



## 25<sup>th</sup> INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

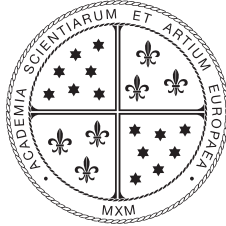
9<sup>th</sup> SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE WITH INTERNATIONAL PARTICIPATION  
ALL ABOUT PEOPLE: DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION  
IN SCIENCE, EDUCATION AND ARTS

*COMPETITIVENESS IN HIGHER EDUCATION*

Alma Mater Europaea - ECM in Cooperation with the European Union of Private  
Higher Education (EUPHE) & 25<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Higher Education (ICHE)

Maribor, March 18 2021

**PROCEEDINGS BOOK WITH PEER REVIEW ON CONTRIBUTIONS TO HIGHER EDUCATION**



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**25<sup>th</sup> INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON HIGHER EDUCATION**  
**9<sup>th</sup> SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE WITH INTERNATIONAL PARTICIPATION**  
**All about people: Digital Transformation in Science, Education and Arts**  
Proceedings book with peer review on contributions to Higher Education

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**I.C.H.E.**  
*International Conference  
on Higher Education*

## **25<sup>th</sup> INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON HIGHER EDUCATION**

9<sup>th</sup> SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE WITH INTERNATIONAL PARTICIPATION  
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IN SCIENCE, EDUCATION AND ARTS**

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PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION (EUPHE) & 25<sup>th</sup> INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE  
ON HIGHER EDUCATION (ICHE)

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## CONTENTS

Ludvik Toplak FOREWORD	7
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>11</b>
IHSAN DOGRAMACI, FOUNDER OF ICHE	13
Ignaz Bender WHAT IS THE I.C.H.E.?	14
Klaus Hekking NON-STATE HIGHER EDUCATION IN EUROPE DRIVER OF PROGRESS	15
Ignaz Bender EU-UNIVERSITÄTEN NICHT WELTSPITZE ?	19
Arif Çağlar INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON HIGHER EDUCATION AND ITS PIONEERING JOURNEY OF THE LAST 40 YEARS	20
<b>SELECTED THOUGHTS</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>SCIENTIFIC CONTRIBUTIONS</b>	<b>33</b>
Maruša Hauptman Komotar QUALITY ASSURANCE OF INTERNATIONALISATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION: SLOVENIA AND THE WESTERN BALKANS COUNTRIES	35
Nataša Kramar, Klemen Šubic, Franci Demšar IZVAJANJE EVALVACIJSKIH IN AKREDITACIJSKIH POSTOPKOV NA DALJAVO – KAJ BOMO OHRANILI PO PANDEMIJI?	47
Adriana Dervishaj INTEGRITY, SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL TRANSFORMATIONS, INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION AND GENDER EQUALITY IN ACADEMIC HE INSTITUTIONS	54
<b>ABSTRACTS</b>	<b>63</b>
Ignaz Bender RANKING OF UNIVERSITIES - WHY CONTINENTAL EUROPEAN UNIVERSITIES - EXCEPT TU ZÜRICH - ARE NOT AMONG THE 25 HIGHEST RANKING UNIVERSITIES OF THE WORLD	64
Arif Çağlar ICHE AND ITS PIONEERING JOURNEY OF 40 YEARS	65
Franci Demšar, Nataša Kramar, Klemen Šubic ONLINE EVALUATION AND ACCREDITATION: WHAT SHALL WE KEEP AFTER THE PANDEMIC?	66
Stane Božičnik DIGITALISATION OF THE LABOUR THEORY OF VALUE – PROBLEM OR SOLUTION FOR MANKIND	67
Rasto Ovin LEADING A FORMAL RESEARCH GROUP IN A DIGITAL ENVIRONMENT	68
Maruša Hauptman Komotar QUALITY ASSURANCE OF INTERNATIONALISATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION: SLOVENIA IN THE COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE OF WESTERN BALKANS COUNTRIES	69

Ridvana Mediu, Ntovolis Kostandinos IMPLEMENTATION OF E-LEARNING IN MEDICAL EDUCATION AS AN INNOVATIVE PROJECT FOR BETTER RESULTS AFTER THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC	70
Glediana Zeneli, Arsen Benga ALBANIAN STUDENT'S PERCEPTION ABOUT ONLINE LEARNING UNDER THE CONDITIONS OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC	71
Venisha Jenifer Dmello, Ambigai Rajendran ADOPTION OF UNIFIED THEORY OF ACCEPTANCE AND USE OF TECHNOLOGY (UTAUT) IN ANALYSING THE EMERGENCE OF E-LEARNING AT HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS – A STUDY OF THE LEARNER'S PERSPECTIVE	72
Adriana Dervishaj INTEGRITY, SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL TRANSFORMATIONS, INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION AND GENDER EQUALITY IN ACADEMIC HE INSTITUTIONS NEED TO BE PROMOTED BY PROPOSING AND DRAFTING A NEW LAW/REGULATION AND GUIDELINES FOR ACHIEVING A HIGHER QUALITY ASSURANCE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON HIGHER EDUCATION	74





## FOREWORD

International cooperation between universities in the field of education and research, in accordance with the standards of academic culture and autonomous university acts, has been known in the world since the beginning of the existence of universities.

Alma Mater Europaea follows the principles of the European Academy of Sciences and Arts (EASA): "transnationality, interdisciplinarity and building bridges", and implements them in various forms of inter-university cooperation, especially through international conferences. In March 2021, Alma Mater Europaea organized its 9<sup>th</sup> international conference under the title *All About People*. One of the sections represented the 25<sup>th</sup> ICHE Conference in Higher Education, with the subtitle "Competitiveness in Higher Education". This was organised in collaboration with The European Union of Private Higher Education (EUPHE), a European Association of Private HEIs.

Modern universities are facing new challenges posed by digitalisation. Thus, the reason for placing the 25<sup>th</sup> ICHE within the 9<sup>th</sup> Alma Mater Europaea Conference "All About People: Digital Transformation in Science, Education and Arts). Today, among the biggest challenges for national universities we can find internationalization, as it is dictated by digitalisation in education and science, an area where national universities face enormous international competition in terms of quality, relevance, and rationalization. Statistics point out that European continental universities, with a hundred-year old tradition, are now faced with extensive international competition especially from English, American, Chinese, Russian and other universities, based on their organization, content, rationalization and results.

Universities on the European continent from the times of Napoleon in France, Humboldt in Germany, and Emperor Joseph II. in Central Europe, have as a rule been nationalized and thus subject to national policies and control. The declared autonomy of universities was under the pressure of daily politics, while at the same time the current government provided economic stability to universities and thus social security for teachers as public servants. State universities were thus protected within the public sector, were without competition, and operated in harmony with national policy.

The digitization of science and education allows foreign universities, especially from non-European centres of knowledge and power, unrestricted access to centres of knowledge and education in Europe as well. This way, European universities face global competition, as evidenced by international rankings and shown by the actual market demand, where quality, relevance, rationalization, and other measurable criteria count. All this encourages universities to strengthen their international regional networks (European University Association, Danubian Rectors Conference) in addition to national academic networks (national rectors' conferences), including wider international networks such as International University Association ICHE. However, as the continent was dominated by state universities, the national and other university associations predominantly represented the interests of state universities in the interdependence of state policy.

New movements for a free, democratic, and open society in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century stimulated new processes: in politics the so called parliamentary democracy, on personal level called human rights, in economics called the free market, and in academia called academic, institutional, and financial university autonomy with an emphasis on freedom of scientific and artistic creation. These processes, in particular the demands of the international market, have also stimulated the tendency to form and establish autonomous, non-state universities. European universities in the 1980s therefore needed to respond to the demands of international competition in the economy.

In 1988, on the 900<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the University of Bologna, the *Magna Charta Universitatum* was adopted, declaring freedom of scientific and artistic creation and teaching. The declaration was signed by over 400 European universities. This process was followed by politicians when European ministers signed the Bologna Declaration in Bologna in 1999, marking the beginning of the Bologna Process. It is a process that shows in university practice and formulates its mission in new documents. The Bologna Process develops and consolidates the principles of autonomy with responsibility, quality, compatibility, mobility, employability, rationality, relevance, and others.



New trends in Europe and in the world were also followed and created in the academic sphere by prof. dr. İhsan Dođramacı, a scientist, educator, politician, and a humanist. In 1980, he founded the International Conference in Higher Education (ICHE), which included public and private universities from around the world. In 1984, he founded the first private university in Turkey, the Bilkent University, which in ten years developed into the first Turkish university and was comparable to the 10 best universities in Europe. The 25<sup>th</sup> ICHE Conference was organized in 2021 in collaboration with Alma Mater Europaea, in online form due to Covid restrictions.

The process of democratization and international competition, and thus the role of non-state universities, is present on all continents today. In Europe, private universities are organized in the European Union of Private Higher Education (EUPHE), and in Russia in the Union of Russian Private Universities, the Association of Non Public Universities Russia, chaired by ROSNOU (Russian New University). Similar trends are particularly present in China, Japan, and South Korea.

The present monograph of the 25<sup>th</sup> International Conference in Higher Education, entitled Competition in Higher Education, presents presentations and papers, delivered as part of the 9<sup>th</sup> International Conference of Alma Mater Europaea, All about People and includes rich and diverse content. Professor Phillis Erdogan, long-time vice-rector of Bilkent University and collaborator of prof. Dođramacı, presented the work and realized visions of İhsan Dođramacı, under the title İhsan Dođramacı, founder of ICHE. Professor Ignaz Bender, former Chancellor of Trier University, presented the positioning of European universities in the face of other centres of academic, economic and political power, entitled What is the ICHE.

Klaus Hekking, President of EUPHE (European Union of Private Higher Education), led the discussion on Non State Higher Education and Europe Driver of Progress, emphasized the benefits of a dual system as it stimulates institutional pluralism, content diversity and competition that fosters innovation, quality and efficiency of higher education and thus contributes to the consolidation and efficiency of the European and global knowledge industry. He also emphasized the positive correlation between competition in higher education and the quality, innovation and efficiency of higher education and the efficiency and competitiveness of the economy.

Prof. dr. Arif Çađlar from Bilkent University, in his article International Conference on Higher Education and Its Pioneering Journey of the Last 40 Years, described the outstanding contribution of the ICHE Conference in the global university development process, especially "academic freedom, institutional autonomy, accountability, social responsibility and equal access".

Assistant professor dr. Barbara Toplak Perovič, who moderated the conference, in her role as the president of the Association of Slovenian Higher Educational Institutions presented the contradictions of higher education. She emphasized in particular the legal mission of public and private universities, international standards regarding students, teachers, organization, and quality. However, the issue of equal opportunities in implementing regulations is still open.

Following the opening, further debates and presentations included an extensive paper on the "Importance of quality control in higher education at the national and European level" by dr. Franci Demšar; the problem of "Work theory and measuring quality and quantity in higher education" presented by professor Stane Božičnik; the importance of "International knowledge exchange" presented by professor Rasto Ovin; "Quality Assurance of Internationalization in Higher Education" presented by professor Maruša Hauptman Komotar, and an article by Franci Demšar, Klemen Šubic and Nataša Kramar which described the experience of The Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education. The Agency started operating in 2010 and took over the tasks previously performed by the Council of Higher Education. The main message which was emphasized in the discussion it that the agency "is autonomous and independent, and it operates on the principles of professionalism, impartiality, legality, and political neutrality. It operates in accordance with standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). It strengthens its reputation and the validity of Slovenian higher education through membership in international associations. As in the entire international field of higher education, the COVID-19 pandemic brought a major shift in the way we work. The Agency had to react quickly to the changes and adapt its way of working to the new conditions, while at the same time advising higher education institutions in quality assurance."

In the last section we listened to further international contributions; Adrijana Dervishaj from the University of Tirana, presented a paper on "Integrity, Socio-Economic and Political Transformation, Intercultural Communication and Gender Quality in Academic Institutions", with trends "towards sustainable and cultural transformation of interuniversity cooperation"; Ridvana Mediu talked about the "Implementation of E-Learning in Medical Education as an Innovative Project for Better Results after the Covid- 19 Pandemic". Also interesting were the contributions of Gledian Zeneli and Jennifer Venisha.

I would like to thank Barbara Toplak Perovič and Luka Tomažič for their work and dedication to this part of the conference. Special respect and congratulations go to ICHE for 40 years of work and the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the International Scientific Conferences as well as their contribution to the development of universities in the service of the humankind.

At the conference *Competitiveness in Higher Education*, as part of the larger conference All About People, the authors drew special attention to the common characteristics of universities of all times and places, emphasizing especially that the university must follow all human needs, including politics, economics, technology, health, and security. This also provided the starting point for the next It's About People conference 2022, which will focus on the ethical and humanist aspects of digital transformation for healthy and safe sustainable development.

### **Ludvik Toplak, PhD**

President of Alma Mater Europaea ECM





# **INTRODUCTION**



## IHSAN DOGRAMACI, FOUNDER OF ICHE

The top educational institutions of the world are diverse. They differ in their governance structure, financial sources and accountability. They differ in how they recruit, promote and empower their teaching staff as well as in the balance between research and teaching activities. They differ in the ways they admit and support their students. They differ in terms of their curricula, teaching methods, class sizes and more. Yet excellence in education is achieved by institutions quite different from each other.

Ihsan Dogramaci recognised this. Born in 1915 in Erbil, part of the Ottoman Empire, by the time he settled down in Turkey in 1947 to teach pediatrics in Ankara, he had been educated in Erbil, Baghdad and Beirut, and had attended the University of Edinburgh medical campus in Baghdad and the University of Istanbul Faculty of Medicine. He had trained at Harvard University and at Washington University in the United States. And he had learned to appreciate the value of those diverse educational institutions. He would exert considerable effort to discourage those who wanted to impose a homogeneity on all universities in their own country.

While at Ankara University from the late 1940s to the 1960s he began his lifelong role as a founder and leader, creating a children's hospital, an institute of child health, and a second medical faculty. In 1967, after having served as rector of Ankara University and Chair of the Board of Trustees of Middle East Technical University in Ankara, Ihsan Dogramaci became rector of the newly chartered Hacettepe University, which encompassed all the schools and institutes he had established. In the 1980s, as President of the Turkish Higher Education Council, he led the drafting of a new university law, allowing private, non-profit universities, a concept which he had admired in the United States during the early years of his career. In 1984, he founded the first such university in Turkey, Bilkent University, which was renamed Ihsan Dogramaci Bilkent University in 2010, in memory of its founder.

Alongside his leadership activities in Turkey, Professor Dogramaci was a strong believer in international collaboration, frequently heading the Turkish Delegation to the World Health Assembly, serving as head of the UNICEF Program Committee and Chair of its Executive Board, and as President (1968-1977) and Executive Director (1977-1992) of the International Pediatric Association.

In December 1981, Prof. Dogramaci invited prominent academics from Turkey and abroad to Ankara, to introduce Turkey's new Higher Education Law which had gone into effect in November. He called this meeting the International Conference on Higher Education (ICHE).

Since that first ICHE in 1981, the Conference has been convened a total of 25 times, in many parts of the world, addressing a variety of aspects of higher education. Assembling academics from diverse backgrounds not only builds bridges between cultures but also demonstrates the benefits, the richness and the promise of diversity. The 25<sup>th</sup> ICHE took place online within the Alma Mater Europaea Scholarly Conference held in Maribor, Slovenia, in March 2021. The increasing adoption of online meetings promises a bright future for continuing the work of the ICHE.

