

**INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES OF NON-STATE UNIVERSITIES:
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Abstract

In the context of global challenges and risks, the topic of international activities of universities is becoming one of the most important and discussed in the professional community. In light of the current situation, many of the plans for the development of international activities of universities in the coming years will not be able to be fully implemented. The Covid-19 pandemic has jeopardized all universities in terms of achieving the goals of international activity, including non-state universities. At the same time, the crisis has spurred innovation in education. Thanks to the prompt response measures taken to organize a smooth educational process, higher education organizations have found solutions for the further development of international cooperation in a distance format using digital technologies.

The article provides a scientific review and comparative analysis of the main problems of the international activities development by non-state universities. The study of the international activities of non-state universities was carried out on the example of the ANO VO Belgorod University of Cooperation, Economics and Law, which is one of the leading non-state universities with a state license and accreditation. Academic mobility and attraction of foreign citizens to study in the main educational programs of higher education are designated as priority areas for the development of international activities. The data on the dynamics of the number of foreign students of ANO VO Belgorod University of Cooperation, Economics and Law are presented. The analysis made it possible to identify the key problems in the development of international activities that non-state universities face in the direction of the export of educational services. Among them: limited flows of academic mobility, more stringent requirements from migration legislation, difficulties in the recognition of diplomas in foreign countries. Discussion of problems and exchange of experience in conducting international activities by non-state universities at round tables, scientific and practical conferences held both at the premises of ANO VO Belgorod University of Cooperation, Economics and Law, and in other universities, which served as the basis for the working out of prospects for the development of international activities in the face of global challenges and risks.

Keywords: *international activities, non-state universities, academic mobility, export of education, educational services, foreign students*

1. Introduction

Development of the export of education has been one of the priorities of state policy since 2018, when the federal project “Export of Education” of the national project “Education” was launched. The task of doubling the number of foreign students in Russia by 2024, set in the federal project, is one of the paramount for many Russian universities.

The main functions to achieve the goals set by the state in terms of the development of higher education internationalization are assigned to state universities. At the moment, state universities have already developed clear strategies for internationalization, formed an image in the international market, developed and launched a mechanism for information and coordination support of international activities of universities, there is free access to all-Russian online platforms for the recruitment of foreign students, as well as significant support, both on the part of Rosstrudnichestvo representations abroad, and on the part of the ministries of science and education of the countries of far and near abroad.

Unlike state universities, non-state universities have to work in less comfortable conditions and rely only on their own strength. Non-state universities, in the current mode, constantly interacting with foreign students, each time explain to them that they also have a license and state accreditation and receive them on the same conditions as state universities. The situation is further complicated by the stricter norms of migration legislation in relation to non-state universities, the difficulty in recognizing educational documents by foreign ministries of science and education. The role of non-state universities in the development of research activities and in improving the quality of education is underestimated. Often, the main emphasis is on the commercial approach of non-state universities to internationalization processes.

Of course, without denying that the commercial component acts as an important factor stimulating the activities of non-state universities in terms of the development of international activities, the existing difficulties and problems on the way to internationalization make non-state universities feel a great responsibility for providing high quality education. Non-state universities are an integral part of the modern Russian higher education system and contribute to the development of international cooperation and partnership.

2. Extent of the study of the problem at present, study purpose

An analysis of studies related to the participation of non-state universities in the processes of higher education internationalization convincingly indicates the need for a detailed study of the problems and determining the prospects for the development of international activities of non-state universities. In the specialized literature, attempts are made to systematize these issues, however, a description of the specific problems that non-state universities face in the process of international activities and ways to solve them in the context of the changing requirements and challenges of modern economic and educational reality is not presented.

The purpose of this article is to determine the prospects for the development of international activities of non-state universities based on an objective analysis of the strengths and weaknesses, threats and opportunities for conducting international activities of the ANO VO Belgorod University of Cooperation, Economics and Law.

3. Methods and materials used

This article was made using the methods of theoretical and empirical research. The logic of the research was built on the basis of three sequential stages and using the appropriate scientific methods:

1. The exploratory stage - the study of the conceptual foundations of the development of international activities of universities and the legal framework governing the conditions and procedure for its implementation. The works of A. M. Alexandrov, D. G. Arsenyev, M. S. Andronov, M. V. Larionova, M. A. Trubitsin and others are devoted to the issues of international activities development by higher schools.
2. Information and analytical stage - analysis of the results of international activities of ANO VO Belgorod University of Cooperation, Economics and Law. The analysis of the results of the international activities of ANO VO "Belgorod University of Cooperation, Economics and Law" was carried out in the context of two aspects of international activities aimed at increasing the level of internationalization and most exposed to global challenges and risks:
 - 1) expanding the export of educational services in order to attract foreign citizens to study at non-state universities;
 - 2) support and development of academic mobility.In this case, the methods of analogy, induction and deduction were used.
3. Development stage - determining the prospects for the development of international activities of non-state universities. The methods used at this stage include: modelling, design, visualization, graphic methods of presenting authors' ideas and developments.

