opportunity to develop their values, skills and abilities other than those they develop in formal education. These skills include a wide range of competencies such as interpersonal, teamwork, organizational competencies, conflict management, intercultural awareness, leadership, planning, organizing, coordination of teamwork, self-confidence, discipline, responsibility, etc. These soft skills are considered a key element for successful job performance, for future successful employment, as confirmed by the research of Souto-Otero, M. *et al.* (2013).

### 2.2 Recognition of the Education

The OECD seeks to make both non-formal and informal learning more visible through the process of recognition of learning by awarding certificates,

the right of access to the higher education system or to any programme in the formal lifelong learning system, or to any recognised document (Nemcová, Šolcová, 2020). It is important to process this activity in such a way that the value of non-formal and informal learning (learning) also has a social value and that it is a document that is universally recognised and useful now or later when returning to formal lifelong learning or the education market (Recognition of Non-formal and Informal Learning, OECD).

The knowledge and skills that we acquire in school, in vocational training, are not sufficient to function in a variety of rapidly changing social conditions throughout life. From the perspective of lifelong learning, all learning is an unbroken continuum throughout life. It is underpinned by high-quality basic education for all from the earliest age of the child. Basic education followed by vocational education and training, should give young people the new basic skills needed for a knowledge-based economy. Young people should learn how to learn and develop a positive attitude to learning. They need to want to learn. Early learning experiences should not be associated with failure and negative personal experiences left unreflected. Good and accessible learning opportunities need to be created for them in terms of appropriate timing, pace, location and financial conditions. They will not want to invest time, effort or money in further learning - non-formal learning - if the knowledge, skills and expertise they have already acquired are not realistically recognised, either for personal satisfaction or for job advancement. It is important to increase learning, especially for those who have so far benefited least from education and training (Nemcová, Šolcová, 2020). A guideline has been developed at Matej Bel University that accepts and respects this recognition process.

### **3. LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK FOR THE RECOGNITION OF EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES AT THE FE MBU IN BANSKÁ BYSTRICA**

Directive No.11/2021 MBU on the awarding of ECTS credits for extra-curricular activities at the University of Matej Bel in Banská Bystrica, according to which the criteria and procedures for the awarding of ECTS credits for student activities outside the compulsory curriculum are determined, was put into effect on 27 September 2021.

Extracurricular activities may be implemented as part of formal, non-formal and informal learning.

These extra-curricular activities develop students' professional competences and transferable competences, but are not part of accredited study programmes, i.e. they are not regulated within the course curricula. These may be student internships, volunteer activities, artistic activities, active participation in scientific, professional or artistic conferences, workshops, seminars, non-formal education programmes or other activities that have not yet been awarded ECTS credits within the study programmes of UMB or other domestic or international institutions. Transferable competences are competences that are not specifically linked to a particular job or profession, but can be used and further developed in a variety of situations and conditions. These include, for example, communication skills, mathematical skills, organisational skills, digital skills, analytical skills, interpersonal skills, creativity and abstract thinking skills, critical thinking skills, mentoring and supervisory skills, entrepreneurial skills, motivation and learning skills, contextual thinking, metacognitive skills. It is very important to accept that ECTS credits are awarded to students for extra-curricular activities if the activities meet the following prerequisites:

- they have clearly stated learning outcomes;
- the student's time commitment to the activity is clearly expressed;
- the active participation of the student in the activity is demonstrated;
- the achievement of the learning outcomes is demonstrated.

The calculation of ECTS credits for extra-curricular activities reflects a student workload of 30 hours (1 hour = 60 minutes of active student work) which is 1 ECTS credit. Activities that are less extensive (under 30 hours) are not taken into account. The maximum number of credits for participation in an extra-curricular activity corresponds to the number of ECTS credits normally awarded for elective courses at the faculty concerned. There is no limit to the number of extra-curricular activities that may be credited to a student.