Ihsan Dogramaci passed away in 2010. We miss his physical presence, but we continue to be guided by his ideas and principles.

### **Phyllis Erdogan, Ph.D.**

(Former Secretary General of the ICHE. Worked with Prof. Dogramaci at Hacettepe and Bilkent Universities from 1970-2010)



## Dr. Ignaz Bender

International Conference on Higher Education

### WHAT IS THE I.C.H.E.?

The International Conference on Higher Education (ICHE) is a meeting of minds on significant issues in higher education, primarily university governance. It assembles experts in higher education (heads/administrators of higher education institutions, scholars, researchers) and representatives of interested organisations and foundations. The Conference was founded in the 1980s by higher education expert Professor Ihsan Dogramaci (1915-2010), former Rector of Ankara University, Founder of Bilkent University (Ankara), and long-time Chair of its Board of Trustees.

The Conference is international. Participants come from all corners of the world, including North and Latin America, West and Eastern Europe, Africa, Asia and Australia. The Conference is independent, not linked to any national or international organisation. It is a free forum of minds for the exchange of opinions and experiences, views, and new trends in higher education.

The Conference is particularly devoted to improving university governance. Political changes in many parts of the world have created more opportunities for the development of autonomous and effective university systems. Many higher education institutions, in particular in new democracies, need consultation and support.

Does the Conference have any effect? One concrete example:

When the Conference met in 1998 in Qingdao (P.R. of China) and debated the need for educated people in Deng's new market economy, Chinese officials had to admit to not having enough universities to accommodate students. As it was considered unrealistic to create hundreds of thousands of new study places in a short period of time, it was felt that help was needed from abroad. One year later, during the Education Congress in the People's Congress Hall in Beijing, State President Jiang Zemin quoted in his speech essential parts of what had been stated during our ICHE conference. China subsequently opened its borders for students to study abroad, and today 700,000 Chinese students are enrolled in foreign universities.



**Prof. Klaus Hekking**

President of the European Union of Private Higher Education

## **NON-STATE HIGHER EDUCATION IN EUROPE DRIVER OF PROGRESS**

**ABSTRACT**

*Non-state universities in Europe may not yet be outstanding in absolute numbers, but they are remarkable in terms of entrepreneurship in the education market, their customised programs, their dynamic growth in the recent two decades, their effective governance and educational efficiency, which for many students and faculty have made them a real alternative to state universities.*

*The establishment and operation of non-state or independent higher education institutions (IHEI) is an indicator of the willingness of civil society and the business community to contribute to a good education for future generations. Although higher education in Europe is traditionally seen as a task of government, is organised as a public service and funded from taxes, a strong IHEI sector has emerged over the last 20 years through private commitment and private funding.*

*This commitment is an expression of:*

- *the intention of relevant players of civil society to promote the common good,*
- *the quest of people for educational diversity and differentiation in higher education,*
- *their desire for more truly autonomous higher education institutions,*
- *the promotion of more self-responsibility in education and*
- *the affirmation of competition as an effective driving force for innovation, quality and efficiency in higher education.*

*This paper provides an overview of the state of the development and perspectives for IHEI in Europe. It is based on surveys from the member associations of the EUPHE, the European umbrella organisation of national IHEI associations from Austria, France, Germany, Ireland, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia and Spain (EUPHE states) and on the evaluation of public statistics and national education reporting of the individual EU member states, the OECD and from education research, published in a study 2021.*

**1 DEFINITION OF NON-STATE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS (IHEI)**

The understanding of IHEI is quite different in the individual states in Europe. They range from institutions of higher vocational education via academies and colleges, to universities of applied sciences and universities.

It therefore is necessary to provide a clear definition of IHEI for the purposes of this paper.

We have chosen the following definition:

IHEI are universities, universities of applied sciences, technical colleges, art and music colleges, academies and other institutions of tertiary education which are:

- constituted as private legal entities,
- authorised to award publicly recognised Bachelor-, Master- and PhD degrees in accordance with the Bologna-system, equivalent to those awarded by state universities,
- accredited by national quality assurance agencies and authorised to market by national authorities
- more than 50% financed from private sources.

**2 FACTS AND FIGURES ON NON-STATE HIGHER EDUCATION IN EUROPE**

The non-state higher education sector in Europe has shown a remarkable **institutional growth** since 2000. While in 1984 there were only 44 IHEI, by 2020 their number had risen to more than 700 in just the 8 EU member states in which the European Union of Private Higher Education (EU-



PHE)<sup>1</sup> is represented. If the approximately 300 IHEI in the other EU states are added, the figure is over 1000, which corresponds to a share of 37% of all higher education institutions. Despite this strong growth, Europe's IHEI sector is still underrepresented compared to other leading education nations, where it has a significantly stronger position, such as South Korea (80%), Japan (76%), USA (55%) and China (40%).<sup>2</sup>

The reasons for the strong growth after the turn of the century were not only the "wave of academisation" and the differentiation of the higher education sector into ever more types of institutions, but also the increasing commitment of the civil society and the business sector to higher education, as these did not want to leave this field exclusively to governments.

IHEI also experienced a rapid **upswing in enrolments**. While their share of students in the EUPHE states was still just under 1.2% in 2000, with approximately 190,000 students, this rose to approximately 14% in the academic year 2019/20, which corresponded to some 1.36 million students. If one adds the approximately 650,000 students from the other EU states, this corresponds to a share of 11% of all 17.5 million students. The growth rate of all higher education institutions in the EU during this period was around 9%, while IHEI were able to increase their student numbers sixfold.<sup>3</sup>

This quantitative growth has contributed significantly to broadening the **academic spectrum** of IHEI. Before the turn of the century, when state universities had a de facto monopoly in higher education, IHEI were forced to concentrate on niches, especially in business administration, law, engineering and social sciences.

With the dynamic growth after 2000, the IHEI under the Bologna system were able to expand their scientific spectrum into more and more academic fields (e.g. human medicine, veterinary medicine, nursing, psychology, computer science, art, music, design, nursing, therapy, philosophy, sports, etc.). Today, apart from exotic subjects and extremely specialised and expensive disciplines with a high proportion of basic research, IHEI in Europe have almost the same academic range as their state counterparts.

It must be acknowledged that most IHEI have a clear focus on teaching, while they lag well behind the state universities in **research**. However, this has less to do with scientific competence than with the system of research funding, which still favours the state universities. Nevertheless, a number of IHEI e.g. in Austria, Germany, Poland, France, Portugal and Spain, show quite remarkable results in applied research.<sup>4</sup>

The contribution of IHEI to the creation of attractive **academic jobs** should not be neglected. According to our surveys, they had some 100,000 employees in the EUPHE states, which corresponded to 7% of the staff of all higher education institutions in these countries.<sup>5</sup>

IHEI have also gained **increasing economic importance** since 2000. This is all the more remarkable as they are financed largely from private revenues generated competitively in the education market. While state universities can usually rely on stable state funding, financed by taxes, regardless of demand for their programs, the funding of the vast majority of IHEI depends very largely on tuition fees, which they must earn in free competition on the education market. This forces them to constantly adapt their programs to the latest scientific findings and to design them in a market- and student-oriented way. In this way, their funding becomes an essential driver of innovation, quality and efficiency.

As public statistics do not provide data on the financing of the IHEI sector in all EUPHE states, we have aggregated the budget from the total expenditure on higher education of the EUPHE states, data on tuition fees and student shares. According to this, the total expenditure of IHEI in 2018 was approximately €8.7 billion. This corresponded to a share of 7% of total expenditure on higher education in these countries, while their share in students was about 14%. This still leaves them far behind the USA, where IHEI had a funding share of 36% in the same year, while their share in students was

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1 See: [www.euphe.eu](http://www.euphe.eu)

2 Hekking (2021,19,157)

3 Hekking (2021, 20,157)

4 Hekking (2021, 112)

5 Hekking (2021,24,158)

about 21%. Nevertheless, European IHEI are well on their way to becoming a relevant economic factor in the knowledge industry of the future.<sup>6</sup>

### 3 WHAT IHEI CONTRIBUTED TO THE ACADEMIC SYSTEM IN EUROPE

As the EU states have a well-developed system of state universities, the question is justified as to whether and what IHEI can actually contribute to improving the European higher education system. Developments since 2000 show that IHEI did indeed make a significant contribution to the European higher education system.

They were:

- pacemakers of **mass-academisation** in Europe by the academisation of numerous non-academic professions at ISCED levels 4 and 5 (e.g. therapy professions, nursing, mechatronics and IT) which they have adapted to the changing technological, economic and social requirements,
- trendsetters of **customised study courses** by offering tailor-made programs for specific target groups and companies (e.g. short-term study programs with microcredentials),
- **enablers for students with disabilities** by providing facilitated access to higher education),
- **innovators of flexible study-forms** for working people (online study, part-time study, extra-occupational study) and
- developers of **new forms of entrepreneurial university government** beyond the traditional bureaucratic self-governing model of traditional universities.

In doing so, they have opened up access to higher education for many to whom the state universities were not open and thus have contributed to better accessibility and permeability of the education systems in Europe and, as a result, also to more educational equity.<sup>7</sup>

### 4 SUCCESS FACTORS OF NON-STATE UNIVERSITIES

IHEI are an expression of an entrepreneurial understanding of higher education that focuses foremost on the benefits and added value of studies for students and aligns strategy, structure and processes of the higher education institution accordingly.

In the 1990s, American education researcher Burton R. Clark defined the 5 success factors that make up an entrepreneurial university<sup>8</sup>:

- a central market-oriented strategic control of the institution,
- networking with relevant stakeholders,
- the diversification of the funding base,
- the development of the academic core areas into entrepreneurial units,
- a corporate culture in which the quality of teaching, efficiency and customer orientation of the organisation are systematically managed as important success factors.

As the practice shows, that successful IHEI have learned this lesson and made these features their strategic key factors has certainly contributed to enabling them to steadily expand their market share over the past 20 years despite some regulatory distortions of competition in favour of state universities.

### 5 THE POLITICAL AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR IHEI IN THE EU

Irrespective of the entrepreneurial strategy, the quality of the programs and the effectiveness of the management of IHEI, their success also depends to a significant extent on the political and legal framework conditions for higher education in the individual EU member states.

It can be observed that national higher education laws in all EU member states set certain limits to the entrepreneurial design and operation of IHEI. Even though European governments have worked on a single European Higher Education Area (EHEA) since the turn of the century and achieved a

6 Hekking, (2021,25, 159)

7 OECD (2020,42)

8 Clark, 1998

higher grade of harmonisation in this field, it can be seen that the regulation of IHEI in this respect still shows considerable differences.

The range extends from a constitutional ban on national IHEI in Greece, via the exclusion of certain types of higher education institutions for non-state providers in France and Ireland (ban of non-state universities) to a more open and liberal approach e.g. in Austria, Germany, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia and Spain.

In almost all EU member states, legal and administrative barriers to the detriment of IHEI can be observed, which take place under the pretext of protecting academic freedom, quality assurance and consumer protection, but in fact often serve to shield state higher education institutions from competition and hinder equal market access between them and the IHEI.

Notable among these are, for example:

- the unequal treatment of national and foreign providers in the market authorisation process,
- the limitation of the duration of the market authorisation by the government
- more stringent requirements for quality assurance in comparison with state universities
- the demand for the provision of additional financial guarantees as a prerequisite for market authorisation.

For the first time in 2021, EUPHE developed a country rating (European Independent Higher Education Score), in which the individual EU member states are rated in a Europe-wide comparison with regard to their framework conditions for the establishment and operation of non-state higher education institutions.<sup>9</sup> This rating is to be further developed in the coming years.

Following the European Court of Justice's ruling in the case *European Commission v. Hungary in Central European University*<sup>10</sup> that the activities of IHEI are protected by Art. 13, 14(3), and 16 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union and that the European Services Directive 2006/123/EC<sup>11</sup> grants to them a non-discriminatory market access, it will be the task of the European Commission to identify and remove any discriminatory national rules for IHEI.

## 6 RESUME

The development of non-state higher education in the EU since the turn of the century can be described as a success story. In the last 20 years a strong IHEI sector has emerged in Europe, which has replaced the state monopoly in higher education.

In this respect, Europe has caught up to the world's other leading educational nations such as the USA, Japan, South Korea or China, where the dual system of state and non-state higher education already has a longer tradition and where IHEI are key players of the higher education system.

This dual system is characterised by plurality, diversity and competition, which are important drivers for innovation, quality and efficiency in higher education and help Europe to consolidate and expand its position in the global knowledge industry.

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9 Hekking (2021, 55-58,151)

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**Dr. Ignaz Bender**

International Conference on Higher Education

**EU-UNIVERSITÄTEN NICHT WELTSPITZE ?**

Mit einem großen Fragezeichen hat der ehemalige Kanzler der Universität Trier, Ignaz Bender, bei der 25. Internationalen Hochschulkonferenz (ICHE), die als online-Konferenz im Rahmen der Wissenschaftstagung „Menschen 2021“ in Maribor / Slowenien stattfand, das QS-Ranking der besten Universitäten der Welt versehen. Dieses einflussreiche nordamerikanische Welt-Ranking der Universitäten, das sich nur wenig vom Times Higher Education Ranking in London unterscheidet, nennt unter den ersten 49 Universitäten keine einzige der 500 Universitäten in den 27 EU-Staaten. In der Spitzengruppe befinden sich neunzehn US-Universitäten, neun Hochschulen des Vereinigten Königreiches, elf Universitäten des ehemaligen britischen Commonwealth (Australien, Kanada, Hongkong, Singapur) und sieben fernöstliche Universitäten (VR China, Japan, Korea) sowie zwei nicht zur EU gehörende Schweizer Hochschulen (ETH Zürich und Lausanne).

Erst auf Platz 50 taucht mit der Technischen Universität München die erste Hochschule aus den EU-Staaten auf, gefolgt auf Platz 52 von der ersten französischen Hochschule, Paris Sciences et Lettres, und auf Platz 57 mit der Technischen Universität Delft die beste niederländische Hochschule.

Selbst wenn man zugesteht, dass in der Spitzengruppe überwiegend englisch-sprachige Hochschulen vertreten sind, meist - wie in den USA - reiche Privatuniversitäten, so erstaunt doch ein Vergleich zwischen der auf Platz 6 eingestuften ETH Zürich und der Technischen Universität München (Platz 50). Beide Hochschulen haben ein ähnliches Fächerspektrum und eine fast gleichgroße Personal- und Finanzausstattung. Auch in der Zahl der Nobelpreise bestehen kaum Unterschiede (Zürich 19, München 17). Lediglich bei der Zahl der Studierenden gibt es Abweichungen: die TU München hat 45.000 Studierende, die ETH Zürich 22.000. Ob allein dieses bessere Studenten-/Lehrpersonen-Verhältnis die sehr viel günstigere Einstufung von Zürich im Ranking rechtfertigt, müsse mit einem großen Fragezeichen versehen werden.

ICHE-Präsident regte Bender an, die Europäische Union möge in einer Studie der Frage nachgehen, wie es zu einer derart seltsamen Einstufung der Universitäten der EU-Staaten im Welt-Ranking komme.



