







## Content



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*As Central CEEPUS Office, we are responsible for all organizational work of the CEEPUS program. We make sure the program is running and that the member states have all the necessary resources to participate in the program. Furthermore, we always look for a way to improve and expand the program. We are in close contact with the Senior Officials and the National CEEPUS Offices from our member countries and meet them regularly in person or virtually to keep everybody updated for a smooth execution of the program.*

*From right to left: Marlene Grubeck-Grabner, Katrin Weber, Michael Schedl*

*Photo: CEEPUS/Sabine Klimpt*

30 years ago, the international agreement to establish the Central European Exchange Programme for University Studies (CEEPUS) was signed. A program to promote cooperation in the field of higher education in Eastern and South-eastern Europe through academic exchange. We are celebrating a big HAPPY Birthday, with additional years to come. Since the current CEEPUS agreement will expire in 2025, we are glad to tell that we have been working on establishing a new agreement that will be formally signed in Warsaw Poland in September 2023. CEEPUS will be extended for another seven years.

The last years were extremely challenging for exchange programs. It started with the limitations of the Covid 19 pandemic and travel restrictions that brought academic exchange almost to a hold. When the worst restrictions and limitations of the national pandemic regulations were over, the next news shocked Europe. Last year, the war in Ukraine and the steady increase of the living costs had an impact on mobility of students and teachers in our region. Due to these profound situations, we noticed a substantial decline of our mobility numbers and still are currently not back where we stood in 2018/19 before the pandemic.

The decentralized organization of the CEEPUS program turned out to be an advantage in this time. The CEEPUS member countries were able to react to all the external influences flexible and in individual ways.

Some members established a virtual or blended scholarship scheme shortly as a reaction to the pandemic. Other countries even made it happen to implement scholarships for Ukrainian academics as a reaction on war refugees in 2022. These different experiences from the last years can now be used to implement new key aspects into the future overall program.

The CEEPUS networks, partnerships of university institutions under a common scientific topic, are the heart of the CEEPUS program. Besides the main academic exchange within our networks, it was specifically the network coordinators and partners that helped to continue the program even during restrictions. To honor their efforts the CEEPUS ministers present a special award to one network each year. In addition to that we had a new record of network applications in 2022, which proves the ongoing interest in this program. The CEEPUS countries reacted with an increase in the overall scholarship quota. From our point of view, everything is prepared to get the program running at full speed again.

We are looking forward to the ongoing good cooperation with our stakeholders, teachers, and students and of course all CEEPUS members and are excited about the future developments of our program.

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## Mission – what is CEEPUS about

**CEEPUS, which stands for Central European Exchange Programme for University Studies, is a multilateral university exchange program in the extended Danube region. It operates based on an international Agreement that outlines the framework and principles of the program. CEEPUS III is the current iteration of the program and involves the participation of 15 member states. The program's primary objective is to promote academic cooperation and mobility among universities in the member countries. By supporting student and teacher exchanges, CEEPUS aims to foster collaboration, enhance educational experiences, and strengthen the ties between participating university institutions and countries.**

CEEPUS operates differently than most of the other widely known exchange programs. One difference is that the applicants are paid by their host country in comparison to being paid by their home country. Because of this different structure all member countries have a National CEEPUS Office. The administrators offer direct information about the national regulations to the applicants. Furthermore, they are also in direct contact and exchange with the CEEPUS coordinators and partners in the academic institutes. The National Offices are a central tool in the CEEPUS universe for mobilities and networks. Not only are they also in regular exchange with each other and gain knowledge about scholarship administration in other countries, but they are also a dynamic group and the core to help to develop the program.



*Some of our National CEEPUS-administrators during a workshop with the Central Office in Vienna, March 2023*

*Photo: CEEPUS/CCO*

Another particularity of our student exchange is, that CEEPUS has a network-based system. Therefore, eligible universities of the CEEPUS member states are operating on joint programs and activities. Within these networks, CEEPUS covers mobility grants for students and teachers of those eligible universities. Since the first student exchange in 1995 approximate 82,000 mobility applications have been awarded in the framework of our program. CEEPUS is decentralized and therefore a very flexible

exchange program, where every member country handles its own incoming CEEPUS scholarships according to their respective national regulations. Which sometimes sounds complicated, brought the advantage that CEEPUS was able to react to all the external influences in very innovative ways. The member countries were able to respond to the crisis individually, without having to find a common compromise. Some members established very fast a virtual or blended scholarship scheme shortly after the out-

break of the pandemic to make exchange possible. Once travel restrictions were loosened, the virtual and blended programs were reduced again within CEEPUS. However, the experience with that novel form of exchange will help to implement a virtual grant scheme in the future. In March 2022, some of the CEEPUS member countries

assigned unused scholarship month to Ukrainian academics. This fast reaction based on a common decision of all countries and was implemented within weeks.

## We are almost back on track

After 2 years of Covid 19, we have almost reached the number of applications from before the pandemic. **"More of the same ..."** is exactly the right way to offer and administrate experiences of CEEPUS exchange. Of course, we are speaking about knowledge transfer and establishing contacts for our students. But also, teachers can profit while conducting new research methods, planning joint projects and joint research, having discussions about new study programs, improving their existing study programs, etc.

