From potential to practice: Comparative insights into Peer Tutoring implementation in European Universities

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"This research project focuses on the comparative research findings of the Peer-Edu project, titled 'Competence transformation in the University: Peer-tutoring as a key element in supporting student development'. The primary purpose of this research is to systematically evaluate the awareness, needs, expectations, and attitudes of stakeholders to inform the development of a sustainable peer-tutoring system within higher education. The project is a collaborative diagnostic study involving three key institutions: the University of Gdańsk (Poland), the University of Split (Croatia), and the University of Malta.

This research is guided primarily by two research questions:

- How do students and staff perceive peer tutoring in their institution?
- What are the necessary characteristics to implement peer tutoring in each institution?

Both groups generally perceive peer tutoring as a mutually beneficial, academically enriching, and socially integrative practice. Students particularly value its informal atmosphere and its role in reducing stress and fostering supportive learning communities. However, awareness levels vary across institutions; for instance, the University of Malta exhibits higher awareness compared to the University of Gdańsk.

Implementing peer tutoring requires both universal and context-specific elements. Universally, there is a critical need for trained tutors, pedagogical training, and institutional recognition through incentives like ECTS credits or stipends. Contextually, the University of Gdańsk requires enhanced technological infrastructure and internal communication , while the University of Malta needs strategies to manage academic competitiveness and hierarchy. The University of Split emphasises the need for authenticity and consensus-building in its implementation.

The findings reveal a significant 'knowledge-practice gap', where high enthusiasm for peer tutoring exists despite low historical participation rates. Major barriers identified include a lack of trained tutors and insufficient formal recognition for staff supervisors.

The implications for higher education suggest that a successful implementation must balance student-led authenticity with robust institutional scaffolding. Sustainable peer-tutoring systems should be embedded into institutional policy and quality assurance frameworks, supported by dedicated digital platforms and cross-institutional collaboration within networks like the SEA-EU alliance. Ultimately, this research underscores that peer tutoring is a transformative pedagogical culture that fosters student development, inclusivity, and academic success.