## Prof. dr. Arif Çağlar

Bilkent University, Turkey

# INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON HIGHER EDUCATION AND ITS PIONEERING JOURNEY OF THE LAST 40 YEARS

I would like to thank Prof. Ludvik Toplak and Prof. Barbara Toplak, our hosts, and ICHE president, Professor Ignaz Bender, for making this meeting possible.

My presentation is a tribute to the memory of Professor Ihsan Doğramacı, who started the **ICHE, International Conference on Higher Education**. It has been an exciting journey through 40 years of the history of the ICHE, the history of the world and the history of higher education. ICHE saw a lot of changes taking place in higher education, trying to respond to these changes in its own way. When I was getting ready for this presentation, I had to find a suitable topic for our ICHE activities in the last 40 years. And I remembered a Turkish traveler in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, 400 years ago, Evliya Çelebi, who wrote a 10-volume book of travels, translated into all the major languages of the world. He narrated his travels, which took him 40 years to complete, a 40-year journey. After more than 400 years, this work is still famous as a reference and respectful companion of knowledge. He begins his book with a dream in which he sees the Prophet and begs for his intercession so he can go to heaven. In his excitement he does not ask for şefa'at (intercession), but asks for **seyahat**, a journey (travel), which is very close in pronunciation. And the Prophet smiles and says: "I will give you both, şefa'at and **seyahat**". So, he goes on this journey and after 400 years, his journey is still famous, and his words were well taken.

Ours has been an exciting journey through history: we saw a lot of changes in higher education. Was it a case for weeping or celebration for us? Our 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary is a cause for celebration and not for weeping because it has contributed to the field in its own right.

Meanwhile in Turkey, universities in the 1970s saw very bad times. Academics and administrators were helpless. There was a military coup in 1980. Order was restored remarkably easily, and then came the time for serious reforms in higher education.

Professor Doğramacı was an academic in Paris in 1981, after 25 years in university administration in Turkey (12 of those as rector of two universities). He had also held internationally acknowledged high positions in UNICEF and similar bodies, ...

Professor Doğramacı, a doyen of Turkish higher education, was invited by the Turkish Government to return and advise on a reform of higher education. In this connection, he organised the first ICHE, to which he invited 10 rectors from Europe, the USA and Canada; the Secretary General of the Standing Conference of European Rectors; 17 of the 19 Turkish rectors, and 35 deans of various universities (and I was one of them). At the end of three days of discussions to evaluate the newly passed University Law in Turkey, the first Conference was held in Ankara in December 1981, at which the attendees pronounced themselves in favor of the new Law.

Through this reform, Turkish higher education was revamped. The number of universities went from 19 to 28, and they were organised similarly to public universities in the United States: multi-campus, state university systems with a *higher education council* as the *national board of trustees*. There was centralised control and coordination of the higher education system, general restructuring of curricula, selection and placement of students, and finances. And the idea of private universities, organised by non-profit foundations, was brought into the picture. Unfortunately, later amendments introduced by politicians in the 1990s undermined some of the crucial reforms.

The consequences of the 1981 reform of Turkish higher education were:

- Turkish higher education was integrated into European higher education
- The Turkish universities first became members of the CRE (Conference of European Rectors) and later of EUA (European University Association)
- Turkish universities had bilateral relationships with European countries, especially with Yugoslavia in those days

- Turkish rectors signed the Magna Charta in Bologna in 1988, and the Turkish universities continue to be in the Bologna area
- Turkish universities joined student mobility programmes, such as Erasmus
- Private higher education – mostly universities – was brought into the picture
- Turkish universities experienced a reverse brain drain to some extent
- Developments in information technology and the internet have transformed the higher education area.

There was a second ICHE meeting in 1989. I was the rapporteur for private universities. There were three topics:

1. State higher education institutions
2. Private higher education institutions and
3. Finances

Ninety persons from 21 countries attended, including Laurence W. Klein, Nobel Laureate, and the academic and rector of the University of Zagreb, Professor Vladimir Stipetić. There were international rectors, Turkish rectors, and Turkish Higher Education Council members.

I would like to highlight the subjects pertaining to the section on private universities. We discussed the mission of the private universities, academic freedom of private universities, comparison of private and public universities in many aspects. Discussing the funding of private universities, we proposed state contributions, endowment contributions and fundraising, tuition fees for students, and encouraged entrepreneurial university income. Student admission and quality of education, governing bodies, and executive heads were also discussed.

Turkish higher education now is a real giant. I just want to share some numbers with you. There are over 8 million students in Turkey; of these, 3.8 million are in full time (classroom) and 4.2 in part-time (distance) education. And there are over 215,000 international students from 82 countries. Turkey is No. 10 in student mobility in the world.

The journey of the ICHE has continued with 25 meetings held in 16 countries on 3 continents. And our 14<sup>th</sup> meeting, held in 2000, was also in Maribor, organised by Prof. Ludvik Toplak on the main topic of Ethical Considerations in Research and Teaching.

What was the world like 40 years ago?

It was a “bipolar” world, almost in the medical sense. There was a Western Block and a Socialist Block. There was also a non-influential Non-Aligned Block. Colonialism was still going on *incognito*; higher education was very elitist and conservative.

What is going on in the world today, at this moment? Impressive commitment to higher education on the international scene. From elite education, when only about 5% of the age group entered higher education, to mass higher education with the aim of reaching 35%. The number of institutions has expanded; many polytechnics have been given university status. As higher education expands, it faces great difficulties. In the European area, there will be trouble unless special care is given to the higher education institutions.

The most important issues in the last 40 years were:

- Accessibility
- Affordability
- Accountability
- Quality.

Sometimes, it seems as though these issues will never be solved.

The concerns of affordability and access are the main issues now, and we are still confronted by them: we have to gain the public’s trust so that our institutions can play their role to the fullest and retain their independence.

Throughout its journey, the ICHE has emphasised the following university values and I think these values should be emphasised in private higher education, too:

- Academic freedom
- Institutional autonomy

- Accountability
- Social responsibility
- Equal access.

During the journey, the ICHE participants have witnessed:

- Two generations of 20 years each
- A changing world
- Evolving higher education

The past meetings of the ICHE have been:

- Far-sighted
- Relevant
- Up to date
- Pioneering.

We can see the range of themes reaching from university mission and values to ethics, governance, quality, structure, leadership, staffing, student mobility, market forces, internationalisation, impact on development, globalisation, global cooperation, fundraising, financing, and accreditation. As early as 1989, privatisation of higher education, the entrepreneurial university and integration were among the discussion topics of the ICHE.

In the global economy, the keys to survival and success are science, technology, invention and intervention. In the emerging knowledge economy, knowledge is the driving force that brings huge returns on investment with it. Private sector competition, access to new technology, a well-trained workforce and knowledge production are necessary. The bottom line, as a new dilemma between sharing knowledge and intellectual property rights arises, is: will the university's knowledge monopoly come to an end?

This changing global context happened because there was victory over illiteracy, democratisation, market economies, globalisation, technological innovation and changing public/private HEIs on the scene.

Six themes of achievements in the last 40 years:

1. Freedom with responsibility
2. Life-long employability
3. Mobility in the global higher education arena
4. Compatibility
5. Quality assurance and accreditation
6. Competitiveness and cooperation (at home and in the world).

What needs to be done in higher education?

- Increase resources by improving the infrastructure, adding new curricula, recruitment and retention of the faculty and increased equality of access
- Improve efficiency by strengthening the governance and improve and develop educational programmes
- Improve access and graduation rates
- State support for the private HEIs (higher education institutions).

**What prevents us from doing what needs to be done?** There is firstly the absence of vision on the part of politicians and bureaucrats. Secondly, there is a lack of political and financial commitment, initial disadvantage for some and lastly, disruptions caused by globalisation that show in brain drain, economic fluctuations and information revolution that requires investments.

Are we coming to the end of the journey? Let's take a look at the Steering Committee of the ICHE: members have shown a commitment to being creative and dynamic contributors in the global higher education arena. Their commitment is to be up-to-date, innovative, successful and the driving force behind the relevance and vitality of the ICHE, the International Conference on Higher Education. There are currently nine members on the ICHE Steering Committee; the by-laws say the number can go up to 15. With additional young members, the ICHE can continue to be a dynamic contributor to the future of global higher education.

Let me conclude with my thanks to our hosts; to Professor Ali Dođramacı who took on the responsibility of the ICHE after his father's passing; to Dr. Ignaz Bender who has been President of the ICHE for a long time; to Ms Phyllis Erdogan, who has been our Secretary General all this time; to all the people who have presented in past conferences and to those presenting at this conference, and to all the unsung heroes who have made this journey of 40 years possible.

**Thank you.**







# **SELECTED THOUGHTS**



Dear Ladies and Gentlemen, welcome to the 9<sup>th</sup> international scientific conference *All About People: Digital transformation in Science, Education and Arts*, organised by Alma Mater Europaea and the European Academy of Sciences and Arts. It is a great privilege for me to welcome our speakers today: Professor Klaus Hekking, President of the European Union of Private Higher Education, Professor Ignaz Bender, President of the International Conference on Higher Education and Professor Arif Caglar from Bilkent University. The moderator of this session will be Assistant Professor Barbara Toplak, President of the Slovene Association of Private Higher Education Institutions of Slovenia. Today's session of the conference is also co-organised in cooperation with the International Conference on Higher Education. The 25<sup>th</sup> ICHE conference was supposed to take place last August. However, due to the pandemic, we decided to postpone it and place it within the contents of the Alma Mater conference.

*Dr. Ludvik Toplak*

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen, the private higher education institutions are fast, responsive and adaptable and socially responsible. We showed that we are not behind and that we will continue playing the crucial role in the digital transformation. I therefore look forward to today's fruitful discussions and wish you a pleasant conference.

*Dr. Ludvik Toplak*

Thank you very much for this nice introduction and welcome to the session "Competition in Higher Education" which is organised by Alma Mater Europaea in cooperation with the International Conference on Higher Education and European Union of Private Higher Education.

The Slovenian Association of Private Higher Education is honoured to be able to cooperate with the International Conference on Higher Education (ICHE) an organisation with a 40-year tradition and its eminent academic partners, represented by its president, prof. dr. Ignaz Bender, who is here with us.

ICHE was established by the late İhsan Dođramacı and we are honoured that his son, Ali Dođramacı, is also in the audience today, together with Professor Phyllis Erdogan, both representing the Steering Committee. The organisation has members from all over the world, from North America to Latin America, Europe, Africa, Asia, and Australia, and many are here with us today. Welcome.

We are also honoured to have an established cooperation with an association called the European Union of Private Higher Education, or EUPHE for short, which is advocating for pluralism, diversity of higher education, freedom of choice, and study programmes that are labour market related and practically oriented. EUPHE therefore supports the international competition of higher education through innovation, quality, efficiency, and a customer-oriented approach.

Private higher education institutions contribute to the effectiveness and relevance of European higher education and serve the needs of the people. That is why I am glad to welcome Professor Klaus Hekking, president of this eminent organisation and members of this organisation from all over Europe. Greetings also to EUPHE members who are in the audience today.

I have the pleasure to announce a special guest who will be in the round table later on, prof. dr. Franci Demšar, president of the Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance agencies in higher education, the director of the Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency and former director of the Slovene National Research Agency. Professor dr. Franci Demšar, welcome.

*Dr. Barbara Toplak Perovič*



The institutional tangle of academia has become increasingly confusing. This makes it necessary to define what the phrase "non-state universities" means. What we have put here on the slide is what we at EUPHE have chosen as a definition which can be seen as the common denominator of the legal framework in the member states as well as the practical reality.

As complex as the structure of higher education is today, just as puzzling are the statistics regarding it. I've checked dozens of statistics from the EU, from national governments, from ranking organisations, from other NGOs, and they all show different facts on the same subject. It is like the famous quote once said: you can only believe in statistics you have made yourself.

For my presentation I took the data of the institutions and students for 2019 from the International University Association and for 2020 from Uni Rank because they seem the most consistent, objective and trustworthy, compared to other statistics. According to these statistics in the European Union, in 2020, there were 1,748 higher education institutions in the sense of our definition; 659 of them non-state owned. This means that they increased their share from 14% to almost 40% of all universities within the last 30 years.

*Prof. Klaus Hekking*

Competition in higher education: I will try to illustrate it in this picture: state universities are living on the green pasture, well-protected by regulation, political support and state funding. They will survive whether they perform or not, whether their programmes are demanded or not. On the other side of the dyke, non-state universities have to sail in the stormy sea of competition. Those who perform well will survive. Those who don't, will go down. Only the fittest will survive.

*Prof. Klaus Hekking*

As you can see, the European governments are very creative in developing a repertoire of hidden barriers. You have to see that in different countries, some are open, some are hidden, but all are designed to keep the private system restrained. And they are balancing very elegantly on a narrow bridge between the constitutional requirements of liberal democracies and the political and economic interest of the government and state bureaucracy. Our project, the European Independent Higher Education Score, will rate and compare different EU countries, how favourable they are from the legal, administrative and financial aspects for non-state universities; whether they are favourable or non-favourable.

*Prof. Klaus Hekking*

It was professor Toplak's idea to carry out this 25<sup>th</sup> ICHE conference under the title *International Competition in Higher Education*, with the weak position of universities in the European union among the best universities of the world. Since 2004, the QS (Quacquarelli Symonds) world university ranking has been comparing the universities of the world. QS World University Rankings created by TopUniversities.com is one of the top international rankings measuring the popularity and performance of universities all over the world. For three years now, three private US academic institutions have occupied the first ranks in the world: Harvard University, Stanford University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). Among the first 25 universities, there are 14 private universities from the US (CalTech, Princeton, Cornell, University of Chicago, Pennsylvania, Yale, Columbia, New York, Michigan, John Hopkins in Maryland and Duke, North Carolina). Furthermore, 5 universities from the UK, namely Oxford, Cambridge, UCL, Imperial College London and Edinburgh; are followed by two Swiss Institutes of Technology: ETH Zurich and ETH Lausanne, and two universities in the PR China, two in Singapore and one in Japan. The curiosity of this ranking is that there are no universities from Germany, France, Italy, Spain, the Netherlands, Belgium, Austria, Sweden or Poland listed among the top 25, or even the top 49 universities of the world. In other words, of the 500 universities listed, no university in the 27 member states of the European union occupies a place among the first 49 institutions.

*Dr. Ignaz Bender*

It was an exciting journey through history, and we saw a lot of changes in higher education. Was it a case for weeping or celebration for us? Our 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary is a cause for celebration and not for weeping because it has contributed to the field in its own right.

Meanwhile, in Turkey, universities in the 1970s had seen very bad times. Academics and administrators were helpless. There was a military coup. The order was restored remarkably easily and then came the time for serious reforms in higher education.

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Professor Dođramacı, a doyen of Turkish higher education, invited to the first conference 10 rectors from Europe, USA and Canada, the Secretary General of the standing conference of European rectors, 17 of 19 Turkish rectors, 35 deans of various universities (and I was one of them). At the end of three days of discussions on evaluating the newly passed University Law in Turkey, the first conference on the results was held in Ankara in December 1981 and it was favourably received.

Through this reform, Turkish higher education was revamped. Universities went from 19 to 28, and they were organised similar to United States universities: multi-campus, state university systems with a higher education council as the national board of trustees. There was centralised control and coordination of the higher education system, general structure of curricula, selection and placement of students and finances. And the idea of private universities, organised by foundations, was brought into the picture. Unfortunately, later amendments of the politicians undermined some of the crucial reforms.