4. Findings and discussions

The Belgorod University of Cooperation, Economics and Law pay special attention to the development of international activities. The primary task is to preserve and develop international collaboration in the field of cooperation. To this end, agreements on cooperation in the field of education and science were concluded with cooperative universities of the CIS countries. As of today, they have grown into an agreement on the Consortium for the creation of the Cooperative Network University. Within the framework of the consortium, active interaction is carried out in the educational and scientific spheres, joint educational programs are being developed and implemented, joint scientific research and cultural events are being carried out.

Since 2014, the UNESCO Chair Education for Sustainable Development of Cooperatives has been successfully functioning. As part of the work of the UNESCO Chair Education for the Sustainable Development of Cooperatives, it has already become a tradition to hold annual international forums at which the problems and prospects of the development of the cooperative movement in the world are discussed.

Cooperation with cooperative universities of the CIS countries within the framework of the Consortium and the UNESCO Chair Education for the Sustainable Development of Cooperatives stimulated an increase in the pace of academic mobility. The most active academic mobility of teaching staff and students is carried out with the Belarusian Trade and Economic University of Consumer Cooperatives and the Tajik State University of Commerce. Another direction in the development of the international activities of the university, contributing to internationalization, is to attract foreign citizens to study in the basic educational programs of higher education. As can be seen from the data shown in Figure 1, the number of foreign students at Belgorod University of Cooperation, Economics and Law

has been constantly increasing since 2018. As a positive trend, a significant increase in the number of foreign students in 2020 compared to 2019 should be noted.

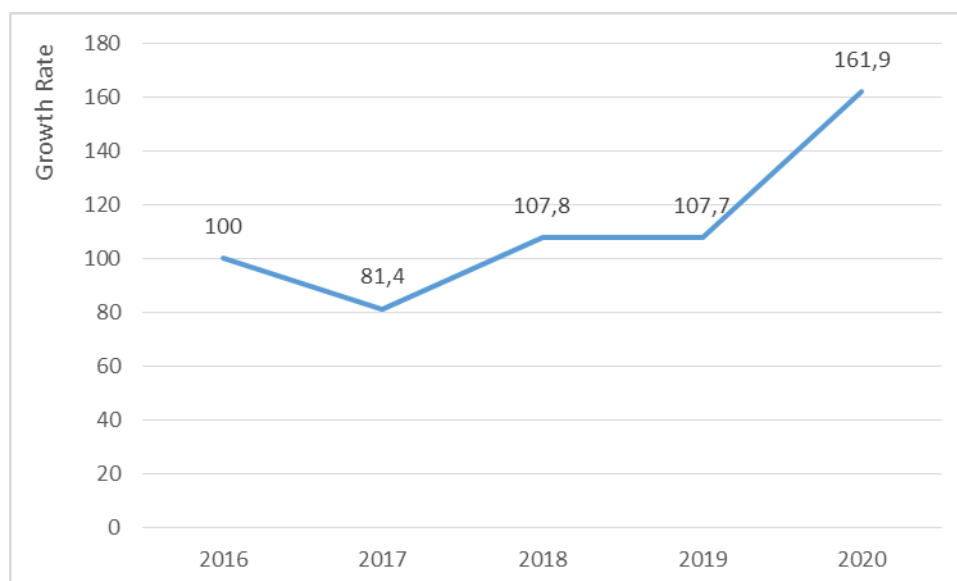


Figure 1. Dynamics of students of ANO VO Belgorod University of Cooperation, Economics and Law for 2016-2020, %

The composition of foreign students studying at the university on basic educational programs is dominated by citizens of the countries of the near abroad: Ukraine, the Republic of Belarus, and Turkmenistan. The most demanded areas of training for them are Economics, Management, and Jurisprudence. Students from far abroad are more attracted by Applied Informatics.

In order to increase the enrolment of foreign citizens from far abroad for the main educational programs of higher education in 2015, the university opened a Preparatory Faculty for Foreign Citizens. The dynamics of the number of students who have successfully completed the development of additional educational programs that ensure the preparation of foreign citizens and stateless persons for the development of professional educational programs in Russian is shown in Figure 2.