**Some statements of scholars who participated in a CEEPUS exchange explain exactly what is CEEPUS about:**

*“ I learned a lot from some professors about topics that aren't really talked about much in my home University. And even when we do mention them, it's more theoretical and harder to understand than it is through practical learning, which we did at WU (Vienna University of Economics). ”*

*Iva Vujovic, applicant from the University of Montenegro,  
Faculty of Economics*

*“ It should be noted here that the research has both - local and global dimension. Research results can be a universal tool used in Poland as well as abroad. This applies not only to host countries. The trip to Kosovo is above all an opportunity to gain a lot of experience. Looking at the research being conducted at the University of Prishtina, interviewing scientists and local leaders, establishing contacts abroad – all this underlines the interdisciplinary nature of my research and expands the scale not only to Poland, but also to other European countries. I also believe that going to Kosovo can open up a new research aspect and help to fill the research gap. ”*

*Grzegorz Smutek, PhD applicant from University of Krakow,  
Institute of Geography and Spatial Management*

*“ I feel I have greatly benefited from scholars and students from different and diverse countries. Talking to them gave me a confident boost, and the welcoming and warm atmosphere gave me the confidence to speak freely about my research interests. Because of these circumstances, I believe my own lecture and my overall performance was more successful than it might have been otherwise. ”*

*Masa Grdesic, PhD, Teacher at the summer school “Women writers in history”, Nova Gorica*

## 8 CEEPUS in numbers

CEEPUS is based on lean management. The highest-ranking decision making body is the Joint Committee of Ministers that meets every second year and takes all strategic decisions. Coordination, evaluation, program development and defining the advertising line are the main tasks of the Central CEEPUS Office.

Each country has a National CEEPUS Office in charge of national implementation. In order to avoid setting up new administrative bodies, the National CEEPUS Offices are integrated into already existing structures, usually national agencies.



**129 Networks**



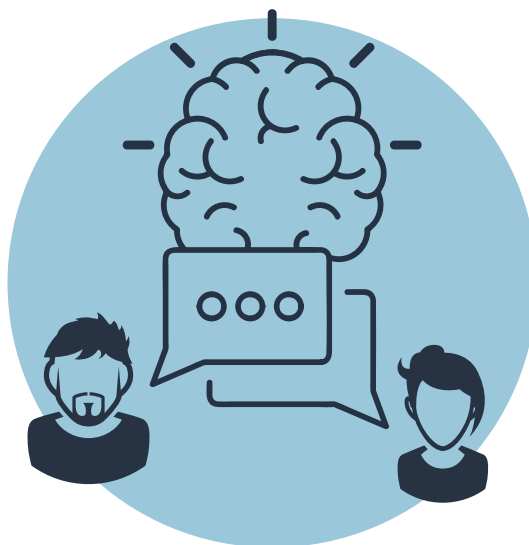
**82,000 Mobilities**

(since 1995)



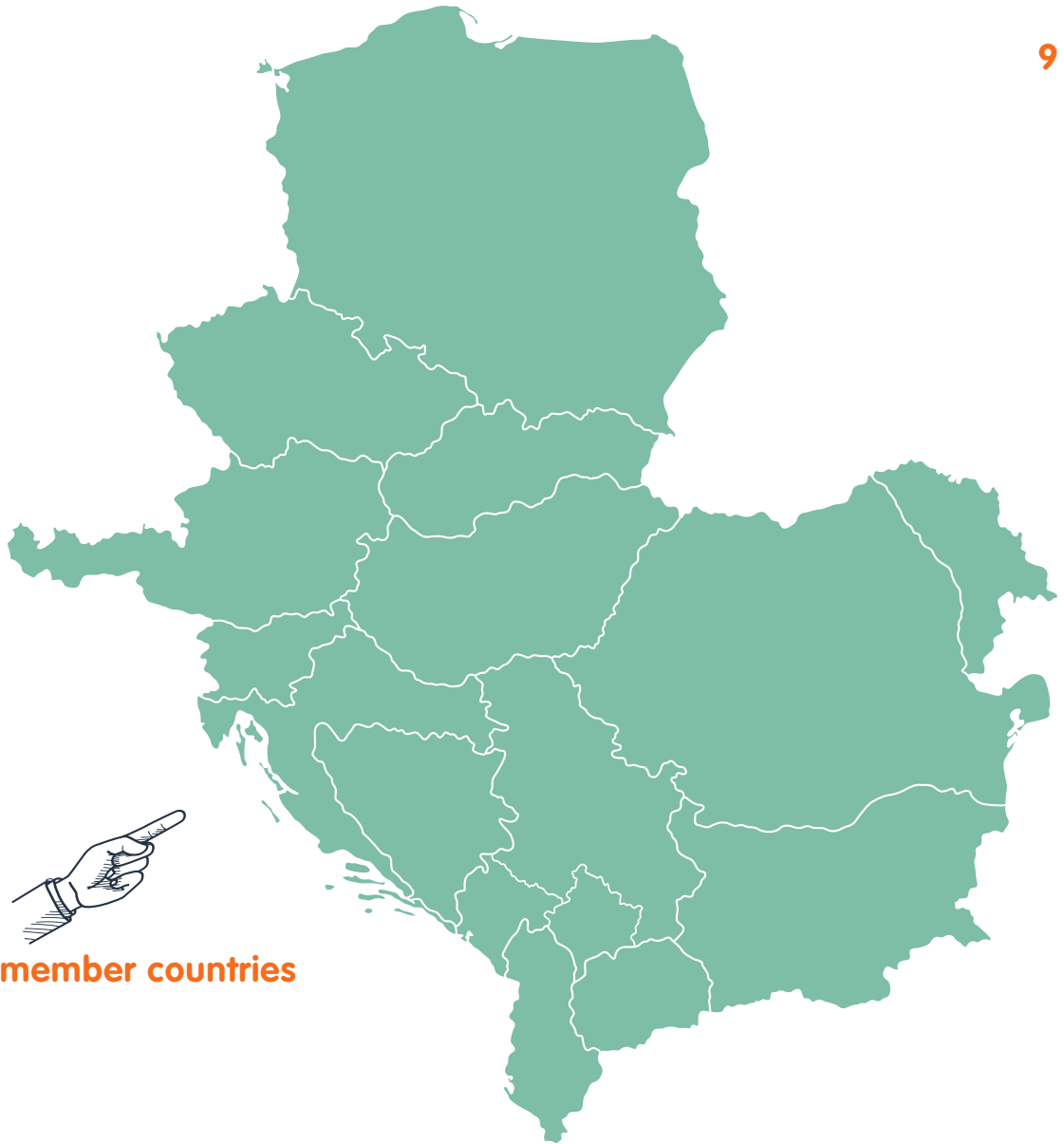
**7,473 Scholarshipmonths**

(Academic year 2023/24)