The consequences of the Turkish reform from 1981:

- Turkish higher education was integrated into the European higher education
- They were first members of the CRE and later of EUA (European University Association)
- We had bilateral relationships with European countries, especially with Yugoslavia in those days
- We signed the Magna Charta in Bologna in 1988, and the Turkish universities continue to be in the Bologna area.

*Prof. dr. Arif Çađlar*

Data I would like to hear from Professor Hekking or Professor Bender includes the following: if you look at how HE is being financed, it can be financed either through the state, which is the case for non-private universities; partly through the state through concessions, through tuition fees and partly from concessions, as for example in Slovenia (if you study PhD, you have to pay tuition). So, in public universities, there is a third element which I believe is the most important in Anglo-Saxon countries, making (in my opinion) these private universities so successful and so good in quality as you showed when comparing different rankings – and that is tax relief. Those countries, as far as I know, have very substantial tax relief while in Europe, except for in the UK, we don't have this.

*Dr. Franci Demšar*

Why do universities from certain regions fare better than others? Let me reflect on that, why the European universities are not so successful in the rankings; why private universities in particular are not so successful in the rankings, especially the universities of central and eastern Europe. If we look at the Shanghai academic ranking, one can make a really striking observation. If you look at the 100 highest-ranked universities, we can conclude that they are based in the countries where there are strong institutions, where the rule of law is respected, where the standard of living is quite high compared to other world regions. That could be a reason why they are so highly ranked. This also explains why the universities of central and eastern Europe are lagging behind. Central and eastern Europe is a region that is very diverse. There is one country that dominates the region, which is the Russian Federation, and this region also has the highest ranked university in the Shanghai ranking, namely the Moscow State University, ranked around 70<sup>th</sup> place.

*Dr. Jernej Letnar*

Not wanting private universities in Slovenia or Croatia, for example; it is more about protecting old interests.

*Dr. Jernej Letnar*

What about the future? What will we do after the pandemic is over? Have we learned something, or shall we continue as we have done before?

*Dr. Franci Demšar*

When I've seen the challenges of this conference, focused on all about people, focused on digitalisation and technological development, I was – as an economist – thinking what I can contribute in terms of future development of higher education; where are the challenges and the needs of higher education, in particular curricula, for the future?

My aim is to sum up conclusions, relevant for a higher education system, which are based on the lessons learned from two fundamental economic theories of value, which are both embodied in the Microsoft patent (2020) "Cryptocurrency System Using Body Activity Data".

*Dr. Stane Božičnik*

The problem of the labour theory of value is how to measure the quantity and quality of the used psychic-physical energy. How to estimate socially necessary labour and today, on the market, how to assess the correct relationship between value, based on labour, and market prices.

*Dr. Stane Božičnik*

You need people from your field or from similar fields to exchange your statements and positions, and even receive some polite criticism. Online, this is hardly possible. Secondly, there is a typical relation to travel. We like to travel, I have visited quite a few international universities, but at the same time, in the last 20 years, and particularly in the last 10 years, we have more online communication. Covid-19 is pushing for a strong symmetry in communication. First, it harms some instruments and features. I remember my doctoral studies at the University of Bonn, where the Head of the department, Professor Neumann, met us students every day over lunch. You can only imagine how you were able to test and prove your ideas for research.

*Dr. Rasto Ovin*

First, I would like to focus on the conceptual level of this relationship between the two main concepts which we can see in three different directions. The first is assuring the quality internationalisation; the second is internationalisation of quality assurance and the third is the added value of internationalisation for the quality of higher education. This means that internationalisation is a mean to improve quality.

*Dr. Maruša Hauptman Komotar*

In Albania, after the liberalisation of the higher education system, there are 60 higher education institutions, and most of them were accredited by a private accreditation agency. The government brought in an accreditation association from England to carry out the accreditation of public higher education institutions and now almost 60 have been accredited. According to the law, with the accreditation procedure, applied in our country, one can accredit the whole institution or just partial programmes of a higher education institution without previously accrediting the institution.

*Dr. Ridvana Mediu*



The debate regarding e-learning became a big topic this year. Just to define it one more time, e-learning is a learning system we can obtain from the internet, using an electronic device. This is called e-learning, online learning, online education, ... There was a debate regarding the pros and cons of online teaching. This was a debate that gave advantage to the cons, in fact, because most of the universities were not ready to perform their classes in an online mode and in other cases, they just preferred to keep their traditional way of teaching inside their campus.

According to the Harvard Business Review, they made some really interesting findings, in which they specify that before the pandemic, higher education had significantly lagged behind other industries that were moving to a more digitally driven environment. Less than 5% of the colleges' budgets were dedicated to IT learning, education was the least digitalised sector, and the majority of college students had no e-learning experience.

In the last year, online learning became a must in almost all educational institutions, and almost all schools shifted classes into the online mode.

*Arsen Benga*

E-learning in India will rise 8 times as the number of e-learning users will also increase eightfold. Despite significant investment, there is a research problem that e-learning is poorly adapted, accepted, denied or dropped by the learner. To determine what the factors are that lead to the eruption of technology, I will use a model proposed in the year 2003 by Venkatesh et al., aimed at developing theory to measure any technological innovation, acceptance and usage on the consumer front. Before this model, there were other models used by researchers.

Vekatesh et al. have unified the following eight theories and proposed a theory called the "Unified theory of acceptance and use of technology". This model was extended in 2012 by adding three new categories.

*Venisha Jenifer Dmello*

What is academic integrity? It is a moral code or ethical policy of academia, established by Donald L. McCabe, who is considered the founding father of academic integrity. It is the commitment to and demonstration of moral behaviour in an academic setting. This is most relevant at the university level as it relates to providing credit to other people when using their ideas. Leading to a sustainable academic and cultural transformation and cooperation, universities and research institutions draft joint modules, integrating the existing ones in response to the case developments by looking at the best practices and policies of transformation and by sharing the best values to the best interest of our community with people in the focus of research. Two years ago, I was teaching in Germany, at Humboldt University, and I initiated a project for joint modules. I was grateful to the coordinator who invited me and agreed to my ideas of drafting joint modules and integrating the existing ones. It would be crucial for the academic HEIs to incorporate integrity as the key principle indicator for measuring quality assurance and performance of staff. Universities and academia should proceed with the application of radical and constructive transformation from within to better serve the young generation and the democratic development of the country.

*Prof. Adriana Dervishaj*

This is really the best conference regarding the methods of organisation, speakers and high quality.

*Dr. Ridvana Mediu*

Thank you very much, it has been a pleasure and I hope that you will come to our conference (ZOOM, online or live) again next year. Thank you very much.

*Dr. Barbara Toplak Perovič*







# **SCIENTIFIC CONTRIBUTIONS**



**Asst. Prof. Dr. Maruša Hauptman Komotar**  
AMEU – ISH

## **QUALITY ASSURANCE OF INTERNATIONALISATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION: SLOVENIA AND THE WESTERN BALKANS COUNTRIES**

### **ABSTRACT**

*This paper addresses the relationship between internationalisation and quality assurance in higher education from the perspective of quality assurance of internationalisation in the higher education systems of Slovenia and seven Western Balkan countries (Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, Northern Macedonia, Kosovo\*, Albania). To this end, it provides answers to the research question of how the internationalisation of higher education is perceived and implemented from the standpoint of quality assurance in selected countries? It approaches this issue through the investigation of 1) prevalent conceptual understandings and 2) development and implementation of policies, strategies, activities, and other initiatives aimed at ensuring the quality of internationalisation in higher education of the eight selected countries. Specifically, this means to deal with the topic of quality (assurance) in/of national and institutional internationalisation strategies, mobility, joint programmes/degrees, international partnerships, internationalisation at home, etc. Initially, this issue is explored separately in Slovenia and the Western Balkans countries, whilst afterwards, it is also approached from the comparative perspective. Methodologically, the paper is based on a (critical) analysis of various documentary sources and findings from semi-structured and expert interviews with various stakeholders and actors working in the field of internationalisation and quality assurance in the chosen countries. Research results derive from the ongoing postdoctoral research project (Z5-2658), which is funded by the Slovenian Research Agency.*

**Key words:** *Quality assurance of internationalisation, Higher education, Slovenia, Western Balkans countries, Comparison*



## 1 INTRODUCTION

This contribution investigates the interdependent relationship between internationalisation and quality assurance in higher education, which has three prevalent understandings, namely, quality assurance of internationalisation, internationalisation of quality assurance, and the added value of internationalisation for the quality of higher education (van der Wende 1999; van Gaalen 2010; Hauptman Komotar 2018a, 2018b).<sup>1</sup> More precisely, it considers the issue of quality assurance of internationalisation in Slovenia and seven Western Balkans countries: Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, Northern Macedonia, Kosovo<sup>\*2</sup>, and Albania, as these countries are comparable in many respects. With the exception of Albania, they were all part of the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY); excluding Kosovo, they are also all members of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and apart from Slovenia and Croatia, in different phases of their negotiation agreements to join the European Union (EU). However, despite their common historical, socio-cultural, economic and political roots, each country was confronted with further domestic challenges after the fall of communism (such as war conflicts, political shifts, multiethnicity issues, etc.) (Kanažir et al. 2014), thereby making a unique mixture of similarities and differences that are worth investigating (Vukasovic 2012) in the context of the present study.

In the few existing comparative studies on higher education dynamics in this peripheral part of Europe, research on the internationalisation of quality assurance (agencies) was, for example, conducted at the start of the previous decade, when Brankovic et al. (2014) conducted a study entitled *European Integration and Higher Education and Research in the Western Balkans (NORGLOBAL)*, which did not include Slovenia in its (comparative) framework. On the other hand, Zgaga et al. (2013) investigated the trend of internationalisation and international cooperation in higher education both in Slovenia and the Western Balkans, but in their study, the interdependent relationship between internationalisation and quality assurance was not explored to the same extent and depth as it is in this study.

In this respect, the paper addresses the identified research deficit in the light of the following question: How is the internationalisation of higher education perceived and implemented from the standpoint of quality assurance in Slovenia and the selected Western Balkans countries? Specifically, this means to explore: 1) the prevalent understandings of the relationship between the two main concepts and 2) the development and implementation of national and institutional internationalisation policies, strategies, and activities (such as mobility, joint programmes/degrees, international partnerships and projects, internationalisation at home, etc.) from the perspective of quality assurance in Slovenia and the Western Balkans countries. Initially, the paper investigates these issues separately in Slovenia and the Western Balkans, whilst afterwards, they are also approached from the comparative standpoint.

Hence, the aim of this study is to provide the most recent insights into the title topic, to offer new possibilities for investigating both phenomena under study in diverse higher education contexts and to contribute to a better understanding of the ongoing debates in this part of Europe on this basis.

## 2 METHOD

Methodologically, the study considers documentary analysis and semi-structured interviews as the two chief data collection methods. It investigates national (political) documents, programmes, strategies, legislation, institutional (internationalisation) strategies, annual plans, theoretical literature, recent studies from the field, etc. The analysis of documents formed the basis for conducting a total of 22 interviews via Zoom/Skype platform, which were conducted between March 2021 and September 2021 (for data on interviews, see Appendix 1). Interview participants, who originated from eight countries, were representatives of national quality assurance/accreditation agencies and national agencies for mobility and EU programmes, institutional leadership, heads or representatives of institutional departments for international relations and quality assurance offices or commissions, and experts from the field of internationalisation and quality assurance in higher education.

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- 1 The paper is based on results of the postdoctoral research project entitled *Quality assurance of internationalisation and internationalisation of quality assurance in higher education: Slovenia in the comparative perspective of the Western Balkans (Z5-2658)*, which is funded by the Slovenian Research Agency.
  - 2 This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is compliant with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

Interviewees were selected according to their role and/or professional expertise and were asked to participate via an invitation email. With the exception of participants from Slovenia, interviews were conducted mostly in English and some in the Croatian/Serbian language. After the interviews were conducted, audio recordings were transcribed and then also translated into Slovenian. This was followed by a thematic qualitative analysis (of transcripts), which “is a powerful method for analysing data that allows researchers to summarise, highlight key features of, and interpret a wide range of data sets” (Kiger and Varpio 2020, 8). In this study, it helped to find out opinions, views, knowledge, and experiences from interviewees and was based on the inductive approach, which means that some themes were predetermined by the author’s knowledge.

### 3 RESULTS

In the following, results of this study are presented separately for Slovenia and jointly for the Western Balkans countries, in order to form the background for the continuing comparative debate, in which the issue of quality assurance is addressed through the investigation of internationalisation activities abroad and at home (see Knight 2008).

#### Slovenia

In Slovenia, internationalisation is considered crucial for the development of the higher education system and represents an element of its quality (Ministry of Higher Education, Science, and Technology 2011). As stressed by one interviewee, “the goal of internationalisation is to achieve quality. If we take mobility as an example or as an aspect of internationalisation [...], mobility requires leaving the comfort zone and the reason for this is, of course, the lack of quality” (Interview 21, Slovenia). In the national programme (for the period 2011–2020; the current one for the 2021–2030 phase is in preparation), the Western Balkans region is considered an example of good practice in the field of regional mobility (Ministry of Higher Education, Science, and Technology 2011, Measure 30); however, students from the region who enrol at Slovenian higher education institutions are (already) exempt from tuition fees on the basis of governmental agreements and hence, it should be questioned whether enrolling more students from this region – who already represent more than 70 percent of all foreign students enrolled, – indeed represents an example of good practice (see, for example, Hauptman Komotar 2018a).

At the national level, the agency responsible for the implementation of mobility and European educational and training programmes, called Cmepius (established in 2003) also collaborates extensively with other similar agencies from the Western Balkans: “we have this informal group of Western Balkans countries where we collaborate extensively [...] and we exchange practices, we organise conferences and events together, [...] we organise job shadowing among ourselves” (Interview 9, Croatia). On the other hand, it was stated that the collaboration between Cmepius and the Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency (SQAA) is not formally established “because as agencies and centres, we both cover different fields. However, it is true that these fields are also in a cross-section of activities, and we cooperate a lot at events, in exchanging opinions, in giving information” (Interview 3, Slovenia).

Recently, the importance of joining the European Universities Initiative has been regarded one of the biggest steps forward in terms of assuring the quality of internationalisation:

Why is this such a leap in quality? Because we do not have one thousand eight hundred employees, but ten thousand. There are more than a hundred thousand students directly within the network. So, the dimension of action itself is on a completely different level. [...] And what is the most challenging? We want to increase this external engagement, so the goal is not [only] to improve this collaboration between partners, the goal is for these partners to offer for others, for the whole world something special, something different. And here, quality assurance processes are crucial, the most important. (Interview 21, Slovenia)

However, the establishment of European Universities also puts pressures on national quality assurance agencies in terms of designing proper quality assurance methodologies; in this respect, the SQAA, for example, participated as a consortium partner in the Erasmus+ project *Developing a European Approach for Comprehensive QA of (European) University Networks – EUniQ* (2019–2021), which also addresses issues of international joint programmes, the integration of university networks, and supports quality assurance agencies in developing their methodologies (ENQA 2019).