The dynamics of trainees' graduation of the preparatory faculty for foreign citizens of the Belgorod University of Cooperation, Economics and Law is presented in Figure 2 using chain and basic growth rates. The dynamics of the chain growth rates shows an annual increase in the number of students of the preparatory faculty for foreign citizens, but the growth rate of this indicator is slowing down annually. Thus, the largest increase occurred in 2017, when the number of students who successfully completed the development of additional educational programs that ensure the preparation of foreign citizens and stateless persons for the development of professional educational programs in Russian, was increased almost threefold. In subsequent years, the growth in the number of trainees took place at slower pace.

Basic growth rates indicate that the number of students at the Preparatory Faculty for Foreign Citizens of the Belgorod University of Cooperation, Economics and Law as a whole has increased eightfold within the five-year period under review. And this number is not yet the limit to the possibilities that the university currently has.

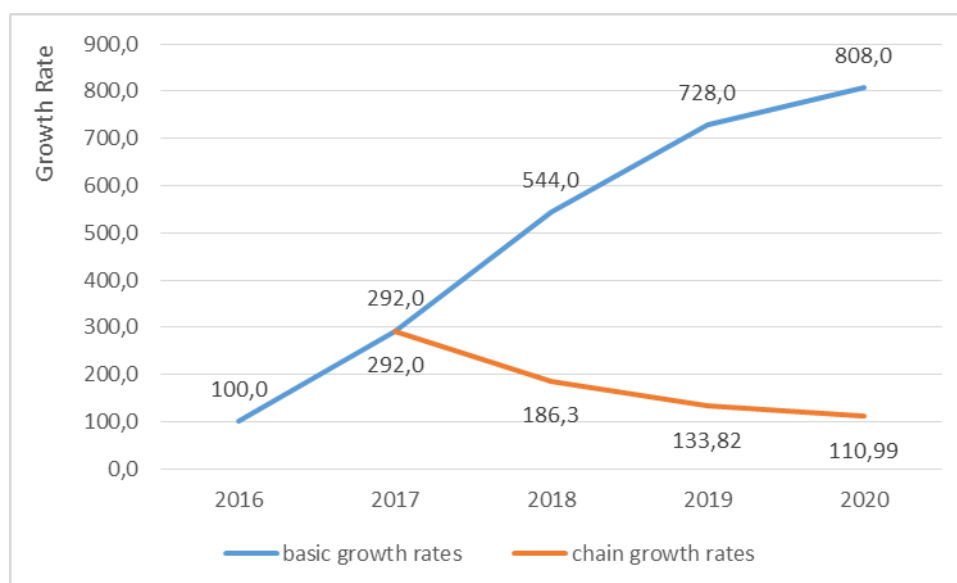


Figure 2. Dynamics of foreign trainees graduation of the Preparatory Faculty for Foreign Citizens of ANO VO Belgorod University of Cooperation, Economics and Law for 2016-2020, %

The main reason for the slowdown in the growth rate of the number of trainees of the Preparatory Faculty for Foreign Citizens is associated with the latest changes in migration legislation, in accordance with which universities do not have the opportunity to automatically extend the visa for foreign citizens who have completed preparatory courses in non-state universities. Migration legislation requires a mandatory departure of a foreign citizen to his/her country and the issuance of a new invitation to enter the Russian Federation for the purpose of study. As a result, a foreign citizen decides to study at a state university and, accordingly, makes his/her choice towards the preparatory departments of state universities. This is especially true for foreign citizens from Latin America and Africa, since the cost of air travel to these countries and back to Russia is high. In this regard, the main audience of students of the Preparatory Faculty for Foreign Citizens of the Belgorod University of Cooperation, Economics and Law are foreign citizens of the neighbouring regions of Asia and North Africa (Figure 3).

Thus, analysing the main directions of development of international activities with ANO VO Belgorod University of Cooperation, Economics and Law as a case study as one of the leading non-state universities, included in 2020 in the TOP-5 private universities in Russia (RAEX Rating Review), we identified a number of problems requiring further discussion.

Based on the results of the analysis, it was found that the academic mobility of the university is reduced mainly to mobility within the CIS countries. One of the obstacles on the way to reaching the international level in terms of the mobility of teaching staff and students of non-state universities is their insufficient level of proficiency in English. It should be noted that this problem is of a purely intra-university nature and it is already being solved by organizing English language courses for teaching staff and university students on preferential terms, which serves as a motivating factor for increasing the pace of academic mobility.