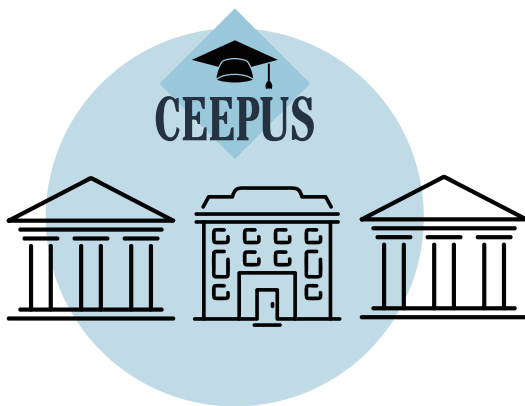


**62 Intensive courses**





**15+ member countries**



**More than 2,000 participating departments/institutions**



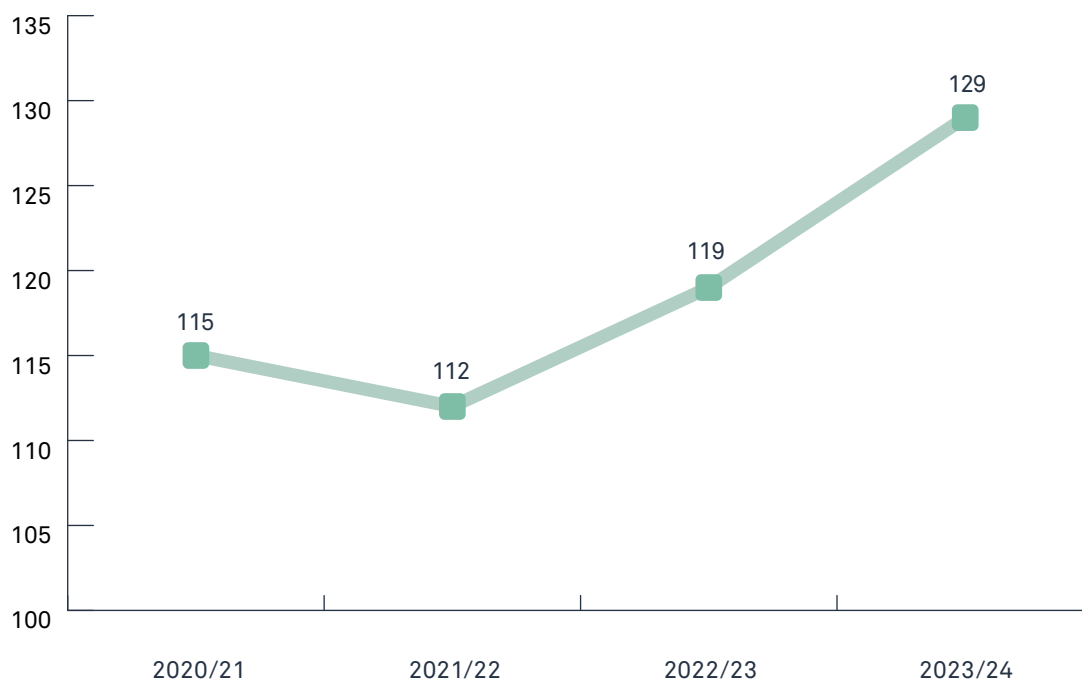
## 10 Networks

Networks form the core of the CEEPUS program, as they are partnerships between university institutions centered around a common scientific topic. Not only the main exchange of students and teachers is organized within our many networks, but it was specifically the network coordinators that helped to continue the program even during restrictions. To honor these efforts the CEEPUS Ministers present a special award to one outstanding network each year. In 2022 we had a new record of network applications, 131 network applications, of which 92 will be fully funded as CEEPUS networks, and 37 partly as umbrella networks. The CEEPUS countries also reacted with an increase in the scholarship quota

over 7,800 scholarship months, a plus of almost 1,300 months. The networks are also our innovators, where new trends are set and tested, like joint activities and intensive courses, which became an important tool of international exchange within CEEPUS.

Despite the pandemic, all networks have stayed active in these recent years. Additionally, new networks submitted their applications to become part of the CEEPUS program. The networks have completely different fields of studies and often represent current social developments.

### Number of networks

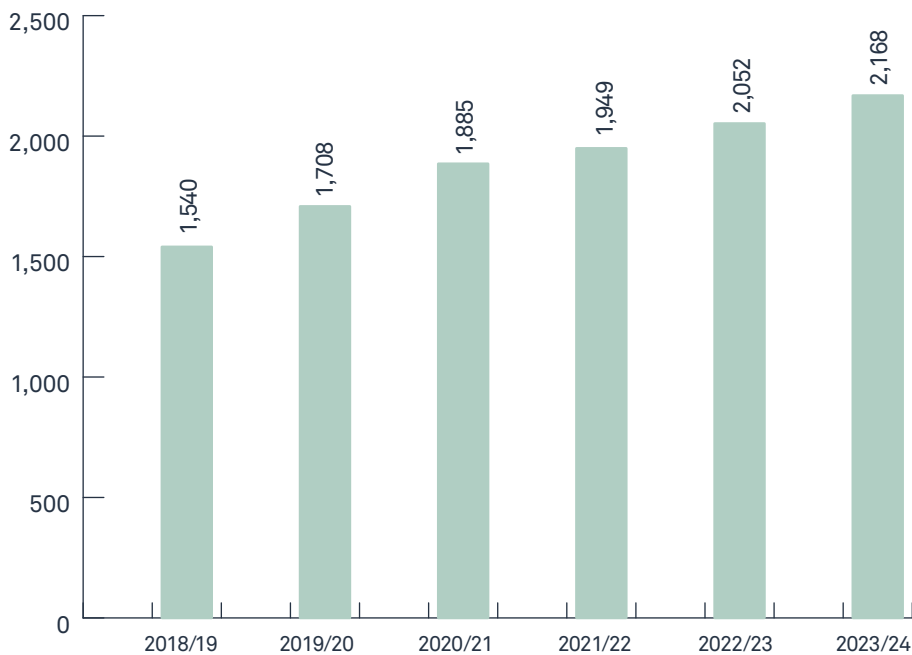


Number of funded networks in recent years

CEEPUS will soon be celebrating its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary, since its first signing. Nevertheless, we are still looking forward to constant growth. Every year new institutes join CEEPUS as participating units in exciting networks, over 2,100 already in 2023/24. Many of the new institutes also start their own new networks with their novel topics or research agenda.