In more general terms, the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes was launched in 2015 to facilitate quality assurance processes of joint programmes in the EHEA without additional national criteria (see Yerevan Communiqué 2015). As argued for Slovenia,

We are one of the first higher education systems to put the European approach into legislation. So, in the case of [international] joint study programmes, we recognise accreditation decisions of foreign agencies by not starting our own process. But, in fact, some key evidence is needed, the key elements need to be met. [...] All higher education institutions included in the consortium must be accredited by EQAR-registered agencies and this joint study programme must be accredited by one of the agencies enrolled in EQAR. [...] [But] despite the fact that this European approach was agreed at the ministerial level ten years ago, most European countries still do not implement it. (Interview 3, Slovenia)

### The Western Balkans countries

Comparably to Slovenia, Croatian policy documents also state that “the process of internationalisation [...] has resulted in an overall increase in the quality of education and accelerated development of scientific research” (Ministry of Science and Education 2017, 189). But when asked about the existence of instruments for assessing the quality of internationalisation, it was underlined that this is possible through the implementation of system checks, as stressed by the representative of the Agency for Mobility and EU Programmes (AMPEU),

we go to universities and colleges and there we look at strategic documents to really confirm that they do not have this only in writing, but that they also have these action plans, operational plans to work on them. [...] But now, the level of implementation is different. (Interview 9, Croatia)

Additionally, Croatian higher education institutions are very interested in attracting international students as a way to improve both the quality of study programmes and institutions (AZVO 2019), although internationalisation is [still] primarily considered as Croatian students, teachers, institutions going abroad [...]. [And] not all higher education institutions are at such a level to be viewing internationalisation as a tool for quality, [...] [given the existence of] some obstacles at the national level, primarily regarding the possibility of higher education institutions offering classes in English, teachers being able to perform in English, the question of physical dormitories, of safe rooms. So, the infrastructure is really not up to the challenge quite yet. [...] But the biggest public universities in Croatia are [...] now going one step further and are thinking about internationalisation as a quality. So, we have two, I would say, different levels [...]; part of the group is still just about mobility, and there is this, I would say, more progressive group of higher education institutions and they really see it as a tool of quality. (Interview 9, Croatia)

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, internationalisation also represents one of the seven priority areas of the document called *Decision on Adoption of Priorities for HE Development in Bosnia and Herzegovina for the Period 2016–2026*, which highlights international mobility of students and staff, the development of study programmes in foreign languages, training in foreign languages and learning official languages in Bosnia and Herzegovina, funding programmes for the acquisition of joint degrees or to gain experience abroad, regional and crossborder cooperation of higher education institutions in projects, etc. (Eurydice 2017). In 2016, a consortium of different national institutions (such as quality assurance/accreditation agencies, ministries, ENIC/NARIC Center) and 15 partner universities started to implement the project called STINT (*Strengthening of Internationalisation in B&H Higher Education*) whose wider objective was to improve internationalisation and mobility through procedures of academic and professional recognition of diplomas (Eurydice 2017), whilst more specifically, the project focused on the development of indicators for quality assurance of internationalisation through the inclusion of existing criteria for accreditation of higher education institutions. As stressed by the representative of the Agency for Development of Higher Education and Quality Assurance of Bosnia and Herzegovina (HEA), STINT

was a really successful project and with a lot of good outcomes [...]. There were certain documents that were issued – for example, all public universities developed strategies for internationalisation; also, they developed some regulations regarding the recognition of mobilities and different things, how to attract students from other countries to our country. [...] And finally, we developed a guide for assessing internationalisation at universities, [which] can help higher education institutions to see what they need to have, to improve and, of course, to assess that, and for experts to assess internationalisation. (Interview 17, Bosnia and Herzegovina)

Furthermore, the STINT project also improved collaboration between the national quality assurance agency (i.e., HEA) and the National Erasmus+ Office (NEO), where the so-called HERE (*Higher Education Reform Experts*) team also operates (as in some other Western Balkans countries). According to one interviewee, it “consists of different stakeholders and one of them is the representative of the agency. So, they are some kinds of support for governments, for ministries, for agencies, for higher education institutions in some subjects that are relevant” (Interview 17, Bosnia and Herzegovina).

In Serbia, the government is adopting a new education strategy until 2030 with specific measures on internationalisation together with the accompanying action plan, although this is “the beginning of implementing some policy measures. But this is still very early to call them strong policy measures” (Interview 5, Serbia). In 2016, the working group consisting of various representatives of national and institutional actors and stakeholders issued the *Draft of the Higher Education Internationalisation Strategy in the Republic of Serbia 2017–2025*, which was published but never officially adopted. This draft additionally stressed the importance of assuring the quality, transparency, and competitiveness of the Serbian higher education system; as noted by the representative of the Foundation Tempus, it exposed “a clear link between quality and economy [and] as well, with internationalisation” (Interview 5, Serbia). But in terms of existing tools for assessing (the quality of) mobility, it was underlined that “this is possible through participant reports. [...] But these questions are more an insight into the quantity of mobility, not the quality of mobility” (Interview 5, Serbia).

In Montenegro, the internationalisation of higher education also represents one of the six key objectives of the *Strategy for the Development of Higher Education 2016–2020* and is perceived, together with mobility, “as sine qua non for improving the quality of knowledge acquisition and provision as well as the overall quality of higher education institutions and curricula” (Ministry of Education 2016). But currently, the country is “in the process of very massive reforms and changing the features of previous documents” (Interview 7, Montenegro). Moreover, at the level of higher education institutions, “quality in internationalisation is a less pointed issue. So, massive understanding of the internationalisation of higher education - at least, when we are speaking about policy-makers - is linked with mobility” (Interview 7, Montenegro). On the other hand, many Tempus projects “targeted quality [...] [And] Slovenia was a quite frequent partner [...] [and] is one of the countries which is quite preferred in Erasmus mobility and preferred in any kind of European projects” (Interview 7, Montenegro). Currently, Montenegrin higher education institutions are involved in the project *Fostering Internationalisation at Montenegrin HEIs through Efficient Strategic Planning* (IESP)<sup>3</sup>, which centres on the development and implementation of institutional internationalisation strategies and on the quality assessment of internationalisation, as the intent is to increase international competitiveness and visibility (University of Montenegro 2020). Nevertheless, despite the adoption of institutional internationalisation strategies, their development still often starts due to external requirements outside the university (University of Montenegro 2020).

In North Macedonia, national internationalisation objectives also stress the importance of regional (i.e., European and Western Balkans) cooperation in the field of education, research, and culture, whilst considering geographical proximity, language barriers, and traditional connections (Eurydice 2021). For example, the South East European University (SEEU), which is a private-public not-for-profit institution, aims to become “the regional leader in international cooperation” (EUA 2018, 26) and

in the last IEP [i.e., Institutional Evaluation Programme] evaluation, we got one of the recommendations, which was to find partner universities from the region [...], which would help us get more visibility internationally. But we haven't accomplished a lot in that regard; we cooperate mostly with universities from the region from Kosovo and Albania, mainly because of the language of instruction, [...] [because] in about seventy-five percent [of courses], the language of instruction is Albanian. (Interview 4, North Macedonia)

Also, the (public) Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje outlines the importance of competitiveness at home and abroad, as it was recommended that the university should take a more strategic approach to attract international partners and students (EUA 2017). In comparison, SEEU's interviewee highlighted the (competitive) advantage over public higher education institutions:

3 In the project, the University of Ljubljana collaborates as one of the three European partner universities (the other two are the University Côte d'Azur (France) and the University of Cadiz (Spain)).



we were lucky because the university was established in 2001 – very close to the Bologna Process. And we could start from scratch and build our curricula and our system in accordance with international guidelines. For us, this was easier than it was for state universities that had to be transformed. (Interview 4, North Macedonia)

In Kosovo, the *Kosovo Education Strategic Plan 2017–2021* also stressed the need for “[u]pgrading the quality and competitiveness of higher education through the promotion of [...] internationalisation” (Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology 2016, 8). Next to the promotion of mobility, the offer of study programmes with international partners is also considered of key importance, as

we have to think about joint degrees, double degrees. But joint degrees are left aside [...]. So, [if] we build a joint project with your university – that means, we will be careful about quality [...] and that is the main goal that should be the target of the Bologna Process. (Interview 10, Kosovo)

In this respect, many Tempus projects addressed the issue of quality (assurance); “there were a lot of documents, formulars, procedures, guides, which [...] are structured very well. But it’s missing the part of monitoring [...], which is much more important” (Interview 10, Kosovo). Also, an important role is played by international organisations and donors, such as the Austrian Development Agency (ADA), EU, German Corporation for International Cooperation (Giz), United States Agency for International Development (USAID), World Bank, UNESCO, Council of Europe, etc. (Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology n. d.). However, their role

is influential if they have local partners. [...] Internationals, when they are coming, sometimes they are promoting what they have [...] [but] they don’t understand the ground. [...] Let’s say, the World Bank invested much more than the European Commission, much more than WUS Austria, but they couldn’t find themselves [in Kosovo]. (Interview 10, Kosovo)

For Albania, it was highlighted that “we do not have a separate strategy for internationalisation, we only have a general [...] national strategy on education, which has a sub-chapter that includes higher education” (Interview 19, Albania). As in Slovenia and other Western Balkans countries, Tempus represented a chief internationalisation instrument and of all Western Balkans countries, Albania has been involved in Tempus the longest (since 1992). Also, Tempus had an important role in the setting of the national quality assurance system, which was already established in 1999 through the Tempus project *Support for an Accreditation System in Albania* (Eurydice 2018) and is currently under reform. Moreover, also a favoured tool for linking quality assurance to the internationalisation of higher education are capacity building projects:

in 2019, we concluded a project in the area of quality assurance with the University of Salzburg [...] and we were a partner in that. So, that [project] involved building capacities and building capacities of internal quality assurance offices and officers and improving strategic planning in the area. (Interview 19, Albania)

Nevertheless, the offer of study programmes in a foreign language is still limited in Albania, although there are experiences with programmes that are run [...] in collaboration with foreign universities. And a more classic symbol of this process is the Lady of Good Counsel that is opening collaboration with Italian universities and offers education in the field of Medicine, Stomatology, Pharmacy, Architecture, Physiotherapy, even Management. And this university is giving all their courses in the Italian language. So, this was a very big change for the Albanian system, because in a moment of our life we understood that Italian students wanted to come to Tirana. (Interview 14, Albania)

On the other hand, the interviewee from EPOKA University expressed that their “programmes, from the beginning, were announced in English. [...] We only have one programme in Albanian, which is Banking and Finance” (Interview 19, Albania).

In summary, the above results reveal that the issue of quality assurance is considered increasingly relevant for the development and implementation of national and institutional internationalisation policies, strategies, and activities at home and abroad (see Knight 2008). To this end, the following discussion interprets this issue from the comparative standpoint of prevalent conceptual understandings of quality assurance in the internationalisation of higher education and in terms of its development and implementation in national and institutional policies and practices of the eight selected countries.

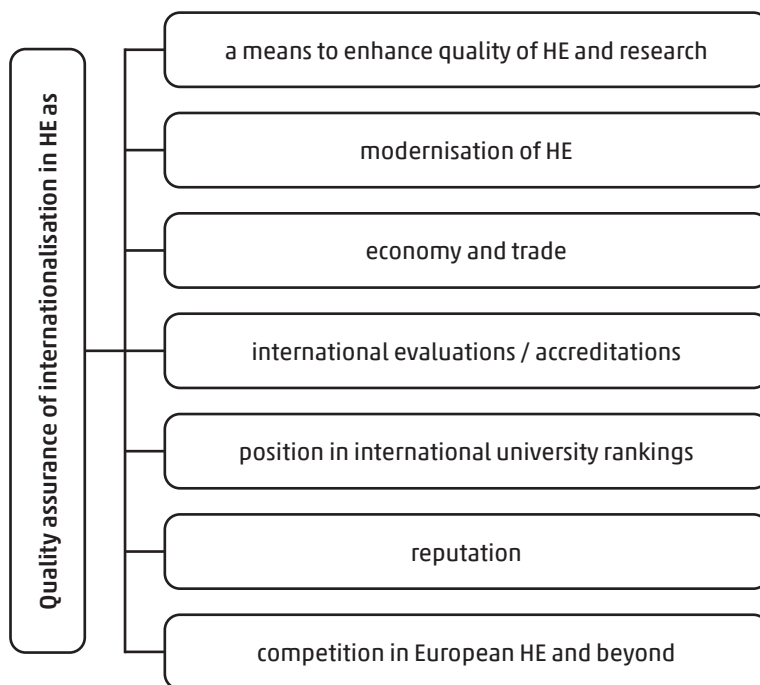
## 4 COMPARATIVE DISCUSSION

In comparative terms, the results showcase that both in Slovenia and the selected Western Balkans countries, the internationalisation of higher education is primarily perceived as a tool for improving the quality of higher education sectors. As maintained by de Wit, the link between quality assurance and internationalisation is best expressed in the recent definition of internationalisation of higher education, which sees it as a means to enhance the quality of higher education and research (de Wit 2020, 2397). As stressed in one of the interviews,

I first see the internationalisation process as a measure of quality. So, internationalisation itself for me is not something that needs to be done, to show nice statistics, to get European funds [...]. And then, as a process within it, there are things that I see as indicators of quality in the sense that when we have student mobility, which is primarily the focus of what we do, that again it's not just numbers [...]. So, in that way I understand the quality of internationalisation, that is itself an indicator of quality as a process and that then it actually has elements of quality within itself. (Interview 15, Serbia)

As indicated by the figure below (Figure 1), the relationship between the two key concepts is also understood in relation to modernisation, labour market, economy, international accreditations/evaluations, reputation, position in international rankings and hence, also to the competitiveness of the higher education sector.

**Figure 1. Perceptions of quality (assurance) in the internationalisation of higher education in Slovenia and the selected Western Balkans countries**



HE = Higher Education  
Source: Own elaboration

In interviews, such representations were highlighted in terms of the following: "internationalisation means how you are recognised, how high our visibility is abroad, and this is often reflected in [international] accreditations you obtain from renowned institutions" (Interview 21, Slovenia). For international evaluations, it was additionally argued that they help "to learn a lot about the university and to realise where we can go further on in the future and what we need to improve in order to be competitive in the European market" (Interview 12, Montenegro). But in some countries, such as Kosovo, international evaluations are "not so popular [...]" for two reasons. One, it's a matter of price – it's more expensive. And second – it's a matter of tradition" (Interview 4, Kosovo).

In terms of the development and implementation of national and institutional internationalisation policies and strategies, de Wit and Rumbley maintain that internationalisation is predominantly guided by institutional-level dynamics, whereas national policies are still “often fragmented and tend to be focused on the mobility side and on matters of competition and competitive advantage” (de Wit and Rumbley 2018, 35–36). But in the chosen countries

internationalisation is not sufficiently understood as relevant and important. I always have a feeling that on a declarative level – yes, it’s there [...] [but] it is more like a cosmetic thing. Not really intertwined in everything that institutions are doing. (Interview 11, Croatia)

Hence, some higher education institutions, “are not yet at this level of having the infrastructure, the administrative support, the internal structure organised in a way so that they can think about quality as well” (Interview 9, Croatia). Therefore, effective internationalisation and mobility efforts should consider quality assurance through the support for investment in information services, monitoring of mobility experiences, assurance of fair recognition, improving the impact of measures; in this way, mobility obstacles can be removed, and mobility flows can be balanced (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2018).