Today, students of most non-state universities are almost completely prepared for mastering lectures in English. Teachers from private universities are also gradually beginning to practice lecturing and conducting seminars in English.

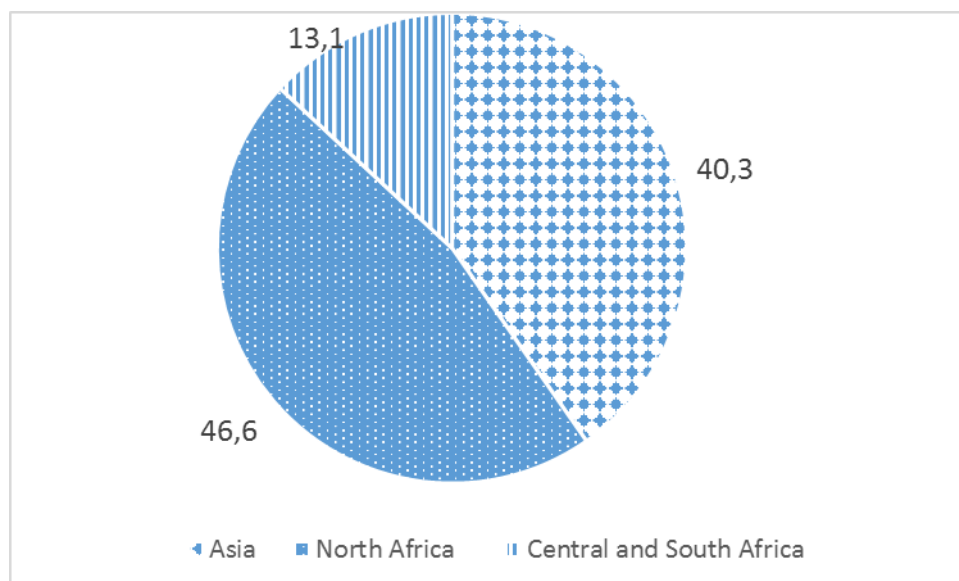


Figure 3. Structure of foreign trainees of the Preparatory Faculty for Foreign Citizens of ANO VO Belgorod University of Cooperation, Economics and Law as of January 01, 2020 by citizenship, %

The situation is somewhat improved in terms of recruiting students by the preparatory departments of non-state universities from Latin America, Central and South Africa by joint Order No. 882/391 of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of Russia and the Ministry of Education of Russia on August 05, 2020 "On the organization and implementation of educational activities in a network form of educational programs", which paragraph 9 allows the transfer of students in additional educational programs from the base organization to the participating organization. We can only hope that state universities will support the initiative of non-state universities to act as a base organization, provided that the migration legislation does not relieve them of their responsibility as the inviting party.

Another problem is related to the fact that the number of foreign nationals from far abroad countries (visa students) who completed their studies at the preparatory department for foreign nationals at a non-state university and continued their studies at the same university in the main educational programs of higher education remains minimal. In general, foreign students come to non-state universities after completing their educational programs at state universities in order to obtain a second higher education or education of the next level.

This problem is caused by the difficulty of recognition of diplomas of non-state universities in some foreign countries. In particular, in the near abroad countries the documents of graduation from the Belgorod University of Cooperation, Economics and Law are successfully recognized by the Ministries of Science and Education of these countries, and the graduates of the university have a high percentage of employment. Meanwhile, with some far abroad countries it is essentially a "vicious" circle: in order to get recognition, it is first necessary to ensure the graduation of foreign citizens from these countries; in turn, the university cannot attract foreign citizens from these countries to study, because it cannot guarantee that the diploma received will be recognized in their country.

5. Conclusions

Despite the above-mentioned problems, non-state universities strive to maintain their attractiveness to foreign nationals from different countries by providing them with a more comfortable environment and a high quality of education.

As promising directions for the development of international activities of non-state universities should be highlighted:

- 1) implementation of educational programs in network form, involving double diplomas; increase in the number of students participating in international academic mobility programs;
- 2) further improvement of the system of attracting foreign nationals to study in higher education programs by concluding agreements on network interaction;
- 3) increasing the number of publications in foreign journals, participation of academic staff of non-state universities in research projects and research papers carried out jointly with foreign and international organizations;
- 4) activation of activities of departments and structural subdivisions of non-state universities to attract foreign teachers and researchers to the educational and scientific process.

Creation of favourable conditions for the development of international activities by non-state universities will allow them to contribute to the achievement of the main goal of education export in the context of global challenges and risks. Thanks to the emerging electronic platforms, international activities, despite the closed borders, are becoming more and more open [1]. Programs of virtual internationalization, virtual international internships and online learning during the closure of borders, blended learning in the post-crisis period become new scenarios for the development of international activities in the current environment.