This gives CEEPUS a constant opportunity for growth and proves the ongoing interest in our program.

## Participating units



*Overall number of university units (departments, institutes) participating in CEEPUS networks*



### Earth-Science Studies in Central and South-Eastern Europe

Teaching and training in fundamental and applied geosciences within the geologically unique Alpine-Carpathian-Balkan-Dinaride Mountain area.



*Lorandite (specific mineral), found in Alšar mine/North Macedonia*

*Photo: CEEPUS*

The diversification of teaching topics and methods, strengthening the interdisciplinary approach, and the increase of the scientific quality are the main goals of this network. This is done by 18 universities from 10 countries, with more than 1,500 individual mobilities realized so far. The network continuously succeeds in contributing to the development of geosciences in the region. Its relevance in many societal aspects: e.g., environmental problems, water resources and geo-hazards; makes this CEEPUS network a particularly valuable cooperation, regarding education, research and awareness in this region.

## Women Writers in History

The content that will be discussed in this network, consisting of courses, summer schools and other events, will enable students to start thinking about different constructions of gender in and through literature.



*Photo: Shutterstock.com/Ground Picture*

Students will learn about a rich female literary tradition and its almost forgotten writers. Participants will be empowered for their own agency in the field of literature but also in everyday life. Nevertheless, the answer to the question why the network would like to offer to the students a new wider range of competences in the field of women writer's history and digital humanities is hidden in the words of American historian Gerda Lerner who said: "Women, ignorant of their own history, did not know what women before them had thought and taught. So, generation after generation, they struggled for insights others had already before them, resulting in the constant inventing of the wheel."

## 14 CEEPUS mobilities overview

Internationalization in the context of an educational institution involves hosting guests from abroad, including both students and teachers. These visitors bring a wealth of benefits to the host institution, contributing to a diverse and enriched academic environment.

Our member countries define their goals through their national regulations and offer incoming mobilities for all CEEPUS members. In Slovenia, for example, a precise number of incoming teacher mobility is allowed, while in other countries teachers are specifically requested in some teaching- or research areas, like pediatric surgery.

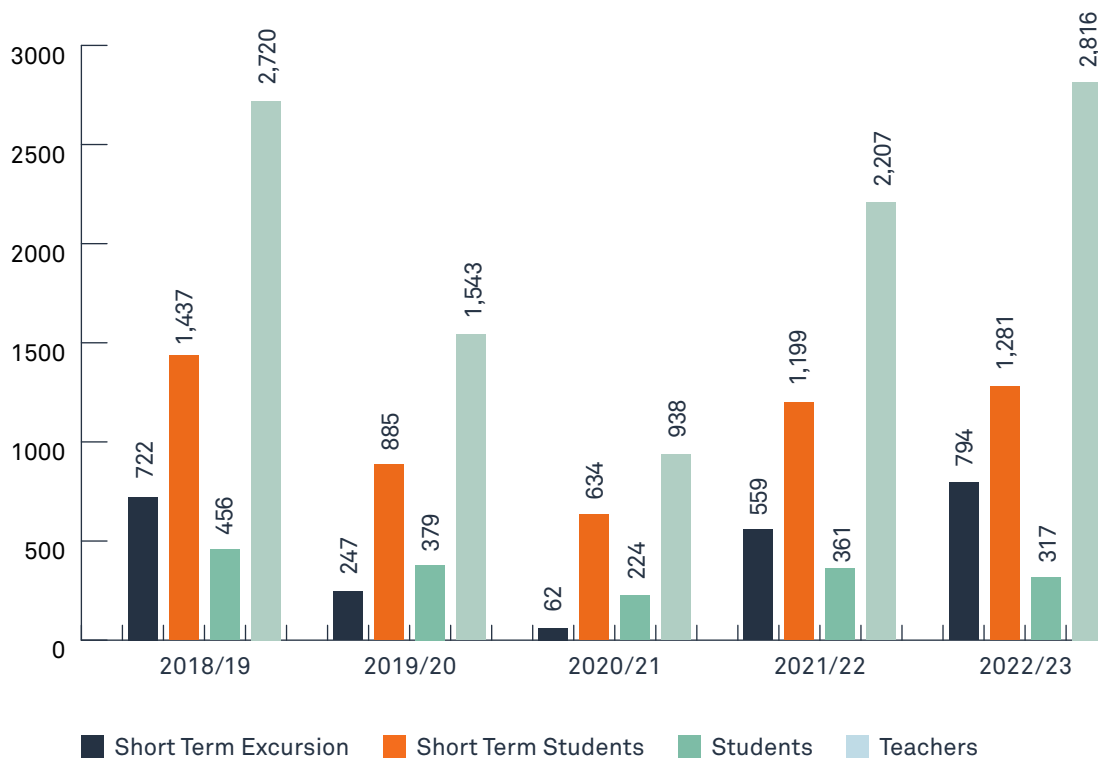
To keep the program flexible, CEEPUS offers a variety of exchange types. Student excursions, short term stays up to three months as well as long term student stays and

exchange for university teachers. In CEEPUS we realized a growing interest in teacher and short term mobility over the last years, especially since the pandemic.

One unique opportunity that the CEEPUS program offers in comparison to other exchange programs are short term stays from the beginning on. Many applicants choose to use this option and gain all the advantages of being abroad, but still be able to stay connected at home and not miss their own work. Therefore CEEPUS can provide a more individual approach.

