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# Bridging the Gap

How central IRO can support integration and inclusion at ELTE

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## Quick clarification

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- 1.) International student integration and inclusion meaning: integrating them into the local student community.
  - Not a one way process – the groups will have effect on each other.
  - There is no successful international student integration without Hungarian students.
  - Bridging the gap meaning: bringing closer these two student community
  
- 2.) ELTE central IRO is ISO but! There are faculty level IRO-s. There is no hierarchy in-between them.
  
- 3.) The topic of this presentation:  
Talking about activities on a 3 years' timeline in which ELTE ISO was heavily involved



# Actuality

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Why international student integration and inclusion is important? :

International students consist close to 15% of ELTE's student population.  
- They invested financially and emotionally in coming to ELTE.

Providing them a great students experience is:

- Duty (reasons see above)
- Great tool for recruitment (best advert is a happy student)
- Successful student integration and inclusion is:
  - Almost a must in a modern university
  - Institutional commitment in line with: *strategy for internationalization, internationalization at home phenomena*
  - Almost mandatory element of the SH project



# The role of ELTE ISO

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ELTE Central ISO:

Generates a lot of thoughts about students:

- How to get them to the university? ( Recruitment and representation , Int. Stud. Ambassadors)
- How to keep them at the university? ( AKA how to keep them **satisfied during their student journey**)
- How to keep them around after graduation? (Alumni)

There is a constant communication:

- With students
- About students (among us at ELTE, with international partners, with embassies and representatives)
- Implements the university-wide Internationalization Strategy
- **Connects central units, faculties, students, leadership**
- **Collects and communicates information**



# Background 1.

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*Bridging the gap:*

ISO initiated project:

Originally an event's name: held in 24th of November 2022:

!But it became a series of events, discussions and actions related to international students' inclusion and university level representation which led to and supported:

- the creation of the International Student Advisory Committee (ISAC)
- the creation of the working group for Better Integration within the Committee for Internationalisation
- the creation of the Student Support Center



# Key takeaways from Bridging the Gap

International students	Hungarian students
•Don't feel included	
•Don't have clear information about: extracurricular activities, studies, rights, representation ( the information channels are not good enough, the methods are not good enough) •Eager to get information: reading and translating Hungarian newsletters	•The communication channels are not clear: •Webpage is outdated, too many faculty level social media channels, - lost in translation: * too much information, and these are not at the right place
- Want to mix with Hungarian students (visiting events)	- Want to mix with international students, but not enough platform for that



## Agreed upon

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Hungarian and international students want to connect!!!They just don't know how (lack of platforms, lack of clear information.)

The communication needs to be improved (between the key players, sharing good practices, and in general about the opportunities)

More classes open for both Hungarian and international students, thought in English

More project work where they are able to mix with Hungarian/international students

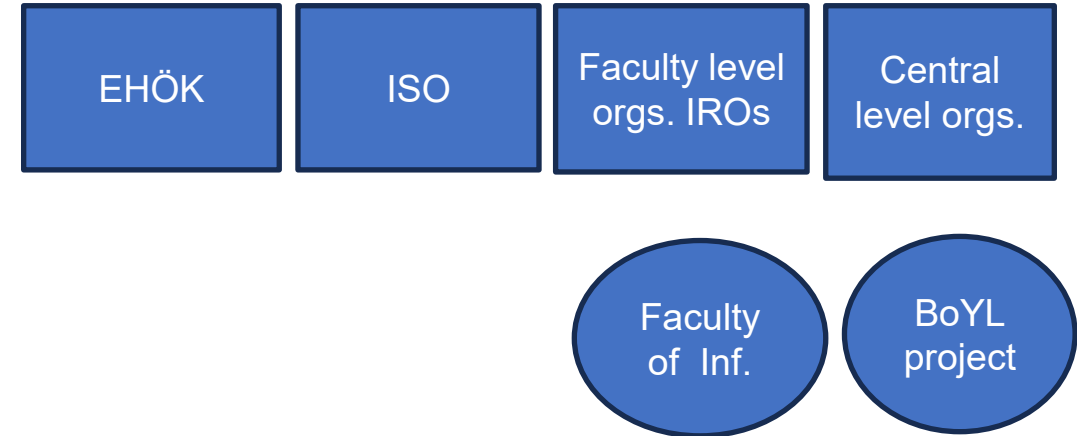
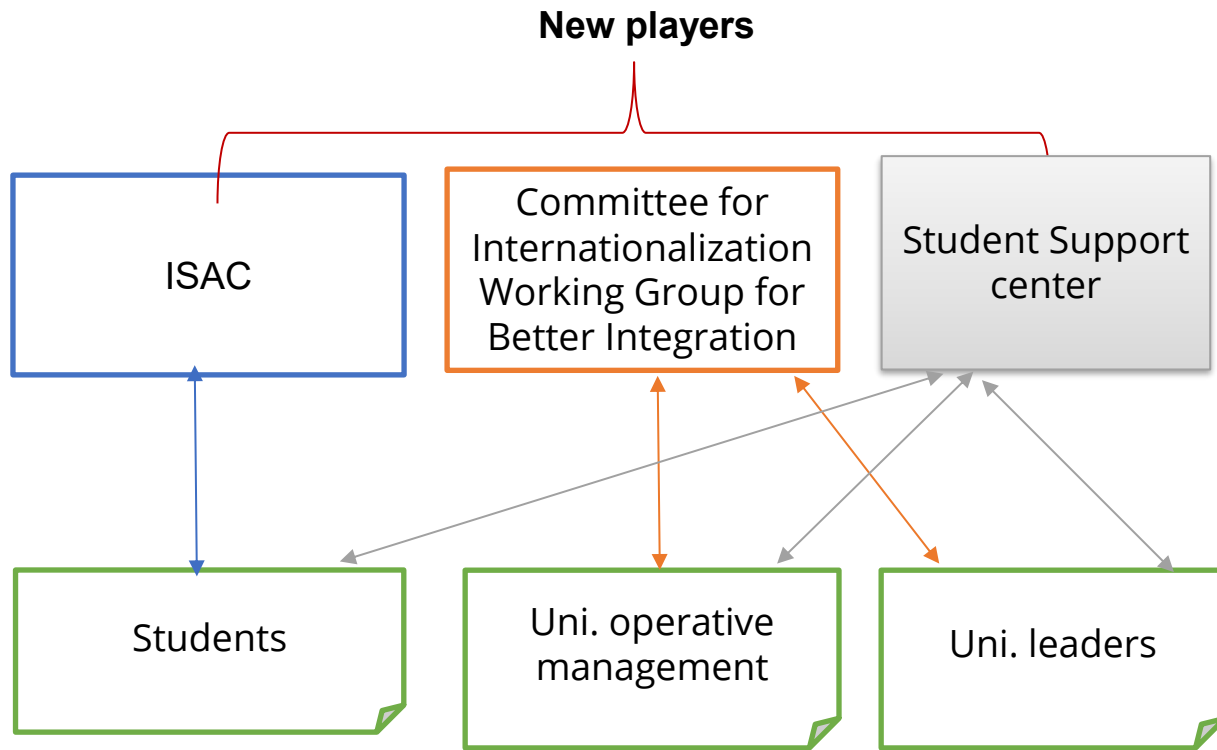
More cultural programs which are open both for international and Hungarian students

