

# **New Initiatives in the Joint Educational Cooperation of Central European Universities in the Field of Graphic Communications**

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## **Abstract**

Five Central European universities have been working in collaboration for years now in the education and research of graphic communication. In addition to aligning their activities with each other, they aspire to shape and adopt novel forms of joint work. The authors are presenting two of these new and successful initiatives where they have taken leading roles from raising the idea until implementation. “ING” has been originated by the Faculty of Graphic Arts at the University of Zagreb as the annual study competition for university students in the field of “graphic engineering and design”. Beyond professional performance, it has the objective to allow students to earn experience in “team work” in an intercultural environment, reasonable division of work and cooperation. This competition is organized in April each year. The “CHIP Plus” program is Óbuda University’s response to the Zagreb competition. The underlying reason is that the students from Zagreb are somewhat disadvantaged in the competition, as they invariably compete in home grounds. Therefore, in this project they are permanent guests. The hosting Hungarian university invites another university team from one of the collaborating institutions every year. The authors have reckoned that the detailed description of these successfully implemented programs can present examples for and encourage ideas in relation to other collaborations with the involvement of the community of teachers.

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## **Introduction: 5U CHEGA (Five Universities Collaboration in Higher Education on Graphic Arts)**

Five Central European universities, the University of Ljubljana (Slovenia), University of Novi Sad (Serbia), Óbuda University (Hungary), University of Pardubice (Czech Republic) and University of Zagreb (Croatia) have been working in collaboration for years now in the education and research of graphic communication. In addition to aligning their activities with each other, they aspire to shape and adopt novel forms of joint work (see Figure 1).



**Collaboration of 5 universities in the higher education of graphic arts**

*Figure1: The five universities on the map*

The representatives of the above institutions have agreed to launch a program of collaboration regarding the following aspects:

- harmonization of conference dates in order to have an event calendar for the next 4 years, including student workshops,
- mutual support to the publication of scientific works in their own university journals, and mutual support to Acta Graphica as a peer-reviewed, high-standard scientific journal, as well as the implementation of a thematic shift for the Journal of Graphic Engineering and Design towards professional and design areas,
- elaboration of an English language study program, which can be mutually accepted as a program for exchange students,
- joining the CEEPUS (Central European Exchange Program for University Studies) program in financial support for the above study program, and the evaluation of options for a joint application for the Erasmus Mundus project,
- joint research projects,

- participation in the ING student competition project at Faculty of Graphic Arts in Zagreb University.



*Figure 2: Sign the contract about the collaboration in Budapest*

### **“ING” student competition in graphic engineering and design**

The Student Senate of the Faculty of Graphic Arts in cooperation with the Management of Faculty of Graphic Arts organized an Engineering Competition of Graphic Designers and Engineers – ING at the Faculty of Graphic Arts in Zagreb University of Zagreb.

The participants of the student competition are students of engineering faculties in Slovenia (Faculty of Natural Sciences and Engineering, University of Ljubljana), Serbia (Faculty of Technical Sciences, University of Novi Sad), Hungary (Rejtő Sándor Faculty of Light Industry and Environmental Engineering, Óbuda University, Budapest), Czech Republik (Faculty of Chemical Technology, University of Pardubice) and Croatia (Faculty of Graphic Arts, University of Zagreb).

The University of Zagreb has unique relationship with University of Travnik in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Faculty of Technical Science) for historical and national reasons. They are also invited to the competition as the sixth participant.

The Engineering Competition of Graphic Designers and Engineers – ING is a competition of students of graphic engineering and graphic product design. The idea was conceived by the Faculty of Graphic Arts in Zagreb and the competition first took place in 2010. In view of the positive reactions of all participants, as well as excellent acceptance by the students and their foreign guests, it is now being organized for the fifth year in a row.

With the purpose of improving cooperation and scientific exchange with other cognate faculties in the region, as well as raising the level of the competition, in the second year it was decided to take a step further in organization, and offer the participants a much extended and enriched accompanying program. In addition

to the competitive part, the participants have the opportunity to attend interesting workshops, guest lectures and have a lot of other experience, pleasant surprises.

During the years workshops were organized, such as “Calligraphy”, “3D printing”, “Make your own pop-up book” and “Design innovative packaging”. Also, guest lectures by renowned designers were held, and they presented some of their most successful works. The opening ceremony of ING takes place in the Conference Hall of the Faculty, followed by the introductory briefing and presentation of the assignments.



*Figure 3: The participants of the ING'2013 competition*

The students are divided into five mixed teams of six members each, one representative from each participating faculty (Figure 3).