The increase in short-term stays highlights the program's flexibility and ability to adapt to the evolving needs and preferences of participants.

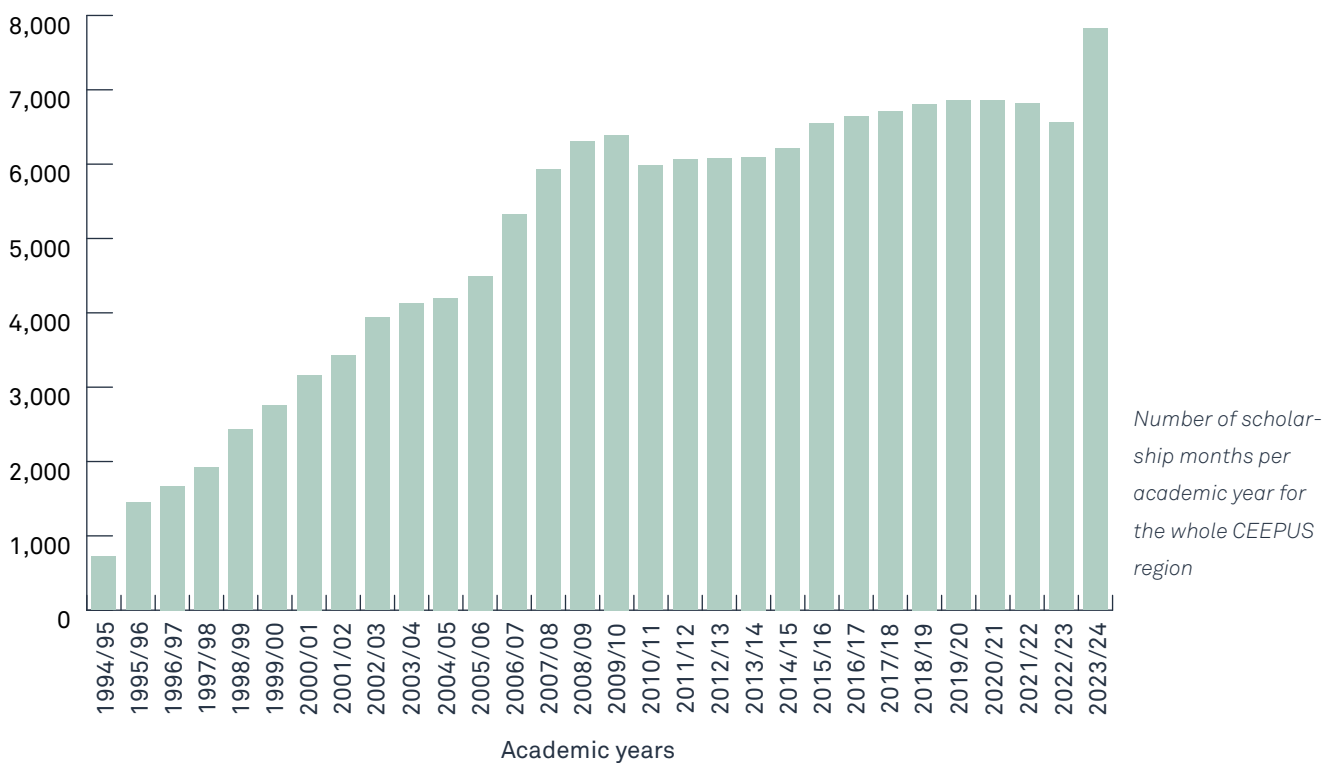
### The mobility applications



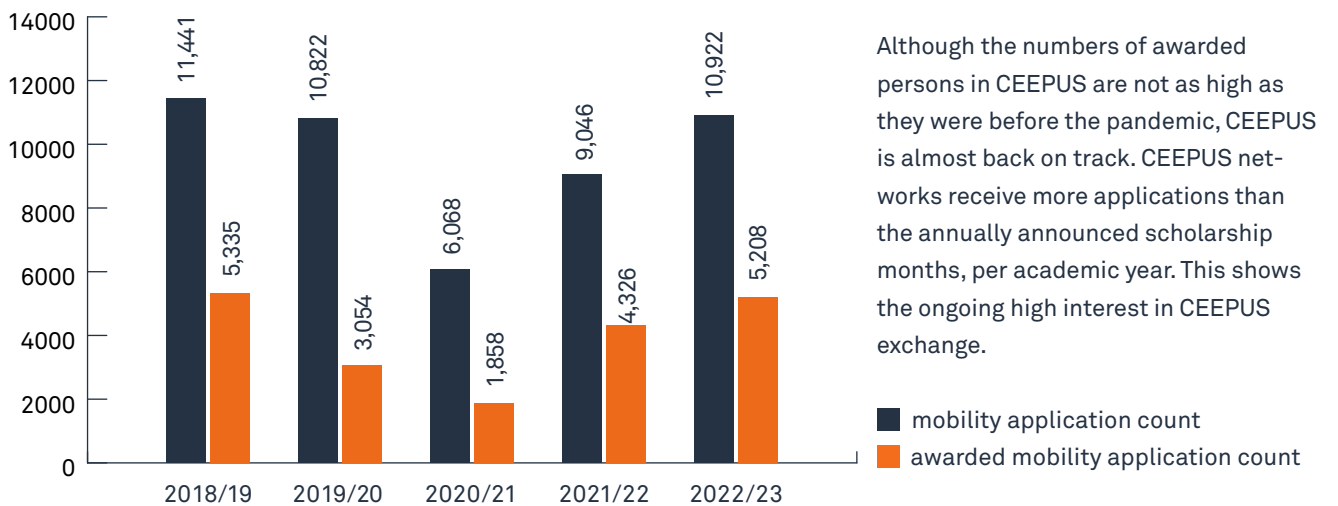
*The mobility applications per CEEPUS mobility category show an increase in short term stays for students and teachers*

Most of our member countries exceed the minimum number of incoming scholarship more than fivefold according to the minimum requirements (100 scholarship months per year) and pay tribute to the increased demand of academic exchange. Although the number of provided scholarship months declined during the pandemic years, we have now a new record high of almost 7,500 incoming scholarship months in 2023/24 provided for CEEPUS mobilities. The program is therefore ready to run on full speed again.