An important indicator for monitoring (the quality) of mobility is the Erasmus Charter for Higher Education, which is awarded for the duration of the Erasmus+ programme (by 2027) and is, as such, a ticket to all European programmes [...]. So, it is very important for our university to have [...] this quality mark. Because there are also external evaluations in the six-year period and at least in the third year, there is a visit and evaluation of the fulfilment of promises. (Interview 21, Slovenia)

Another issue, which is related to (the quality of) mobility, is the implementation of international joint study programmes in foreign languages, which are aimed to accelerate both the internationalisation and mobility throughout the EHEA (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2020) to boost its competitive advantage. But in Slovenia,

the perverted thing that my colleagues are doing [is that] because they do not use foreign languages, foreign literature, are not internationally recognised professors, do not publish abroad, do not accept foreign students and so on, they defend themselves through the fact that Slovenian universities have to use only Slovenian language in lectures. [...] Simply, language is a barrier in our country, but in terms of this flow of knowledge. (Interview 2, Slovenia)

On the other hand, in all selected countries,

the provision of study programmes in foreign languages is [still] a sort of a priority at the national level and also for higher education institutions. [...] Of course, I am not talking about the quality now [...]. We are now in a phase where we are actually trying to promote and attract as many foreign students as we can. (Interview 9, Croatia)

Hence, governments need to ensure the legal setting for the establishment of joint programmes without problems, for example, by implementing the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes, which is (only) implemented in 22 (out of 49) EHEA countries (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2020). According to the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR), the European approach is available to some higher education institutions or only under specific conditions in Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Serbia, whereas in Croatia, Montenegro, and North Macedonia, it is not available to higher education institutions (EQAR n.d.). However, “[o]n paper, they seem easy to implement [...] but in reality, if you want to accredit such a study programme, there are more questions than answers” (Interview 5, Serbia).

Moreover, regional cooperation (in the Western Balkans) represents a priority of internationalisation policies and strategies in all countries examined and is, as such, also highly praised among interview respondents. But “in a way, this is an obstacle for us to internationalisation, because we consider ourselves the same, but [...] the meaning of internationalisation is difference, diversity” (Interview 21, Slovenia). Additionally, it is highlighted that in the assessment of quality of international partnerships, the criteria and indicators for identifying international partners are usually still missing (Jahnke et al. 2019) and to this end, quantitative indicators from existing data sources were developed. These are: the performance of incoming and outgoing students, mobility rate, support and facilities at the host institution, rankings, academic quality, information from the course catalogue, etc. (Ghent University 2015).

Furthermore, another issue relevant for this discussion is internationalisation at home, which is “very important for the integration and in terms of quality that the university is able to offer a foreign student the same good service as it does for domestic students” (Interview 21, Slovenia). However, it is still not sufficiently reflected in the Bologna Process documentation, although it is becoming increasingly important in the time of the Covid-19 pandemic and the associated advances in blended learning (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2020). But in all countries examined, internationalisation at home is still more of an exception:

we have quite a big number of incoming students, but we have not noticed that higher education institutions really don't know how to use them for this internationalisation at home [...]. It's more like that they know about it, they understand it, but in practical terms, they really don't know [...] what the elements are [...]. It could be quite simple, but we don't see it happening to such extent. (Interview 9, Croatia)

As regards internationalisation of the curriculum, European Universities' alliances ensure “a new vehicle for this form of internationalisation to develop” in the future (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice 2020, 133); as stressed, “the biggest public universities [...] are now [most of them] entering these European University alliances [...]. So, they are now going one step further and [...] [they are considered as a] more progressive group of higher education institutions” (Interview 9, Croatia).

Therefore, it can be argued in comparative terms that in (Slovenia and) the Western Balkans countries, you can see that on some level, there are much more efforts and institutions or regions or countries, they are meeting some criteria like playing along. But at the same time, there are some weak spots [...] and they are weak for different reasons. [...] In the Western Balkans, you see differences between [...] central and periphery countries and the quality of research is very much under-developed [...]. Of course, you can always find individuals that are significant, but I am talking about the system, not about individuals. And internationalisation is definitely a [...] very weak spot for different reasons [...]. There is no mentality open enough to accept both international students and researchers and I think this is definitely a weak point. On the other side, I think that generally, quality assurance as a system [...] has been moving forward and [...] you see more and more this balance between those different components [of internationalisation and quality assurance] when you do evaluations or assessments, either in huge institutions or on the lower level. (Interview 11, Croatia)

## 5 CONCLUSION

To conclude: in Slovenia and the Western Balkans countries, the assessment of quality of internationalisation is (still) prioritised mainly in quantitative terms, for example, in the framework of the quality of (Erasmus+) mobility. But more recently, it is also implemented in the context of strengthening quality assurance of internationalisation (see, for example, the STINT project, in which guidelines for the assessment of internationalisation were developed based on the *Standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area – ESG*, see ENQA et al. 2015), thereby adding a more qualitative value to the existing attempts (Jahnke et al. 2019).

Nevertheless, despite the growing importance of having various instruments for the assessment of quality in internationalisation, this trend is (much) more pronounced in Western European higher education systems (e.g., in the Netherlands, Germany), where tools for assessing and assuring the quality of internationalisation were already developed in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (see, for example, the ‘distinctive feature for internationalisation’ by the Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO), on the basis of which the Certificate for Quality in Internationalisation (CeQuInt)<sup>4</sup> was developed by the European Consortium for Accreditation (ECA), or the German's Rector's Conference Audit: Internationalisation of Universities; see, for example, Aerden 2015; Weimer 2016; Hauptman Komotar 2018a, 2018b).

Therefore, there are still considerable regional, national, and institutional differences in the understanding and implementation of internationalisation from the perspective of quality assurance in

4 CeQuInt's aim is to assess and enhance internationalisation at both the programme and the institutional level of higher education institutions (see Aerden 2015 or ECA n.d.).

higher education and one must therefore consider the diversity of national, institutional, and disciplinary contexts in which the development of such efforts is embedded (de Boer et al. 2012; Aerden 2015; Hauptman Komotar 2018a, 2018b). Hence, it needs to be asked: (1) what is the purpose of assessment, (2) what should be measured, (3) what are the main indicators, outcomes, impact or processes, (4) how should these indicators be measured, (5) what data should be collected and how (Weimer 2016; see also Beerkens et al. 2010).

Hence, all of the above issues require further investigation in higher education contexts inside and outside the EHEA, given that one of the study's limitations is that it is only performed by one (post-doctoral) researcher and not within a larger research group. Also, challenges associated with the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the (quality assurance of) internationalisation (and mobility) must also not remain overlooked and to this end, future research in this field should investigate if the perception, development, and implementation of policies, strategies, and activities in this field are currently (still) effective and possible to realise; if not, indicators for assessing the quality of internationalisation should be adequately adjusted to fit the present situation both in the eight selected countries, in the EHEA and beyond.

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## APPENDIX 1: LIST OF INTERVIEWS

- Interview 1: Representative of Kosovo Accreditation Agency, Kosovo, 10 March 2021.
- Interview 2: Expert, Slovenia, 24 March 2021.
- Interview 3: Representative of Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency, Slovenia, 26 March 2021.
- Interview 4: Expert, North Macedonia, 30 March 2021.
- Interview 5: Representative of Fundation Tempus, Serbia, 30 March 2021.
- Interview 6: Representative of International Relations Office, University of Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina, 6 April 2021.
- Interview 7: Expert, Montenegro, 8 April 2021.
- Interview 8: Expert, Norway, 9 April 2021.
- Interview 9: Representative of Agency for Mobility and EU Programmes, Croatia, 13 April 2021.
- Interview 10: Expert, Kosovo, 15 April 2021.
- Interview 11: Expert, Croatia, 15 April 2021.
- Interview 12: Representative of Rectorate, University of Montenegro, Montenegro, 28 April 2021.
- Interview 13: Representative of Department of International Relations, Megatrend University, Serbia, 28 April 2021.
- Interview 14: Expert, Albania, 7 May 2021.
- Interview 15: Representative of International Relations Office, University of Novi Sad, Serbia, 13 May 2021.
- Interview 16: Expert, Serbia, 26 May 2021.
- Interview 17: Representative of Agency for Development of Higher Education and Quality Assurance, Bosnia and Herzegovina, 16 June 2021.
- Interview 18: Representative of Agency for Science and Higher Education, Croatia, 23 June 2021.
- Interview 19: Representative of International Relations Office Department, EPOKA University, Albania, 5 July 2021.
- Interview 20: Expert, Bosnia and Herzegovina, 6 July 2021.
- Interview 21: Representative of International Relations Office, University of Maribor, Slovenia, 20 August 2021.
- Interview 22: Representative of University Quality Assessment Commission, University of Maribor, Slovenia, 9 September 2021.

**Nataša Kramar**  
**Klemen Šubic**  
**dr. Franci Demšar**

## **IZVAJANJE EVALVACIJSKIH IN AKREDITACIJSKIH POSTOPKOV NA DALJAVO – KAJ BOMO OHRANILI PO PANDEMIJI?**

### **POVZETEK**

*Nacionalna agencija Republike Slovenije za kakovost v visokem šolstvu (v nadaljevanju: agencija) je začela delovati leta 2010, ko je prevzela naloge, ki jih je pred njo opravljal Svet Republike Slovenije za visoko šolstvo. Agencija je samostojna in neodvisna ter deluje po načelih strokovnosti, nepristranskosti, zakonitosti in politične nevtralnosti. Deluje v skladu s standardi in smernicami za zagotavljanje kakovosti v evropskem visokošolskem prostoru (Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area – ESG), s članstvom v mednarodnih združenjih pa utrjuje ugled in veljavnost slovenskega visokega šolstva. Velik premik v načinu dela je, tako kot po celotnem mednarodnem področju visokošolskega izobraževanja, prinesla pandemija covid-19. Agencija se je morala na spremembe odzvati hitro in svoj način dela prilagoditi novim razmeram ter obenem ustrezno svetovati visokošolskim zavodom pri zagotavljanju kakovosti.*

### **ABSTRACT**

*The Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (hereinafter: the Agency) started operating in 2010, when it took over the tasks previously performed by the Council for Higher Education. The Agency is autonomous and independent and operates on the principles of professionalism, impartiality, legality, and political neutrality. It operates in accordance with standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG). It strengthens its reputation and the validity of Slovenian higher education through memberships in international associations. As in the entire international field of higher education, the COVID-19 pandemic brought a major shift in the way we work. The Agency had to react quickly to the changes and adapt its way of working to the new conditions, while at the same time advising higher education institutions in quality assurance.*





## 1 O AGENCIJI

*(poglavje povzeto po Debevec 2021a, 3–7)*

Kakovostno visoko šolstvo je temelj vsake sodobne družbe, zato so se v devetdesetih letih prejšnjega stoletja države, podpisnice bolonjske deklaracije, obvezale, da bo prizadevanje za izboljševanje in zagotavljanje kakovosti visokošolskih zavodov, višjih strokovnih šol in študijskih programov njihova stalna naloga. Govorimo o evropski razsežnosti sistema kakovosti v visokem in višjem šolstvu, ki pomeni: samoevalvacijo in akreditacijo oziroma zunanjo evalvacijo visokošolskih zavodov, njihovih študijskih programov in višjih strokovnih šol z obveznim obiskom skupine neodvisnih strokovnjakov, ki presoja izpolnjevanje predpisanih standardov kakovosti. Za zunanje evalvacije in akreditacije so odgovorne neodvisne institucije (agencije).

Nacionalna agencija Republike Slovenije za kakovost v visokem šolstvu (v nadaljevanju: agencija) je začela delovati leta 2010, ko je prevzela naloge, ki jih je pred njo opravljal Svet Republike Slovenije za visoko šolstvo. Akreditacije v visokem in višjem šolstvu, katerih obvezni del je neodvisna zunanja presoja kakovosti, se namreč v Sloveniji v taki ali drugačni obliki opravljajo od leta 1994.

Ustanovitev agencije je pomenila odločilen korak k priznavanju in prepoznavanju pomena neodvisnega presojanja kakovosti v visokem in višjem šolstvu ter odločanja o akreditacijah in mnenjih o doseganju standardov kakovosti. S svojim delom se je po nekaj letih dodobra uveljavila v mednarodnem prostoru in dosegla polno mednarodno priznanje z vpisom v evropski register agencij (European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education – EQAR) leta 2013 in včlanitvijo v evropsko mrežo agencij za zagotavljanje kakovosti v visokem šolstvu (European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education – ENQA) leta 2015. Zunanje presojanje kakovosti visokega in višjega šolstva se je nenehno razvijalo in deloma spreminjalo, tako doma kot v mednarodnem prostoru. Spreminjali so se ESG, zakon o visokem šolstvu; predvsem ZViS-K konec leta 2016, ki daje večjo avtonomijo visokošolskim zavodom pri presoji kakovosti študijskih programov, saj se odpravlja podaljševanje njihovih akreditacij, ki so bile v pristojnosti agencije. Na drugi strani je poudarjeno razvojno in svetovalno delo agencije, ki ga omogočajo tudi v takšno delo usmerjene vzorčne evalvacije študijskih programov.

V letih od 2017 do 2021 se je agencija posvetila izboljšanju strokovnega in razvojnega dela, krepitvi kulture kakovosti, svoje neodvisnosti in avtoritete, prenovi predpisov, informatizaciji ter reorganizaciji. V sodelovanju z zunanjimi deležniki je sprejela nova merila in različne predpise, v katerih je upoštevala tako zakonske novosti kot prenovljene evropske standarde. V tem obdobju je prenovila še merila za zunanjo evalvacijo višjih strokovnih šol, merila za strokovnjake agencije, merila za prehode med študijskimi programi in merila za njihovo kreditno vrednotenje. Spremembe predpisov je podprla z usposabljanji, posveti, razlago meril za akreditacijo in usmeritvami za presojo po standardih kakovosti, prenovi poslovnika kakovosti, smernicami za evalvacijo na daljavo in priporočili za delo v izrednih razmerah med pandemijo. Agencija je vzpostavila tudi dober informacijski sistem in reorganizirala svoje delo.

### 1.1 NALOGE AGENCIJE

Sektorji agencije opravljajo vse naloge na temeljnih področjih njenega delovanja, kar pomeni, da oblikujejo predloge meril in drugih predpisov, vodijo akreditacijske in evalvacijske postopke, posodablja informacijski sistem agencije, izdelujejo analize in smernice v podporo sistemom in presoji kakovosti, spletajo mrežo mednarodnih povezav, skrbijo za preglednost dela in komunikacijo z deležniki, pripravljajo gradiva za odločanje sveta agencije in za pritožbeno komisijo. Ena od temeljnih dejavnosti je tudi stalno mednarodno sodelovanje s sorodnimi agencijami in zvezami agencij ter razvojno in svetovalno delo.

