



NATIONAL ERASMUS PLUS
OFFICE
ALBANIA

QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Thematic Cluster Meeting
Tirana on 14 December 2018

Prepared by:

NATIONAL ERASMUS + OFFICE
ALBANIA



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BACKGROUND

Since the launch of Tempus programme and later on under the Erasmus +, there have been four different projects implemented in Albania on the theme of Quality Assurance in Higher Education Institutions. The theme has been gaining importance as the sector underwent reforming, where the focus has been ensuring Quality Assurance in higher education. The process is still ongoing, with universities and other stakeholders engaged in the debate about how to ensure sustainable quality assurance and what is the role of each actor in the process.

The cluster meeting aimed at looking at the experience of these four projects, long-term and sustainable impact produced, lessons learnt and best practices. It also aimed at providing recommendation for the future and suggests different paths that the HEIs should consider in view of the opportunities for funding actions under the new call Erasmus Plus CBHE.

Over 50 participants from all Albanian universities attended the event; most of them team members from past projects, all the staff responsible on Quality Assurance from the universities, representatives from the Ministry of Education and Higher Education Reform Experts. The event was organised jointly with the Ministry of Education of Albania represented by the Albanian Agency for Quality Assurance represented by its director Mrs. Dhurata Bozo.

KEY OBJECTIVES OF THE CLUSTER MEETING

- Discuss the impact of projects funded by both Tempus and Erasmus +
- Draw some lessons learnt and share them with participates and stakeholders.
- Prepare recommendation for future projects on the theme of Quality Assurance in Higher Education.





PARTICIPATING PROJECTS

Quality in Research (2011-2014)

Participating universities: University Luigj Gurakuqi of Shkodra; Polytechnic University of Tirana.

Long-term impact: The project result of establishing a contact person for issues related to quality assurance for the institutions was the first step to then develop a fully functional QA office. The university also managed to license some of the courses created under the programme and these are still being offered

EUREQA – Empowering the Universities to Fulfill their Responsibilities for Quality Assurance (2012-2015)

Participating universities: Tirana University, University of Korca, University of Shkodra

Long-term impact: A network between partner universities participating in the programme to facilitate future cooperation.

Lesson learnt: Projects of this type and thematic should look at some common European standard and practices such as ESG to overcome problems that arise from too diverse systems in each country or being at different stages in the reform process

Recommendations: Since projects still struggle with getting the institutional ownership this to be considered and targeted better at the project proposal stage.

PARTICIPATING PROJECTS

ENCHASE - Enhancing Albanian System of Quality Assurance in Higher Education: Application of the Process and Outcome Based Methodology (2013-2016)

Participating universities: University of Korca, University of Elbasan, UET, University of Durres,

Long-term impact: Process, documentation and training delivered through the project remained relevant when the university underwent the process of reforming and the introduction of new requirements for QA and accreditation of HEIs.

Lesson learnt: Students involvement in the process of QA brings a strong advantage and benefits to the achievement of the project objectives.

Recommendations: Share the project results outside the circle of institutions involved to the benefit of the entire sector. This could only be achieved when there is institutional ownership over the project results.

QAinAL (2015-2018)

Participating universities: Marin Barleti University, New York University, Epoka, UET

Long-term impact: The process of QA was adapted and applied to the needs of the private HEIs

Lesson learnt: There is not such a big difference between processes and practices in QA between private and public universities so learning from each other and proper dissemination of results can and should prevent overlapping in the future.

Recommendations : Strengthen the role of the institutional partners in Albania so there is no duplication of efforts from one project to another.

Recommendation from AAQA (Albanian Agency of Quality Assurance)

The projects dealing with issues of QA are still very relevant and a lot need to happen to fully address this and to enable the HEIs to own the entire process of QA.

Better reference to ESG should be made in order to avoid duplication of efforts

HEIs to strongly consider applying for further funding through CBHE of the Erasmus+ programme for structural projects that address further the issues of QA in Albanian HEIs



CONCLUSIONS

All four projects have contributed in different ways to the current setting of the QA provision as laid out in the new law on higher education even-though many of these projects have been completed before the recent reform in higher education and the recent approach on QA in HE was adapted.

Conclusions from the event include these findings;

1. Training of relevant staff on aspects of Quality Assurance that has contributed in creating a qualified work force in universities with the right concepts and approach to QA. Sustainability of training provided and traceability of staff trained continues to remain a problem and need to be improved in the future.
2. Creation, strengthening, equipping Quality Assurance offices with procedures, processes, practices, documentation, etc. Some of these actions have happened much before QA offices were defined as such by the new law on higher education. This opportunity offered to universities by EU funded Tempus and E+ CBHE projects helped universities involved in these projects to face with an increased degree of success the implementation of the new law requirements on QA.
3. It is to be discouraged the involvement of universities in the QA projects specifically tailored for either Public or Private universities. Future projects should look at the entire sector and engage both private and public universities in projects, sharing best practices and learning from each other.
4. Local structural project proposals are encouraged to look at ESG and ENQUA practices and aim at building synergies and building on each other achievements so that project do not replicate the same activities but at the same time do reflect the lessons learnt.
5. Some management issues, both financial and of the consortium are dealt now much better under the practices of CBHE of Erasmus+
6. Size of consortium for the future was considered to be more productive if kept smaller and more manageable
7. Sustainability and long term impact is still an objective to be pursued by all project and dissemination of results goes hand in hand with it.
8. Building capacities of universities staff engaged with QA processes through training is crucial to any project on this theme.
9. Need to diversify the variety of dissemination activities and to build networks, involving HERE, other local and international experts and stakeholders.