The teams start working on the designing part of the assignment (e.g. redesign of an Italian air conditioners catalogue) and for that purpose they are given a text, a collection of photographs, vector graphics, etc., which they may use to accomplish the assignment. The designing part is followed by the engineering part, e.g. the calculation of material and operating costs, the duration of the printing and finishing processes and all other relevant parameters.

The students are expected to have skills and competences to work with the Adobe software and be familiar with the printmaking techniques, as well as other processes of graphic production.

The winning solution is evaluated by a jury of experts. The final score is based on the expert opinion of the jury and the votes of the audience, namely, the votes of

the students who will – upon completion of the designing part of the competence – have the chance to vote for their favourite solutions.

The costs of accommodation and meals for all students are fully covered by the Faculty of Graphic Arts in Zagreb.

### “CHIP+” program

Although this international student program looks back only on a brief history, still it is worth highlighting a few details for a start. The teams of light industry engineers, printing and media specialization, from the Óbuda University have been participating in the international study competition “ING”, organized by the Faculty of Graphic Arts of the University of Zagreb in every spring. This one-week program focusing on modern graphic communication has a lot to offer in the professional fields of students from all the six participating academic institutions, as well as in practicing various forms of cooperation. Students can earn experience in work performed in international settings. During the competition and the relaxing evening programs, new contacts, relations and friends are made.

This latter experience prompted the heads of the Institute of Media Technology and Light Industry Engineering and the members of the team having participated in the 2013 competition to return the invitation, and host the representatives of the event-organizing students from Zagreb for an autumn meeting planned to last for a week (Figure 4).

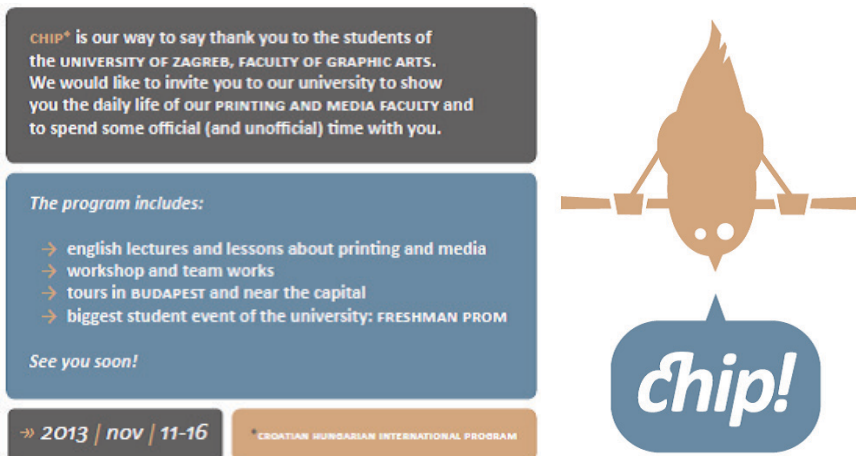


Figure 4: Excerpt from the Hungarian students' invitation lett



This is how CHIP (Croatian–Hungarian International Program) was created in November 2013, covering attendance at professional lectures, the performance of joint design tasks and implementation activities, and obviously common leisure time programs for the participating 6 Croatian and 6 Hungarian students.

Encouraged by the remarkable success of the event, in 2014 “CHIP Plus” was initiated, which meant that the organizer, Óbuda University – in addition to the students from Croatia – invited the young printing engineers of another university, i.e. from the Faculty of Engineering of the University of Novi Sad from Serbia.

Five Croatian and five Serbian students arrived at the program staged from 8 until 13 November, while for that week the faculty students’ hostel provided accommodation to the guests. They were joined by the Hungarian team that would travel to the ING competition the following year. They were also acting as the hosts of the event with the support of the teachers of the institute. The very intensive 5-day program kicked off with an “open air” workshop on Sunday.



*Figure 5: Activities at the workshops*

During the discovery of Budapest, the participants had various tasks to tackle, which resulted in elements to be processed as graphic compositions later. Weekday mornings always started out with work. The students were arranged in teams, and were to design logos, image elements, placards and other graphic solutions that were actually printed on the last day (Figure 5). The middle periods of the days were spent with classes in English. The teachers of the Faculty held lectures on modern multimedia solutions, state-of-the-art applications of paper-based packaging, as well as the “green printing” approach. Students really enjoyed practical “papermaking

by hands” activities. A part of the program was a visit to Hungary’s largest digital printing plant, the Prime Rate facility.