### Scholarship months



### Number of applications (requested vs. awarded)



Although the numbers of awarded persons in CEEPUS are not as high as they were before the pandemic, CEEPUS is almost back on track. CEEPUS networks receive more applications than the annually announced scholarship months, per academic year. This shows the ongoing high interest in CEEPUS exchange.

■ mobility application count  
 ■ awarded mobility application count

The number of applications exceeds the number of granted mobilities by more than twice.

## 16 Intensive courses within CEEPUS

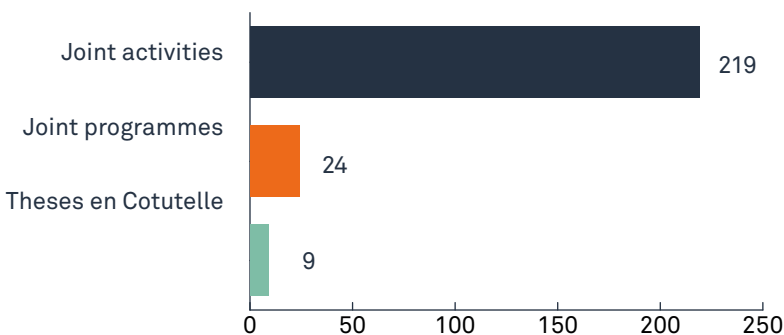
The CEEPUS program has observed a declining trend in the demand for long-term stays among students. Various factors may contribute to this decline, such as financial restrictions, academic commitments, or personal circumstances. However, the positive aspect is that the tradition of joint short-term activities, including summer schools and intensive courses, within CEEPUS networks provides flexible formats for students to participate in international exchange.

Some of the CEEPUS networks provide these intensive courses with great success over the last decades. We are pleased that at CEEPUS first international contacts with professional exchange are already made possible for students from their 2<sup>nd</sup> semester onwards. Some of these intensive courses are organized for specific target groups, others are more openly organized and benefit

particularly from international exchange. Short-term programs are also an opportunity for students with limited options for exchange and help to integrate scholars with disabilities.

The CEEPUS intensive courses prove, that such different approaches and goals can take place via this type of student exchange. The format includes summer schools, winter schools, they are often even a special form of “CEEPUS Micro-Credentials”. Due to its success, CEEPUS supports such programs and rewards networks during the selection process who integrate joint activities. Within the joint activities we have a whopping 62 intensive courses in the current academic year. Even more, the demand for the CEEPUS joint activities, summer schools and intensive short-term courses, is even higher, as we know from our applicants and network coordinators.

### Joint activities

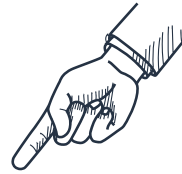


*The high number of requested joint activities, joint programmes and Theses en Cotutelle in the network applications 2023/24 show the high demand on joint activities within CEEPUS.*



## Two of our successful intensive courses

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### SI 0217: "Ars-technique"

### CEEPUS Winter School, Design Week 2022

16–22 October 2022, Maribor, Slovenia

The aim of this network is to cover the whole spectrum of modern engineering design of clothing and other textile forms in the broadest sense. It includes closely related areas, such as: Art, colour/light theory, fashion theory, photography, wearable computer technology, smart and intelligent clothing, ergonomics of the thermal environment and innovativeness.

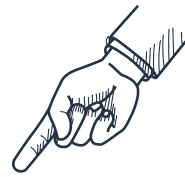


Photo: Pavel Trnka/CEEPUS

A visible contribution of this network was the execution of the traditional CEEPUS Winter School Design Week in October 2022, which included seven different one-week workshops attended by a total of 58 participants. 35 foreign CEEPUS students from eight countries, including three guest students under the Erasmus+ mobility Program, and 20 students from the University of Maribor. The effectiveness of the Winter School activities and the satisfaction of the participants also led to new collaborations in the field of education and research. Collaboration between Nottingham Trent University, Nottingham School of Art and Design (UK) and Vilnius Academy of Art (LT) has also deepened.

**It is important to point out that the activities that have taken place in the framework of student mobility, especially of PhD students, do not end with the end of the mobility, but remain as an important link, in the framework of which joint scientific articles and publications in co-authorship.**

*Jelka Gersak, Coordinator of "Ars-technique" Faculty of Economics*



## AT 68: "Amadeus"

### Central Europe Connect (CEC)

20 March 2023, University of Economics in Bratislava, Slovakia

This network promotes topics which are increasingly considered of importance for a modern and innovative education in business and economics like sustainability, responsible leadership, social inclusion, as well as entrepreneurship and new technologies.



Photo: University of Economics in Bratislava

The Central Europe Connect (CEC) Joint Certificate Program is the most prominent joint activity of this network. It brings together up to 60 students every semester, who jointly attend three courses leading to the Central Europe Connect Certificate. The program has been designed by the three AMADEUS partner institutions WU Vienna, EUBA Bratislava and SGH Warsaw and is embedded into their curricula at the bachelor's level. The strength of this program lies in the fact that all three institutions are involved in the program design and the course delivery. Moreover, students from all institutions jointly attend the CEC courses offered, thus making the program a truly intercultural experience in the Central European Region. Considering European Universities being formed around Europe we see this program as a strong and successful prototype for joint learning programs, which has been running successfully since 2019 and which was developed further despite the Covid pandemic.

Although Ukraine is not a CEEPUS member country, an urgent technical decision made by the Secretary General, along with the approval of Senior Officials from the member countries, enabled to offer scholarships to Ukrainian students and teachers in the academic year 2021/22 from March 2022 onwards. This demonstrates the program’s responsiveness and commitment to supporting international mobility in challenging circumstances. Poland, in particular, played a vital role by accepting the first group of students and teachers within just three weeks after the beginning of the war.