ECTS credits for extra-curricular activities may be awarded:

- on the basis of a request from the activity leader, who is a person with a scientific-pedagogical or artistic degree employed at UMB, prior to the implementation of the activity itself (preliminary award of ECTS credits for extracurricular activities);
- at the request of the activity leader, who is a person with a scientific-pedagogical or artistic degree

employed at MBU, after the implementation of the activity (subsequent award of ECTS credits for extra-curricular activities);

- at the request of the student after his/her participation in the activity (award of ECTS credits for extra-curricular activities at the student's suggestion).

The head of the relevant part of MBU (faculty) or the person authorized by him/her (Vice-Dean for Education) decides on the award of ECTS credits. The activity leader or the student must document participation in the activity by submitting e.g. a certificate or detailed information about the implemented programme, learning outcomes, method of control, etc. The Directive also defines time limits for reporting.

If the student sends the application, it is forwarded to the main person in charge of the study

programme to evaluate the application. The student may be granted credit for both compulsory and elective courses that are included in the student's study plan, or may be granted credit for elective courses. The person providing the credit together with the Vice-Dean for Education takes this decision.

#### 4. METHODOLOGY

The method and possibilities of recognition of extra-curricular activities were measured on a sample of students in the first year of application of the approved recognition guideline. Data collection was conducted through case studies (Novotná, Špaček, Šťovíčková, 2019). For the one-year period of the aforementioned directive's validity, we had the following cases at the Faculty of Education (FE) MBU, which are presented in Table I.

Table I: List of extracurricular activities at FE MBU

EA by departments	Application submitted			Outcome
	before / by the leader of the activity	after/ by the leader of the activity	student	
Student of preschool and elementary Pedagogy		X		EA management of the musical component of the University Folklore Ensemble <i>Mladost</i> and support of activities at MBU (240 hrs/7credits)
Student of psychology			X	EA = Accredited course - <i>Career Counselling</i> (92 hrs/3 credits). The application was accepted and the student was awarded 3 credits for the course - Career Counselling (compulsory elective).
Student of psychology			X	EA = <i>Innovative training for teaching and professional staff</i> - Coordinator of school support teams. The application was accepted and the student was awarded 3 credits for the course - Inclusive Education in the Work of the School Psychologist.
For students of different study programmes	X			EA = Intern - <i>Career Counselling</i> . The activity is currently underway, once the programme is completed (December 2022), together with an evaluation of the students involved, all documents will be sent for review.
For students of theology		X		EA = <i>Introduction to Clinical Pastoral Formation</i> (92 hrs/3 credits). This activity is currently in progress; all materials will be sent for review upon completion of the program along with an evaluation of the students involved.
For students of different study programmes	X			EA = <i>A Future Different</i> - volunteer activity consisting of self-directed learning and long-term mentoring (62 hrs/2 credits). The activity is currently ongoing, all documents will be sent for review after the end of the programme (December 2022) together with an evaluation of the students involved.

## 5. RESULTS

The cases we have examined highlight the variety of activities that students choose to do in their free time. At the same time, however, they are linked to their subject of study, as is also evident in the case of theology students at the FE MBU. An example of good practice is the course run by the Council for Clinical Pastoral Education in the Slovak Republic (CPV, 2022) - the students of the CST of the FE MBU attend it. They plan to apply the certificates from the training, when applying for recognition of extracurricular activities, according to the university guidelines, in the course *Introduction to Clinical Pastoral Formation*. When it comes to students of the teaching professions, the research emphasizes learning with innovative methods in order to develop their own future didactic competences. The evaluation of the development of the desired competences before and after the completion of the non-formal education programme, including self-evaluation by the students, can have a significant impact on their motivation. In this case, it is important to have a clearly measurable scale with a description of the measurable indicators. In addition to teacher and student questionnaires, data can be collected from peer evaluation surveys, problem-solving exercises, observations of student work, through interviews and focus groups with students, during collaborative project work, and other instruments. Data from these evaluation instruments, combined with data from formal assessment methods, can be used to triangulate evaluation results (using two or more assessment methods to infer student or team performance). According to Kioupi and Voulvoulis (2022), this approach is an appropriate combination of research methodologies in addressing the issue of competency development of university students. The authors used self-reflective questionnaires to elicit students' feedback on the development of their transversal competencies in formal and informal education. One of the aims of such an approach is to activate students in their own learning journey.

