Student life during and post Covid19
PLA within the SIDERAL project
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Covid timeline: March-June 2020 - „emergency response“:

- Distance Learning (within ~ 1 week): students were satisfied (see Hajek study, April 2020/February 2021)
  - flexibility in quality assurance requirements
    - introduction of online assessments – regulations for online exams have been put up by all higher education institutions
    - lessons that could not be held online (e.g. laboratory sessions etc.): possibilities to postpone/alternative achievement records (e.g. written assignments)
  - increase of exams between summer term 2020 and winter term 2020 → unclear sure what this implies (?) UAS did not have any losses in terms of active students
Covid timeline: March-June 2020 - „emergency response“:

financial improvements and support services for students

• students have been granted a „neutral semester“ → they can receive **student support** for one additional semester, and are not excluded from child support, tax benefits, insurance...

• students within a **physical mobility within Erasmus+** didn’t have to pay back their mobility grants in case of non-achievement (ECTS) and there greater flexibility concerning the refund of additional costs (e.g. cancelled flights)

• Expansion of psychological student counseling
Small Covid student surveys (April 2020/February 2021)

• Hardware: very good; internet: not so good
• 2/3 say it worked (very) well, independent from prior experience
• 2/3 strong changes, 1/3 hardly any changes
• Cooperation between students was seen positively/worsened in 2021
• Feedback and communication with teachers good for less than 50%
• Great insecurity concerning exams among students
• Strong influence on employment, financial situation/similar in 2021
• Motivation and mental well-being decreased between 2020 and 2021
Covid responses during study year 2020/21

• Legal framework to enable online teaching and exams and regulations for lessons that cannot be held online (e.g. laboratory sessions etc.)

• BMBWF supported HEIs for enabling Covid testing

• Secondary analysis of available surveys/data from HEIs on the topic of “Distance Learning Lessons Learned” from the pandemic for teaching & learning was commissioned → results by the end of June 2021

• Mid-term evaluation of National Strategy on the SD of HE includes questions on impacts of Covid-19 crisis on vulnerable groups → results by December 2021
Opportunities to improve study conditions

• **Distance T&L**: has to be developed to become accessible for all; evaluation of existing formats → best formats will improve future teaching & learning

• **Develop institutional and individual resilience** in HE and prepare for future difficulties (drop in retention rates, less exam activity, students’ mental health problems, effects on vulnerable and disadvantaged students, etc.) → to be seen in national surveys:
  - Student Social Survey 2023
  - survey among upp.-sec. students in graduation year 2022
Barriers to improving study conditions

• Covid-19 increased inequalities in HE (due to a lack of hardware; internet connectivity and learning spaces; employment; student skills for self-organisation and learning → challenges for the whole education system
  – See study (Christiane Spiel, University of Vienna) for strong effects on mental well-being of students at all educational levels

• Specific challenges for on-boarding of first-term students

• Diversity of student body might change (e.g. economic effects on students,...)
Support on EHEA level

• **Principles and Guidelines** on the Social Dimension

• **International BFUG** has started its new working cycle → national commitment and adaptation is necessary (Rome Communiqué)

• International **project cooperations**: 3-IN-AT, PLAR-4-SIMP
Thank you for your attention!

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