A pleasant surprise for the foreign students was an Excursion to Szentendre. So far, they had known very little of the town featuring considerable Serbian and Croatian heritage, culture. The Hungarian students as the hosts put in place lively evening pastimes. Obviously, a highlight event for the guests was their participation at the inaugural ball of first-year students.

On the whole, the week turned out to be a success, great competitive works were presented. Joint work also pointed out the strengths of the individual participants and the areas where our education were to be improved. At the closing event, it could be apparently found that there was a cross-border community of young printers emerging, which was further strengthened by the CHIP Plus program.

#### Chip2+ international printer student event

In the spring of 2016, funding could be obtained in the framework of the CEEPUS European Union project from the Tempus Foundation for an international student event. As a result, we had the opportunity to organize the “CHIP 2+” program at the end of June. The name “CHIP 2+” refers to two guest universities in addition to the Croatian and Hungarian students. For this program, the extra invitations were sent to the students of the Warsaw University of Technology and the University of Ljubljana. In addition to the 4 strong student teams, one reputed professor from each university was hosted.

Meantime the Warsaw University of Technology has also connected to the 5U CHEGA program

Held in English, the one-week program kicked off on 25 June with the reception of guests. On the following day, after the opening event the participating students formed international teams (one student from each university) for the execution of the planned tasks that focused on the topic of “Green printing”. All Sunday was dedicated to exploration of Budapest with the guidance of the Hungarian students. At the same time, the teams were to gather themes for the design tasks (Figure 6).

Weekdays started with workshops where the students created typographic designs in teams, and then before each lunch a presentation was delivered by one of the invited professors: Dr. Diana Gregor-Svetec (University of Ljubljana), Dr. Joanna Izdebska (Warsaw University of Technology) and Dr. Igor Majnaric (University of Zagreb). On the Hungarian side, presentations were held by Dr. Ákos Borbély and Dr. Csaba Horváth. All the presentations were associated with the central topic of the program.



**CHIP\*** program started in 2013 as our way of saying thank you to the students of the UNIVERSITY OF ZAGREB FACULTY OF GRAPHIC ARTS for organising ING Print Competition, but we would like to expand our program for students from other European universities such as the University of Ljubljana and Warsaw University of Technology and start a tradition under name of **CHIP2+**.

We invite you to our university to show you the daily life of our Institute of Media Technology and Light Industry Engineering and spend some official and unofficial time with you.

We launch this program on Saturday evening (June 25) after the foreigner students' arrival and finish it on next Saturday morning (July 2).

**The program includes:**

- lectures and lessons about green printing and media and green packaging,
- workshop and team works,
- tours in Budapest and near the capital,
- visits to printing companies,
- exhibition about the artworks of students,
- social events for networking.

**Workshop/Teamwork**

Students will work in 4 mix groups. Every team will contain 4 member from different university. The main language of event is English.

**Accommodation**

At the Kiss Árpád Kollégium (dorm) at Doberdó Street 6/a – next door at our faculty building.

**Dining**

Breakfast: each morning in the university/dormitory canteen.

Lunch: from Monday to Friday in the university canteen, on Sunday – during the site visits – in the city,

Dinner: on Sunday and Wednesday in city restaurant, on Friday at the Gala Dinner at the faculty garden.

**Per Diem**

Every participant students will get 6000 HUF on Tuesday (June 27).

**June 25 – July 2, 2016**

**\*Croatian Hungarian International Partnership**

*Figure 6: Excerpt from the Hungarian students' invitation letter of 2016*



Afternoons were times for other activities. The student visited a modern “green printer”, Gelbert Ekoprint Kft. Increased interest accompanied the opportunity to have an insight into the largest digital printing plant in Central Europe. At the University’s paper laboratory, students could test themselves in the practical mastery of manual papermaking (Figure 7). The program also included an excursion and a night “tour of gastronomy” in Budapest.

By the last day of the project, printed creations (placards, T-shirts and mugs) were completed, and exhibited by the teams in the showcases on 4.5th intermediate floor of the faculty building. The students from Zagreb surprised the participants by shooting a photo-based film of the program events.

At the closing event, the students and teachers could bid farewell to each other during a genuine Hungarian garden party on the hill side behind the building of the Faculty (Figure 8).



*Figure 7: The process of creation in the paper and print laboratory.*



*Figure 8: The participants of CHIP2+*

## **Conclusion**

The authors have reckoned that the detailed description of these successfully implemented programs can present examples for and encourage ideas in relation to other collaborations with the involvement of the community of teachers.