Agencija si nenehno prizadeva za zagotavljanje in izboljševanje kvalitativnega, strokovnega in objektivnega presojanja kakovosti v akreditacijskih in evalvacijskih postopkih. Zato imenuje neodvisne skupine strokovnjakov – v katerih sta obvezno tuji strokovnjak in študent –, ki poglobljeno presojujejo izpolnjevanje standardov kakovosti po vseh področjih presoje. Strokovnjake in kandidate zanje redno usposablja na posebnih srečanjih in delavnicah, jih seznanja z zakonskimi novostmi, novostmi v predpisih agencije in mednarodnih standardih za presojo kakovosti, nujnostjo nepristranskega, poglobljenega vsebinskega presojanja kakovosti, informacijami o lastnostih zunanjih presoj in zadovoljstvu z njimi, protokolom obiska visokošolskih zavodov in šol ter potrebami po

izpolnjevanju drugih, prav tako pomembnih pogojev za strokovnjaka agencije, kot sta na primer sposobnost dela v skupini in spoštljiv odnos do sogovornikov. Ugotovitve skupine strokovnjakov so razvidne iz akreditacijskih in evalvacijskih poročil in so podlaga za odločitve o akreditacijah, zunanjih evalvacijah oziroma za pomembna priporočila za izboljšanje kakovosti.

## 1.2 POMEN SODELOVANJA

V Sloveniji je zunanje presojanje kakovosti visokega in višjega šolstva neločljivo povezano z dejavnim sodelovanjem študentov, učiteljev in raziskovalcev. Agencija, pa tudi njen predhodnik Svet RS za visoko šolstvo, je ena od prvih v evropskem in širšem prostoru začela sodelovati s študenti na vseh ravneh: študenti so obvezni člani sveta agencije in vseh skupin strokovnjakov, njihove organizacije sodelujejo pri nastajanju zakonodaje, meril in drugih predpisov. Njim, tako kot učiteljem in raziskovalcem, je najprej namenjeno zunanje presojanje kakovosti. Naloga agencije je, da pripomore h kakovostnemu izobraževanju po javnoveljavnih študijskih programih. Javna veljavnost ali veljavnost pridobljenih diplom je namreč zagotovljena s pridobitvijo akreditacije, ki je v pristojnosti agencije.

## 2 VPLIV PANDEMIJE COVIDA-19 NA DELO AGENCIJE

Pandemija covid-19 je po vsem svetu povzročila ogromen val sprememb na področju visokošolskega izobraževanja. Kljub različnim novim tehnologijam in tehnološkemu napredku je poučevanje in učenje večinoma še vedno potekalo v živo. Leta 2020 pa se je to spremenilo za vse deležnike na področju visokošolskega izobraževanja, vključno z agencijami za kakovost v visokošolskem izobraževanju. Postavljeni smo bili pred velikanski izziv glede prilagajanja naših postopkov zagotavljanja kakovosti, tj. akreditacije in zunanje evalvacije visokošolskih zavodov, študijskih programov in višjih strokovnih šol. Gre za kompleksne naloge, ki v postopkih akreditacij in evalvacij narekujejo veliko različnih dejanj, najpomembnejši in za presojanje kakovosti bistveni pa so evalvacijski obiski zavodov in šol. Da bi delo lahko potekalo, je bilo treba sprejeti različne usmeritve za drugačen način dela, kot so obiski na daljavo, kar je zahtevalo številna usklajevanja z vsemi vpletenimi deležniki, prilagajanja, sestanke oziroma posvetovanja; prilagoditev informacijskega sistema, tudi izobraževanja glede uporabe spletnih orodij in podobno.

### 2.1 PRIPOROČILA IN SMERNICE

Aprila 2020 je agencija v sodelovanju z deležniki pripravila priporočila visokošolskim zavodom v času uvedbe izrednih razmer. Večina visokošolskih zavodov je bila prisiljena preseliti celotno delovanje v virtualno okolje ter študentom in učiteljem zagotoviti primerna orodja in mehanizme za oddaljen dostop ter izobraževanje na daljavo. Izobraževanje na daljavo vsem deležnikom omogoča fleksibilnost poučevanja in učenja kjerkoli in kadarkoli, vendar pa je bil prehod na novi način dela in izobraževanja, zaradi nastalih razmer in ukrepov, za večino deležnikov (pre)hiter, da bi jim uspelo zagotoviti ustrezno infrastrukturo in tehnično podporo, usposabljanje učiteljev in študentov za uporabo različnih sodobnih spletnih orodij in možnosti, ki jih omogoča (preverjanje znanja ob upoštevanju načel akademske integritete). Popolna implementacija celostnih spletnih storitev za izobraževanje na daljavo poleg spremembe poučevanja in študija namreč pomeni tudi spremembo delovanja celotnega zavoda, spremembo interakcij in komuniciranja med deležniki, spremembo navad in oblikovanje nove kulture izobraževanja, zagotavljanje ustrezne pomoči in virov (formalnih, priložnostnih in socialnih). Ne gre samo za uporabo spletnih orodij in različnih platform, snemanje predavanj in digitalno posredovanje literature in virov, temveč gre za oblikovanje, razvoj, delovanje in izboljševanje celotnega virtualnega izobraževanja. Razvoj takšnega izobraževanja naj bi v povprečju trajal vsaj od 6 do 9 mesecev, ob predpostavki, da so zagotovljeni kakovostni in zadostni viri (tudi kadrovske in finančne). Raziskovalci na področju izobraževalnih tehnologij so razvili različne variacije podsistemov, ki se lahko uporabljajo v izobraževanju in jih poznamo pod različnimi izrazi (online learning, blended learning, mobile learning, distributed learning itd.). Poseben izraz, ki je značilen za obdobje izrednih ukrepov, povezanih s covidom-19, in označuje hiter preskok iz tradicionalnega načina izobraževanja v neke vrste oddaljen način, v tujini opredeljujejo kot »emergency remote teaching« (poučevanje na daljavo v izrednih razmerah). Slednji se v temeljih bistveno razlikuje od izobraževanja na daljavo (distance/online learning). Ključna razlika je v tem, da je prvi rezultat hitrega in nujnega odziva na nastali položaj, osredinjen na hitro podajanje preostanka sno-

vi, medtem ko je drugi plod preišljenega razvoja izobraževalnega ekosistema v virtualnem okolju in za to uporablja razvite in dodelane ustrezne didaktično-pedagoške pristope (Priporočila NAKVIS visokošolskim zavodom ... 2020).

Agencija je za visokošolske zavode pripravila priporočila zavodom pri prehodu na izobraževanje na daljavo v izrednih razmerah ter napotke glede evalvacije tovrstnega izobraževanja.

Maja 2020 je agencija skladno s priporočili ENQA pripravila smernice za izvedbo evalvacijskega obiska na daljavo, ki so bile namenjene vsem sodelujočim v postopkih agencije za pomoč pri načrtovanju, organizaciji in izvedbi obiska ter pripravi poročila skupine strokovnjakov. V skladu s smernicami je agencija v juniju pričela z evalvacijskimi obiski ter julija izvedla anketo o zadovoljstvu deležnikov z novo obliko obiskov. Prav tako jih je pozvala k predlogom za izboljšanje. Deležniki so bili z novim načinom dela praviloma zelo zadovoljni, največje težave so bile zaznane predvsem pri presojanju materialnih razmer. Na podlagi opravljene ankete je septembra 2020 posodobila smernice, s pravo tehničnih napotkov pa se je posvetila poenotenju dela med strokovnimi delavci.

V prvih dveh delih posodobljenih smernic so tako nasveti o pripravi, informacijskih rešitvah in jasnih opredelitvah vlog ter porazdelitvi dela med deležniki (npr. koordinator na visokošolskem zavodu, skupina strokovnjakov, uslužbenci agencije in sogovorniki). Vsi morajo biti dobro pripravljene in v zadostni meri obvladati digitalne in informacijske veščine. Uslužbenec agencije in koordinator na visokošolskem zavodu imata ključno vlogo, saj morata pojasniti in posredovati potrebne informacije ter zagotoviti, da so udeleženci seznanjeni z virtualnim konferenčnim orodjem, ki se uporablja. Pomembno je tudi preizkusiti morebitne dodatne funkcije (npr. tolmačenje) in v primeru tehničnih težav pripraviti in preizkusiti drugo tovrstno orodje. Predsednik skupine mora že med uvodnimi sestanki skupine zelo jasno določiti vloge in vsebino. Podani so bili tudi nekateri zelo praktični napotki, npr. sogovorniki naj se v spletno čakalnico prijavijo približno pet minut prej, da se izognejo zamudam ali morebitnim tehničnim težavam in uslužbencu agencije omogočijo preverjanje prisotnosti. Smernice poudarjajo pomen ustrezne komunikacije med deležniki in uporabo ustreznega bontona v spletnem okolju. Priporočena je uporaba dodatnih kanalov/metod, kot so mobilne aplikacije, za hitro in učinkovito usklajevanje med koordinatorji na visokošolskem zavodu in uslužbenci agencije ter znotraj skupine strokovnjakov. Ne glede na sprva prepoznane manjše izzive so izkušnje pokazale, da je pisanje skupnega poročila s pomočjo videokonference lahko koristna praksa za celotni proces. Čeprav se smernice primarno osredotočajo na evalvacijske obiske, je mogoče nekatere nasvete in rešitve vključiti tudi v druge postopke (Šubic in Kramar 2021).

V tretjem delu smernic je primer urnika evalvacijskega obiska, ki se lahko spremeni za prilaganje specifičnim lastnostim določenega postopka. Pri urniku je poudarek predvsem na daljših odmorih med sestanki, da se strokovnjakom omogoči dodaten počitek in zagotovi dovolj časa za izmenjavo zbranih informacij, presojo, postavljanje nadaljnjih vprašanj in podajanje zaključkov (Šubic in Kramar 2021).

Oktobra 2020, ob pričetku novega šolskega leta, razmere še vedno niso omogočale izvajanja celotnega pedagoškega procesa v živo. Agencija je tako visokošolskim zavodom priporočala, naj preko procesa samoevalvacije identificirajo dobre prakse in izzive pri izvajanju pedagoškega procesa na daljavo ter se posvetijo izboljšanju sistema. V skladu z razmerami je tudi agencija svoje postopke nadaljevala z izvajanjem na daljavo.

## 2.2 IZZIVI PRIHODNOSTI

*(poglavje delno povzeto po Šubic in Kramar 2021, 29–31)*

Februarja 2021 je agencija ponovno izvedla anketo med deležniki v evalvacijskih in akreditacijskih postopkih, pri čemer je bil izpostavljen vidik pogleda v prihodnosti, ohranjanja dobrih praks in izboljševanja. Pri pregledu rezultatov anket in pri načrtovanju našega dela v prihodnosti se seveda porajajo številna vprašanja.

Katere novosti bomo uveljavili in kaj bomo ohranili iz obdobja pred covidom-19? Kakšen bo neizogibni hibridni sistem in v čem bomo prilagodili svoje sisteme zagotavljanja kakovosti? Prejšnji sistem izvajanja evalvacijskih obiskov v živo je mogoče izboljšati na različne načine, ki bi lahko bili del prihodnjega hibridnega modela, nekaj ključnih je izpostavljenih v nadaljevanju:

1. **Razpoložljivost in dostopnost:** Evalvacijski obiski na daljavo omogočajo veliko širši nabor strokovnjakov z vsega sveta. Ker ni treba izgubljati časa s potovanji, strokovnjaki raje sodelujejo v

postopku, ki je lokacijsko bolj oddaljen. Poleg tega zavodi lažje zagotovijo sogovornike, ki imajo lahko v času evalvacije urnike zasedene ali se nahajajo drugje, tudi v tujini. To je zlasti pomembno, kadar ima zavod ali študijski program mnogo mednarodnih študentov, diplomantov ali učiteljev. Čeprav lahko geografska razpršenost zaradi različnih časovnih pasov povzroči več usklajevanja, v mnogih primerih kljub temu prinaša veliko prednost.

2. **Prilagodljivost:** V urnik daljših obiskov je lahko vključen prost dan, saj ne povzroča dodatnih stroškov. S tem strokovnjakom omogočimo več časa za pisanje poročila ali končnih ugotovitev ter prepotreben počitek po dolgih urah za računalniškim zaslonom. Obenem imajo tudi zavodi več časa za pripravo dodatnih gradiv, če je potrebno, in za opravljanje vsakodnevnega delovnega procesa. Če skupina sklene, da nekaterih materialnih razmer ni mogoče v celoti predstaviti na spletu, lahko lokalni strokovnjaki prost dan izkoristijo za pregled materialnih razmer in praktično usposabljanje v živo.
3. **Zniževanje stroškov in lažja logistika:** Različne nacionalne zakonodaje imajo različne cenovne politike za (nacionalne) agencije in visokošolske zavode. Spletni evalvacijski obiski stroške v vsakem primeru bistveno zmanjšajo, kar koristi tako zavodom kot agencijam. Logistična organizacija je v virtualnem okolju mnogo preprostejša in čeprav od udeležencev terja določene prilagoditve, praviloma vsi prihranijo na času.
4. **Trajnostna prihodnost:** Preusmeritev našega dela v spletno okolje je danes, ko se soočamo z neizogibnimi podnebnimi spremembami, majhen, a kljub temu pomemben prispevek k doseganju trajnostno naravnanih delovnih navad in zmanjšanju ogljičnega odtisa. Skrb za okolje je odgovornost vseh, oblikovanje novega modela izvajanja postopkov naše agencije pa nam daje priložnost, da prispevamo svoj del.

Drugačna oblika evalvacijskih obiskov, bodisi v celoti ali delno na daljavo, seveda prinaša tudi nove izzive.

1. Eden najpomembnejših je zagotoviti verodostojnost informacij. Različne etične dileme, npr. navzočnost nadrejenih med pogovori z udeleženci lahko povzroči samocenzuro med razgovori.
2. Čeprav je bilo s snemalniki zvoka že prej mogoče snemati pogovore brez soglasja, je zdaj v virtualnih okoljih to še lažje, kar ustvarja dodaten pritisk na udeležence.
3. Spontani razgovori na kraju samem niso mogoči, zaradi česar je mnogo težje odkriti morebitne skrite težave.

Čeprav so taki primeri pri evalvacijskih obiskih redki, lahko predstavljajo potencialno nevarnost in jih je treba obravnavati resno. Najlažje se jim izognemo tako, da ustvarimo močno medsebojno zaupanje med visokošolskimi zavodi in agencijo, saj to omogoča spoštljivo izmenjavo informacij in pošteno presojo. Deležniki se morajo sporazumeti, kako zagotoviti verodostojno evalvacijo in hkrati ohraniti medsebojno zaupanje. Večja verodostojnost prejetih informacij na račun izgube zaupanja nikakor ni prava pot za naprej. Bistveno je tako posvečanje etičnim načelom kot spodbujanje odprtega dialoga in sodelovanja. Neodvisno od načina dela (v živo ali na daljavo) je ključno ohranjanje integritete vseh deležnikov.

### 2.3 STRATEŠKI CILJI AGENCIJE 2021–2025

*(poglavje povzeto po Debevec 2021b, 16–25)*

Agencija je za naslednje strateško obdobje (2021–2025) sprejela sedem strateških ciljev. Ob upoštevanju strateških ciljev trajnostnega razvoja (SDG 2030), sprejetih na generalni skupščini Združenih narodov leta 2015, in sprememb, nastalih zaradi epidemioloških razmer, povezanih s pandemijo covid-19, je eden izmed ciljev tudi sledenje ciljem trajnostnega razvoja. S tem bo izkazana podpora družbi na poti sprememb k bolj trajnostno naravnemu življenjskemu slogu. To področje odpira nov spekter znanj in potenciala za raziskovanje in razvoj tudi na področju visokega šolstva. Vključuje inkluzivne in integrativne pristope učenja, poučevanja in sodelovanja ter utira pot novim oziroma inovativnim principom in prioritetam v izobraževanju. Delovanje agencije bo zato usmerjeno v:

- izboljšanje njenega notranjega sistema kakovosti in dejavnosti, povezanih s cilji trajnostnega razvoja;
- aktivno sodelovanje pri zblíževanju elementov zunanjega sistema kakovosti s cilji trajnostnega razvoja v slovenskem visokošolskem prostoru.