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Rezumat

În contextul provocărilor și riscurilor globale, activitatea internațională a universităților devine una dintre cele mai importante și discutabile tematici în comunitatea profesională. Grație situației actuale, multe dintre planurile de dezvoltare a activităților internaționale ale universităților nu vor putea fi implementate pe deplin în următorii ani. Pandemia Covid-19 a pus în pericol toate universitățile în ceea ce privește realizarea obiectivelor aferente activității internaționale, cu excepția universităților nestatale. În același timp, criza a stimulat inovația în educație. Datorită măsurilor luate prompt referitor la organizarea unui proces educațional fără probleme, organizațiile de învățământ superior au găsit soluții pentru dezvoltarea în continuare a cooperării internaționale în format la distanță folosind tehnologii digitale.

În articol se efectuează o analiză științifică și comparativă a principalelor probleme ale dezvoltării activității internaționale derulate de către universitățile nestatale. Studiul s-a realizat în baza ONA SS „Universitatea Cooperatistă, Economie și Drept, Belgorod”, una dintre universitățile de top, licențiată și acreditată de stat. Mobilitatea academică și atragerea cetățenilor străini la studii la principalele programe educaționale ale învățământului superior sunt desemnate ca domenii prioritare pentru desfășurarea activității internaționale. Sunt prezentate datele privind dinamica numărului de studenți străini la ONA SS „Universitatea Cooperatistă, Economie și Drept, Belgorod”. Analiza a permis identificarea problemelor cheie în dezvoltarea activității internaționale cu care se confruntă universitățile nestatale în exportul serviciilor educaționale: fluxuri limitate de mobilitate academică, cerințe mai stricte din legislația migrației, dificultăți în recunoașterea diplomelor în țările străine. Discutarea problemelor și schimbul de experiență în desfășurarea activității internaționale de către universitățile nestatale la mese rotunde, conferințe științifice și practice desfășurate atât la ONA SS „Universitatea Cooperatistă, Economie și Drept, Belgorod”, cât și în alte universități, au servit bază pentru elaborarea perspectivelor de dezvoltare a activității internaționale în condițiile provocărilor și riscurilor globale.

Cuvinte-cheie: activități internaționale, universități nestatale, mobilitate academică, export de educație, servicii educaționale, studenți străini

Аннотация

В условиях глобальных вызов и рисков тема международной деятельности вузов становится одной из наиболее важных и обсуждаемых в профессиональном сообществе. В свете сложившейся ситуации многие намеченные планы в области развития международной деятельности вузов в ближайшие годы не смогут быть реализованы в полном объеме. Пандемия Covid-19 поставила под угрозу в плане достижения целей международной деятельности все вузы, исключением не являются и негосударственные вузы. В то же время кризис послужил стимулом для инноваций в сфере образования. Благодаря оперативным мерам реагирования, принятым для организации бесперебойного учебного процесса, организациями высшего образования были найдены решения для дальнейшего развития международного сотрудничества в дистанционном формате с применением цифровых технологий.

В статье проводится научный обзор и сравнительный анализ основных проблем развития международной деятельности негосударственными вузами. Исследование международной деятельности негосударственных вузов проведено на примере АНО ВО «Белгородский университет кооперации, экономики и права», который является одним из ведущих негосударственных вузов, имеющих государственную лицензию и аккредитацию. В качестве приоритетных направлений развития международной деятельности обозначены академическая мобильность и привлечение иностранных граждан для обучения по основным образовательным программам высшего образования. Приведены данные о динамике численности иностранных обучающихся АНО ВО «Белгородский университет кооперации, экономики и права». Проведенный анализ позволил выявить ключевые проблемы развития международной деятельности, с которыми сталкиваются негосударственные вузы в направлении реализации экспорта образовательных услуг. В их числе: ограниченность потоков академической мобильности, более жесткие требования со стороны миграционного законодательства, сложности в признании дипломов в странах дальнего зарубежья. Обсуждение проблем и обмен опытом ведения негосударственными вузами международной деятельности на круглых столах, научно-практических конференциях, проводимых как на базе АНО ВО «Белгородский университет кооперации, экономики и права», так и на базе других вузов, что послужило основой разработки перспектив развития международной деятельности в условиях глобальных вызов и рисков.

Ключевые слова: международная деятельность, негосударственные вузы, академическая мобильность, экспорт образования, образовательные услуги, иностранные студенты

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