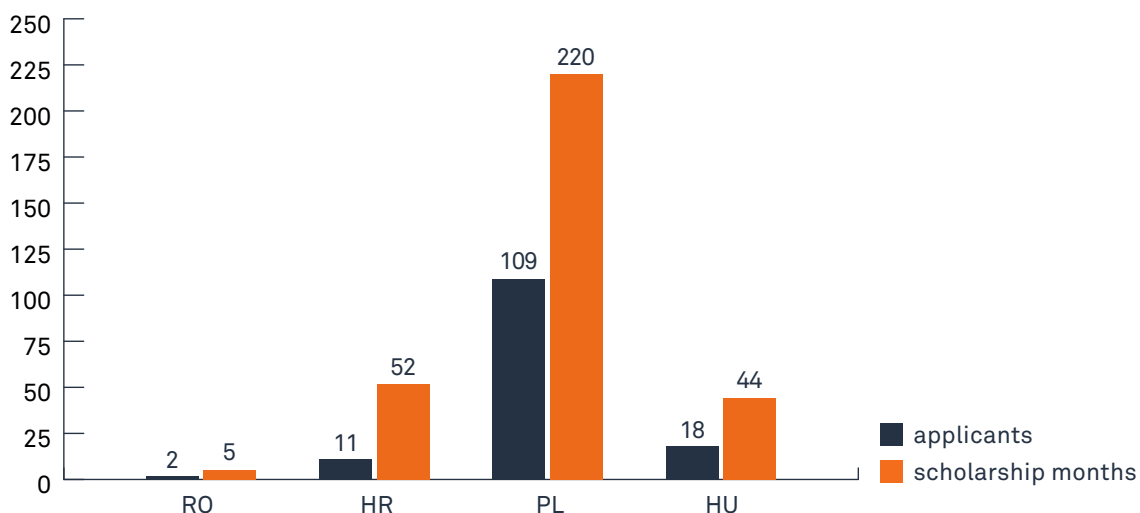
CEEPUS introduced a simplified online application form, reducing the formal criteria for Ukrainian applicants to a minimum. For instance, students’ academic backgrounds were verified through confirmation of enrollment, considering that recommendations from Ukrainian teachers were inaccessible during the first weeks following the outbreak of war.

We have learned, that regarding teacher applications, the academic community was genuinely supportive. Especially in Poland already existing cooperations were used to help as many teachers as possible to receive a scholarship.

We would like to thank our great academic community, which proved in difficult times of pandemic and war in Europe that solidarity does not have to remain an empty phrase.

Of course, these special thanks go to our “Ukrainian host countries” Poland, Hungary, Croatia and Romania, who had the possibility to provide scholarships for Ukrainians without administrative burdens.

## Applications from Ukrainian scholars



The number of applications from Ukrainian scholars in applicants and scholarship months.

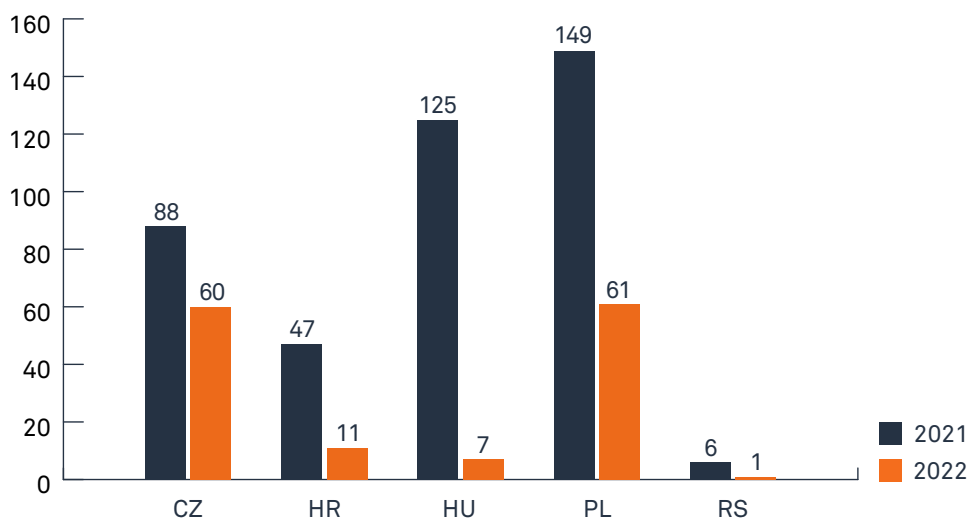
It shows that CEEPUS is not only able to react quickly, but also pays special attention to the latest developments in the European Higher Education Area. Non-EU countries are always beneficiaries of our welcoming academic culture and were, as in the case of the CEEPUS countries Albania or Moldova, integrated in our program after an initial trial phase. One key aspect of the CEEPUS program is to continue to expand in the future.

## 20 Virtual exchange

The introduction of virtual and/or hybrid mobilities during the pandemic was implemented in 5 countries. New forms of hybrid exchange are developed, and especially for very short periods of exchanges it becomes a good alternative to long and costly travel times. Regarding possibilities of internationalization of all our universities, virtual and blended mobility represents a great opportunity for further integration.

Therefore, it is still possible to receive virtual grants in the Czech Republic, Croatia and Poland. Hybrid and virtual exchange, although integrated as a first reaction to the pandemic, will also become another key aspect in the new CEEPUS program and should have a supporting role of the main physical exchange.

### Number of awarded CEEPUS scholarship months



*CEEPUS virtual exchange during the pandemic years 2021 and 2022.*

Every year CEEPUS is awarding a network with outstanding quality. The prize also serves as a label, awarded by the Joint Committee of Ministers once a year. Through our external panel of experts, using various evaluation criteria, we try to determine the best of our great networks.