## 6. DISCUSSION

Opportunities to develop transversal competences within non-formal education, which students of UMB undergo during their university studies, are considered an important contribution in the comprehensive assessment of individual development opportunities. Further research focuses on the results in the context of the use of the possibility of recognition of other types of learning activities according to the MBU guidelines. We are interested not only in the formal aspect of activity recognition and conversion to ETCS credits, but also in the personal experiences of students. Non-formal learning in relation to university studies in CEE is not sufficiently explored. Authors focus on specific issues such as students' interest in the cultural activities offered, etc. (Popescu, 2019). Several authors are interested in the development of soft competences in non-formal and lifelong learning in the context of the labour market employability of university graduates. In this context, the issue of migrants' integration becomes important if students involved in university education also engage in forms of extra-curricular activities that help them to adapt to their studies and to cope successfully with the demands of their studies. For our context, it is interesting to compare the phenomenon under study in the European context (Žagar, Kelava, 2014). The authors emphasize its inclusive role in society. The research presented in the European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning (Hawley, Otero and Duchemin, 2010) classified the European Union countries with regard to the degree of development of the system for validation of non-formal and informal learning. At that time, Slovakia was placed on a four-point scale among the countries with a medium-low level of such a system (e.g. together with Austria and Belgium). Finland, the Netherlands and Norway, for example, scored highly.

## CONCLUSION

We conclude with recommendations for practice related to the possibilities of linking formal education with non-formal activities that develop the knowledge and skills of students in university curricula.

We suggest that some strategies that are transferable to the university setting may bring together universities and other educational institutions in finding appropriate ways to develop the practical skills of their students. This includes, for example, the service learning strategy, which has been successfully implemented at MBU (Brozmanová Gregorová, 2019a, 2019b). Similarly, this includes language competences developed in different models of learning and targeted adaptation to



intercultural environments (Hanesová, 2015). Likewise, linking the formal and informal education of students in other helping professions, such as theological education, remains a challenge, as we map the engagement of these students in specifically focused learning both at home and abroad (Procházka, 2010). Specifically, our analysis focuses on students of teaching professions who are educated at the university in three faculties, and we are interested in the development of their teaching competences (Rovňanová, Nemcová, 2017).

In the following research, we focus on exploring the application of the implemented directive at MBU in the next academic year and comparing the experiences of the competent with the recognition of EA. At the same time, activities of study departments of individual faculties of MBU and persons responsible for marketing and promotional activities for the needs of popularization of information about EA for students and employees are underway. Another research question that needs to be addressed is the question of the content and scope of non-formal education offered in Slovakia, as well as the question of the benefits of legislation from the student's point of view. The research will be carried out this year in the research team of the Vega research project entitled Informal education as part of a modern educational paradigm in the undergraduate training of future professionals of the helping professions. Our follow-up research focuses on the comparison of learning outcomes in parallel curricular and extra-curricular activities in selected fields of study that are expected to bring about the development of transversal competencies in university students.

The paper is an output of VEGA 1/0409/21: Informal education as a part of the modern educational paradigm in the undergraduate training of future professionals of helping professions.