Other important conclusions:

- The process needs to be facilitated in different levels
- Int. Studs. Inclusion and integration should be always in the focus of other institutional practices (dormitories, classes, curriculum, other projects etc.)



# The process needs to be facilitated in different levels: Key organisations



ELTE ISO played an important role in the creation or the support or these organizations



# Results 1

## ISAC 1

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### Creation of the International Student Advisory Committee (October 2023)

- Mission Statement:

*„We are the newly established International Student Advisory Committee, and we aim to further promote the representation of international students attending ELTE. Our mission is the following:*

- Helping the more than 4500 international students of ELTE in their daily university life*
- With the help of our accumulated expertise during our studies here at the various faculties of ELTE we can answer your questions about various topics*
- We will try to bring closer the international and the Hungarian students of the university with various programs and events*
- When in a foreign country, sometimes it is good to have someone with similar background to you, to ask your questions*

*With the establishment of the International Student Advisory Committee, we sincerely believe that the members of the organization can make a difference by being the bridge between organs of the University. Please if you feel overwhelmed because of your university life, or just want to share your ideas do not hesitate and contact the committee via the members email address, or visit the in person during office hours.”*

- Office (provided by Carrier Center)
- Published members with office hours
- [International Student Advisory Committee \(elte.hu\)](https://elte.hu)



# Results 2

## ISAC 2

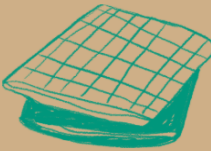
Club activities and cultural programs  
(but ! also trainings and workshops)



supported by  and NSI



## Crochet and Embroidery Night



Join us and discover the joy of  
embroidery and crochet.

Don't forget to bring your  
own kit and fabric!



**Thursday**  
**12 December 2024**  
**6 PM**



**BoYL Community  
Space, ELTE Library**



International Student Advisory Committee



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# Results 3

## Cooperation of ISAC + EHÖK

### Cultural Connection Day



# Results 4

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## Working Group for Better Integration

- Within the Committee for Internationalization
- Established in 2023
- Goal:
  - to map existing institutional best practices,
  - to develop a long-term, sustainable, unified, institution-level proposal.
- The working group held monthly meetings (3-4 in a semester), during which representatives of the faculties and university central organizational units (e.g., Student Union, International Strategy Office, Dormitories) shared their best practices.
- Key proposal: Creation of a **Student Support Center**
  - institutionalize support and integration services for international and Hungarian students under the ISO
  - It was approved and financially supported by the university leadership
  - Starting this summer
  - Take over the role of the WG for Better Integration



# Student Support Center

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## Will be:

- Working under ISO but working with ISAC and HÖK
- Organizing Cultural Activities with the help of ISAC and HÖK
- Advising the faculties on students' needs and integration
- Creating a unified communicational platform where relevant news and events can be shared and facilitate existing platforms
- Initiate and coordinates institution-wide integrational and inclusion needs assessment and analyses every year and follows up on that
- Communicates in every level about and for better international and Hungarian student integration and inclusion



# Other Results

## BoYL project

### The goal was:

- to support the integration of international students arriving at ELTE with the local student community,
- to promote cultural inclusion and encourage acceptance and tolerance among local and international students.
  
- Project supported by the European Cultural Found within the framework of the European Challenge:
  
- Coordinated by ELTE Strategy Office
  
- Participated:
  
- University Library and Archives, the University Students' Union (EHÖK), the International Strategy Office, ISAC



# Final Reflections: What We've Learned

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**Still a long and exciting journey is ahead of us.**

## **Challenges:**

- Financial constrains
- ELTE's size – avoiding parallel projects and silos
- We need indicators

## **Conclusions:**

**Bridging the **communicational** gap....**

*We realized that the key challenge was the lack of effective communication between stakeholders.*

- Needs, right attitude, already existing good practices, platforms were there – needed to connect the dots.
- Central ISO's key role to support and facilitate this communication as well as relevant projects (ISAC)
- The topic needs to be discussed ALL THE TIME – find a way to talk about student integration





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Thank you for your attention!