### Ministers' Prize winner 2021

**SK-1018, Biology, Biotechnology and Food Sciences**

**Coordinator: Prof. Ing. PhD Miroslava Kacániová, Slovak University of Agriculture in Nitra, Faculty of Horticulture and Landscape Engineering**

It is important to understand the development of the Danube Region from ecology, rural development as well as the cultural and historical point of view. Students learn the importance to critically select and apply adequate methods for sustainability in agriculture, food production and food technology. But also, to analyze social interactions in an intercultural context. Due to the intercultural competence achieved, the graduates can be solely responsible for guiding international project teams; to have interdisciplinary knowledge, competencies and skills in agricultural and/or food science with a major focus on sustainability and sustainable technologies. Besides, to have qualification in intercultural learning, which allows deeper understanding of the cultural and social development of and in the Danube region. Thanks to the wide range of partners and involvement of research units, the students will also be able to write their Msn and PhD thesis under co-supervision of the hosting institution.

### Ministers' Prize winner 2022

**HR-0107, VetNEST (Veterinary Network for Student and Staff Transfer) – Extended**

**Coordinator: Assoc. Prof. Zoran Vrbanac, University of Zagreb, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine**

This network already exists since the beginning of CEEPUS in 1993. It offers lectures for graduates as well as for undergraduates and opportunities like various number of summer schools with different topics each year. Their experts are teaching in topics like Biosafety, Zoonose, Aquaculture, Exotic Medicine and Surgery etc in 12 different CEEPUS countries.

Certain conditions for a participation of network partners in this network were agreed upon to keep high standards. The main prerequisite for an even full membership in this network is the accreditation by the European Association of Establishments for Veterinary Education (EAEVE). Therefore, most partner universities are active members of the EAEVE and this common standard helps the full academic recognition of the studies made in one of the partner institutions.

VetNEST is also involved in several additional activities within the “Lifelong Learning Program” framework and participates in many international projects with different fundings. So, VetNEST is regarded in several aspects as a “reference workshop” of the EAEVE as well as for CEEPUS.

### Ministers' Prize winner 2023

**RS1011, Fostering sustainable partnership between academia and industry in improving applicability of logistics thinking (FINALIST) Coordinator: PhD Amrinko Maslaric, University of Novis Sad, Faculty of Technical Science**

Because today's business is constantly changing and evolving in response to change in technology, social and economic environments, and climate.

Dynamics of market changes dictated by globalization, liberalization and constant technological development, places the effectiveness of logistics and supply chain in the center of economic success and competitiveness of a country or region. So, the overall objective of this project is to promote the innovation and implementation of sustainable knowledge transfer between academia and industry. The final aim is to improve regional logistics competence through better applicability of logistics thinking.

## 22 Technical and administrative matters

Decisions on urgent technical and administrative matters are a tool for the Central CEEPUS Office to make quick decisions without having to consult all members first. Those decisions are confirmed later by the CEEPUS joint Committee of Ministers. As we are very grateful here at the Central CEEPUS Office, we want to repeat again that especially during a time of crisis like the Covid 19 pandemic or the War in Ukraine, this tool proved to make the program flexible in its ways to react. The urgent tech-

nical decisions are intended to provide the administrative basis for all CEEPUS member countries, the countries always retain full power and control over their respective national budgets. Together with Senior Officials, a CEEPUS decision making body of representatives of each ministry, the Central CEEPUS Office was able to establish virtual exchange and allow the participation of Ukrainian scholars in CEEPUS.

### Prospect of CEEPUS IV

In September 2023, the Joint Committee of Ministers of the CEEPUS countries will meet in Warsaw, Poland, to sign the new CEEPUS IV agreement. The details for this contract have been negotiated since 2021 with all member states. The draft text was finalized last year and will also include many new and already developed options within the CEEPUS program, like virtual exchange which was implemented during the pandemic, exchange of university staff, benefits for vulnerable, underrepresented, or disabled people and open the program for teachers and students from third-party countries. It will offer the CEEPUS networks from 2025 a further period of seven years with the opportunity to continue offering student exchange and teacher mobility within all participating countries. The new agreement must be ratified by at least three signing CEEPUS member states to become valid in time to start the first CEEPUS IV call for network applications for the academic 2025/2026.

CEEPUS's dynamic and flexible nature allows it to adapt to new circumstances and respond to the evolving needs of the academic community. In the upcoming program phase until 2032, the Central CEEPUS Office is committed to respond to these demands. With the broader goal of ensuring diversity and inclusivity within academic exchange, CEEPUS will introduce new key aspects, and promote important initiatives such as the exchange of young researchers, introducing intensive programs and monitoring gender representation.

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*Photos page two: Shutterstock.com (from left to right)*

*1<sup>st</sup> row: 1 Universität in Belgrad/Fernando Duarte Nogueira*

*2 The Central University Library and statue of King Carol I of Romania/SCStock*

*3 Old University library in Zagreb, Croatia/Simun Ascic*

*2<sup>nd</sup> row: 4 The facade of the university of Belgrade, Serbia/Fernando Duarte Nogueira*

*5 Faculty of Arts Building of Comenius University, Bratislava, Slovakia/martin.dlugo*

*6 The Jagiellonian University. University of Krakow/Agnes Kantaruk*

*3<sup>rd</sup> row: 7 Part of Charles University in Prague, Czech Republic/ Pyty*

*8 Joze Plecnik National and University Library, Ljubljana, Slovenia/AlevtinaGorskaya*

*9 Faculty of Law, University of Sarajevo/mdgn*

*4<sup>th</sup> row: 10 University park. Podgorica, Montenegro/Micko081*

*11 View over university, Berat, Albania/imageBROKER.com*

*12 Monument of St. Cyril and Methodius in Skopje, Macedonia/Leonid Andronov*

*5<sup>th</sup> row: 13 University of Kliment Ohridski in Sofia, Bulgaria/trabantos*

*14 The state university building in Chisinau, Moldova/FrimuFilms*

*15 University of Vienna, Austria/muratart*

*Design: KOMMUNIKATION + DESIGN thepert.at*