## REFERENCES

- Brozmanová Gregorová, A. (2019a). *Service learning ako pedagogická stratégia angažovanej univerzity a jej vybrané prínosy pre študentstvo*. Banská Bystrica: Vydavateľstvo Univerzity Mateja Bela Belianum.
- Brozmanová Gregorová, A. (2019b). *Globálne vzdelávanie na slovenských vysokých školách vo výskumných súvislostiach*. Banská Bystrica: Vydavateľstvo Univerzity Mateja Bela Belianum.
- Collins, J. (2009). Education Techniques for Lifelong Learning. Lifelong Learning in the 21st Century and Beyond. *Radiographics*, 29(2), 613–622. Dostupné z: <https://pubs.rsna.org/doi/pdf/10.1148/rg.292085179>
- Hanesová, D. (2015). Plurilingual and Intercultural Awareness of Future Teachers. *The New Educational Review*, 42(4), 79–90.
- Hawley, J., Otero, M. S., & Duchemin, C. (2010). *Update to the European Inventory on Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning – Final Report*. GHK, Directorate-General for Education and Culture. Dostupné z: [http://ec.europa.eu/education/more-information/doc/2010/inventory\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/more-information/doc/2010/inventory_en.pdf)
- Kioupi, V., & Voulvoulis, N. (2022). The Contribution of Higher Education to Sustainability: The Development and Assessment of Sustainability Competences in a University Case Study. *Education Sciences*, 12(406). <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci12060406>
- KPV (2022). Dostupné z: [https://www.teofania.sk/teofania/Co-je-Klin-past-vzdlavanie-a13\\_64.htm](https://www.teofania.sk/teofania/Co-je-Klin-past-vzdlavanie-a13_64.htm)
- (2000) *Memorandum o celoživotnom vzdelávaní sa. Pracovný materiál Európskej komisie*. Brusel: Komisia európskych spoločenstiev. Dostupné z: <https://www.minedu.sk/9772-sk/dokumenty-a-predpisy/>
- Nemcová, L., & Šolcová, J. (2020). *Neformálne vzdelávanie detí a mládeže. Vysokoškolská učebnica*. Banská Bystrica: Vydavateľstvo Univerzity Mateja Bela Belianum.
- Novotná, E. (2017). *Pedagogika voľného času: teória výchovy mimo vyučovania vo voľnom čase*. Prešov: Rokus.
- Novotná, H., Špaček, O., & Štovičková, M. (Eds.) (2019). *Metody výzkumu ve společenských vědách*. FHS UK.
- Popescu, L. G. (2017). *University and non-formal education*. MATEC Web of Conferences. 121, 12014. Dostupné z: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/319011250\\_University\\_and\\_non-formal\\_education](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/319011250_University_and_non-formal_education)
- Procházka, P. (2010). Church-Related Higher Education in the Slovak Republic. In *Religion and Higher Education in Central and Eastern Europe* (s. 95–110). Pustai, G. (Ed.), Debrecen: University of Debrecen, CHERD.
- Recognition of Non-formal and Informal Learning*. OECD. Dostupné z: <http://www.oecd.org/education/skills-beyond-school/recognitionofnon-formalandinformallearning-home.htm>
- Rovňanová, L., & Nemcová, L. (2017). Integration of Theoretical and Practical Undergraduate Training in the Processes of Developing Student Teachers' Professional Competences. *The New educational review*, 47 (1), 176–186.

- Smernica č. 11/2021 UMB o udeľovaní ECTS kreditov za extrakurikulárne aktivity na Univerzite Mateja Bela v Banskej Bystrici. Dostupné z: <https://www.umb.sk/studium/student/kreditovy-system-studia/uznavanie-extrakurikularnych-aktivit-na-umb/>
- Souto-Otero, M. et al. (2013). *Study on the Impact of Non-Formal Education in Youth Organisations on Young People's Employability*. European Youth Forum/Bath University/GHK Consulting. Dostupné z: [https://issuu.com/yomag/docs/reportnfe\\_print](https://issuu.com/yomag/docs/reportnfe_print)
- Torres, M. (2022). Project-Based Learning for Teacher Training in Primary Education. *Education Sciences*, 12(10), 647.
- \_(2019). *Vzdelávame pre budúcnosť: zborník vedeckých a odborných štúdií*. Banská Bystrica: Vydavateľstvo Univerzity Mateja Bela Belianum.
- Žagar, I. Ž., & Kelava, P. (Eds.) (2014). *From Formal to Non-Formal: Education, Learning and Knowledge*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

## Kontakt

Dr. habil. Mgr. Lívia Nemcová, Ph.D: [livia.nemcova@umb.sk](mailto:livia.nemcova@umb.sk)

Dr. habil. PaedDr. Viktória Šoltéssová, Ph.D: [viktoria.soltesova@umb.sk](mailto:viktoria.soltesova@umb.sk)