Upoštevač cilje trajnostnega razvoja in epidemiološke razmere zaradi covid-19 bo agencija tudi v prihodnje:

- a) racionalno načrtovala potovanja v tujino;
- b) na daljavo izvajala:
  - akreditacijske in evalvacijske postopke oziroma obiske visokošolskih zavodov in višjih strokovnih šol,
  - izobraževanja, usposabljanja strokovnjakov, organizirala posvete z njimi in drugimi udeleženci pri akreditacijah in evalvacijah na daljavo;
- c) imela več sestankov s predstavniki domačih institucij ter tujih agencij, združenj ipd. z videokonferenčnimi orodji;
- d) omogočala sprejem vlog v elektronski obliki;
- e) skrbela za zdravje in dobro počutje zaposlenih;
- f) poiskala nove prostore agencije: prizadevala si bo, da bodo stroški zanje manj potratni kot zdajšnji, po drugi strani pa bodo bolj prilagojeni potrebam dejavnosti agencije in njenih zaposlenih.

Kot je zapisano zgoraj, je agencija že v lanskem letu prilagodila opravljanje svojih dejavnosti spremenjenim razmeram, nastalim ob izbruhu pandemije covid-19. Ta se po napovedih strokovnjakov v kratkem še ne bo popolnoma umirila, zato bo zagotovo krojila delo agencije tudi v prihodnje. Z naštetimi prilagoditvami ga bo skušala čim bolje opravljati, ob tem pa poskrbeti, da bo kakovostno.

## 2.4 MEDNARODNO SODELOVANJE

Na agenciji se zavedamo, da se s podobnimi težavi soočajo v visokošolskem prostoru tako na evropski kot na svetovni ravni. Agencija je del več mednarodnih zvez agencij in tako redno spremlja ter sodeluje pri mednarodnih izmenjavah izkušenj in rešitev. V okviru združenja CEENQA so tako na podlagi obstoječih smernic za izvedbo evalvacijskega obiska na daljavo, dopoljenih s strani drugih mednarodnih agencij, nastale tudi uradne smernice CEENQA, ki so jim bili dodani še primeri dobrih praks in izzivov, ki so bili zbrani v anketi, opravljeni med članicami CEENQA maja 2021. Čeprav agencije spadajo v mednarodno visokošolsko okolje in večinoma upoštevajo iste standarde (ESG), zaradi nacionalnih posebnosti in zakonodaje opravljajo delo na različne načine. Smernice CEENQA se posledično posvečajo zgolj evalvacijskim obiskom kot skupnemu delu procesa zagotavljanja kakovosti, tako da jih lahko uporablja katera koli agencija za kakovost v visokošolskem izobraževanju. Namen tega dokumenta ni omejevati agencij v katerem koli pogledu, ampak predlagati mogoče rešitve in po potrebi ponuditi nasvete. Tako kot smo agencije za zagotavljanje kakovosti v visokem šolstvu uspešno sodelovale pri izmenjavi dobrih in slabih praks ter rešitev tekom pandemije, upamo, da se bo dobro sodelovanje nadaljevalo tudi v prihodnosti, ko bomo vsi snovali nov hibridni sistem izvajanja evalvacijskih obiskov z vsemi omenjenimi izzivi (Šubic in Kramar 2021).

## 3 ZAKLJUČEK

Agencija je v letih 2020 in 2021 spričo sprememb, ki jih je povzročila pandemija, intenzivno preoblikovala svoje delovanje in izvajanje nalog. V procesu samoevalvacije in pri redni komunikaciji z deležniki opažamo tako zadovoljstvo s spremembami kot tudi konstruktivne pripombe za izboljšave. Skrb za trajnostno naravnost agencije, kakovostno opravljanje dela in sodelovanje z deležniki bodo temelji, na katerih bomo gradili nov hibridni sistem izvajanja evalvacijskih in akreditacijskih postopkov.

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**Associate Professor Adriana Dervishaj**

University of Tirana, Faculty of Foreign Languages, Department of English Language

## **INTEGRITY, SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL TRANSFORMATIONS, INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION AND GENDER EQUALITY IN ACADEMIC HE INSTITUTIONS**

### **ABSTRACT**

*Reform in academic institutions and society at large is currently essential in the context of the overall integration of our institutions into the EU. Having been involved in projects and participating in conferences and working groups introducing 'Integrity' in public institutions has been a stimulus for applying it firstly in our daily professional life in the universities and then throughout all aspects of life in our country.*

*Historically, integrity has been inherent and rooted in the inner world and behaviour of educated people in our country. Economic and political transformations have somewhat changed the way people look at values they once thought were more important than any material gain or personal interest.*

*What is academic integrity? Academic integrity is the moral code or ethical policy of academia. The term was popularised by the late Don McCabe, who is considered to be the "grandfather of academic integrity". (Wikipedia)*

*Academic integrity is the commitment to and demonstration of honest and moral behaviour in an academic setting. This is most relevant at the university level as it relates to providing credit to other people when using their ideas.*

*"Leading Towards Sustainable Academic and cultural transformation cooperation Plans in Universities and research institutions by drafting joint Modules and integrating the existing ones in response to today's developments by looking at the best practices and policies of transformation that have occurred in Europe and by sharing the best values to the best interest of our communities and peoples" will be the focus of the research.*

**Key words:** *Integrity in Academia and public institutions, Sustainable education, Economic and political transformations, gender equity and parity, radical and constructive approaches.*



## 1 INTRODUCTION

'The fate of a country depends on the integrity and dignity of its people' appears to be a fact of considerable consideration for our prospective integration into the EU and not only in this respect. Transparency and merit-based competition should prevail over political partisanship or the authoritarian model.

It is crucial for academic HE institutions to incorporate integrity as the key principle indicator for measuring quality assurance and performance of staff.

Universities and Academia should precede with the application of radical and constructive transformations from within as the main source of education of the younger generations to better serve the democratic development of the country.

Integrity, gender equity and parity as well as distribution of power in a democratic way needs to be promoted through a range of research activities in the framework of offering a higher standard in educating sustainable gender equality within our university and at large.

Historically, there has been a masculine dominance in academic and public institutions in Albania. It has been an initiative of all civil associations to empower and impose the introduction of quotas for women in Parliament and decision-making bodies since 1995. It was an idealistic movement intended to contribute to raising awareness and training women in facing the current challenges posed by society at that time.

It is our duty as lecturers, educators and researchers to step forward with initiatives and break the chains of past gender differences for a balanced transformation based on the real values of professional and academic women in HE Institutions, in which integrity requires special attention.

The project aims at adopting and implementing a European Integrity Framework, Intercultural Communication Plans to foster a better understanding of our common values, incorporation of European values and Gender Equality Plans in academic and research institutions. The project is expected to carry out its activities within a 4-year period, starting from March 2021.

In simplest terms, it requires acknowledging the contributions of other people. Failure to provide such acknowledgement is considered plagiarism.

It would be crucial for academic HE institutions to incorporate it as the key principle indicator for measuring quality assurance and performance of staff.

Universities and Academia should precede with the application of radical and constructive transformations from within as the main source of education of the younger generations to better serve the democratic development of the country. As my British colleague Prof. Sarah Mercer stated in her last workshop in July, we also need to show more compassion for teachers and their efforts to advance their careers with dignity and integrity.

## 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

The experience of European Universities will have a valuable impact on the transformative Educational Reform that is expected to be implemented in academic institutions and society at large.

The need to establish effective systems of integrity management is very important in the context of public institutions in the country, in order to have a professional public administration with ethics, integrity, and commitment to public service. Public institutions, in the exercise of their functions and responsibilities, face corruption risks which may affect the performance of public administration, and consequently the civic trust in central government. Therefore, strengthening integrity and adopting systematic anti-corruption measures are vital in the context of public administration reforms. This priority occupies a very important place in the strategic document of the Inter-Sectoral Anti-Corruption Strategy (IACS) 2015-2020. This strategy envisages specific objectives in the function of integrity planning, with the ultimate goal of installing a culture of integrity assessment in public institutions in the country. The development of integrity plans for public institutions is in support of the measures provided in the relevant Action Plan 2018-2022, pursuant to objective A8 "Systematic use of evidence that identifies and proves corruption" and objective A9 "Strengthening the integrity of public employees". The Integrity Plan puts into operation an effective system of integrity management at the institutional level,



a high standard of management that suits a modern central public administration. Specifically, the integrity plan instrument will provide the conceptual framework for policies and measures designed to prevent violations of the integrity of public officials in the institution.

### 3 METHODOLOGY

In order to help public sector institutions in their efforts to adopt anti-corruption policies and instruments at the institutional level, the instrument for Integrity Risk Assessment Methodology (IRAM) for Central Government, piloted at the Ministry of Justice, has been drafted. The methodology is relevant to the assessment of integrity risk in all central government institutions and aims to contribute to strengthening the process of planning and managing integrity risk in the public sector in Albania.

Theoretically, the methodology relies mainly on the analysis of the national legal framework for the organisation and functioning of public administration, ethics and integrity, and legislation in the areas regarding the functioning of public institutions that carry risks of breach of integrity. In terms of risk analysis, from the methodological point of view the main references are ISO Standards, codified in the norms E 31 000 and EN 31010 ISO, adapted to analyse the risk of integrity in the public sector. Another source is the Integrity Risk Assessment Methodology for Local Self-Governing Units<sup>3</sup>, which was implemented with the establishment of integrity management systems in some municipalities of the country. Other sources worth mentioning have been good international practices in public sector integrity management systems.

The paper aims to present a general framework of key risk management concepts, which includes planning, identifying, analysing and assessing the risks of integrity, as well as drafting, approving, implementing and monitoring the integrity plan in a public institution. The methodology provides the theoretical framework of the risk management process, methodological instruments, stages of the process for the development of the integrity plan in the institution, as well as a standard model of the integrity plan.

1. Decision of the Council of Ministers no. 247 dated 20.03.2015 "On the approval of the Cross-cutting/ Inter-Sectoral Anti-Corruption Strategy for the period 2015-2020"
2. Decision of the Council of Ministers no.241 dated 20.04.2018
3. IRAMLSU was drafted in the context of the Project "Strengthening Ethics and Integrity in Local Government", in the framework of UNDP assistance through the STAR2 project

#### 3.1 Integrity as a standard

Integrity is already a well-established standard of good governance, a prerequisite for the legitimacy of government actions, and is of particular importance in the context of the fight against corruption. Integrity is a necessary standard for the functioning of an integrity management system in a public institution, which relies on the assessment of integrity risk. At the institutional level, the implementation of an anti-corruption plan of measures to address the risks of integrity is aimed at improving the efficiency, effectiveness, transparency and accountability of the institution, as well as increasing public confidence in governance.

The integrity management system is a corruption prevention instrument in the public sector institution. In order for public institutions to have a functioning integrity management system, it is important that they adopt and implement a framework for continuous improvement of integrity, as well as install the integrity management process as a work culture in the exercise of responsibilities and its own functions. Thus, it is required that the institution: i) adopt and implement pro-integration policies such as the code of conduct and the integrity plan; ii) supervise and evaluate the implementation of the activities of the institution in relation to the prevention of corruption and the strengthening of integrity, against the fulfilment of the institutional objectives of integrity and pro-integration policies adopted for this purpose. The results of the evaluation should be reported to the head of the institution; iii) continuously carry out activities related to the improvement and strengthening of the integrity of the institution and the integrity management system.

The Integrity Plan serves the institution in identifying, assessing and preventing the totality of risks that affect the integrity of the institution and the individuals working in it. The Integrity Plan is a documented process that assesses the level of vulnerability of an institution and its exposure to

corruption and unethical and unprofessional practices. An integrity plan will provide a conceptual framework of policies and measures designed to prevent violations of the integrity of public officials and employees, as well as to monitor the effects of measures implemented in a public institution in accordance with the Decision of the Council of Ministers no. 241, dated 20.4.2018 "On the approval of the Action Plan 2018-2020".

#### Risk management action plan

Risks identified by priority and associated with the relevant measures are part of the Integrity Risk Management Action Plan. The purpose of the plan is to document how certain measures will be implemented, including: describing identified risks, objectives of the action plan, proposed activities, financial costs, responsible persons, and implementation deadline (Plan Format Integrity Model).

### 3.2 ASSESSMENT METHODS

The resources that will be used to assess the risk of integrity in the institution are a combination of secondary sources (legal-institutional analysis and review of documentation) as well as primary sources (surveys and questionnaires, focus groups, interviews with key executives). Secondary resources will be used in the preliminary phase of the integrity risk assessment process, in order to obtain a general overview of the governance and functioning of the institution, as well as to identify the areas most exposed to integrity risk. Primary resources will be used for a more detailed analysis of the most critical integrity risks by including a specialised analysis regarding the level of risks (the possibility of occurrence / occurrence of risks and the impact on the integrity of the institution). The methods to be used in integrity risk assessment will be:

- Documentary analysis, a qualitative method which includes an analysis of all legal acts in force in relation to central government and the legal framework for integrity; the legal framework that regulates the scope of the institution; the internal regulatory framework of the institution with a focus on the administrative acts issued for the administration of the functions for which the institution is responsible (regulatory functions, financial resources, human resources); administrative acts that define general and normative rules of conduct, as well as mandatory standards in accordance with the law (on ethics, integrity, conflict of interest, declaration of assets, prevention of corruption); national political documents related to the fight against corruption; internal documents such as various annual reports, audits, etc. and external documents (SSC reports, audit) and other information needed to assess the exposure to integrity risks in the institution; as well as previous internal and external audit findings.

Interviews, qualitative interpretation of findings that include interviews with employees of the institution in its various sectors as face to face, semi-structured ones will be used as methods to collect data. Employees have been identified from their positions and working experience in the institution (snowballing).

Surveys, quantitative method which includes questionnaires, statistical analysis of the perception of employees of the institution through a structured questionnaire on the risks of integrity in their institution or activities most exposed to corruption.

#### Field of transparency

The mission of the central government institution is to ensure effective, efficient and transparent governance. Numerous events with negative impacts / consequences can occur in the field of transparency of the institution, such as in the appointment of the coordinator for the right to information, the updating of the transparency program, the quality and transparency of the process.

### 3.3 INTEGRITY RISK ASSESSMENT PROCESS IN THE INSTITUTION

The process of Integrity Risk Assessment in the institution consists of five detailed stages. As a self-assessment process, it is undertaken by the head of the institution by setting up a working group to assess the risk of integrity and prepare the institution's integrity plan. This integrity plan is approved by the head of the institution.

In addition, the data that will be collected from the anonymous questionnaire completed by all employees of the institution will be part of the work in this phase.

The risk assessment contains the ranking of risks according to priorities that have consequences on the integrity of the institution and that may jeopardise efficiency, effectiveness, trust and institutional image.

#### Monitoring and reporting

Continuous monitoring and reporting assist understanding of whether the identified risks have been managed effectively, whether they have undergone changes to their profile and whether they have been reduced or increased in magnitude. This stage includes:

- developing mechanisms for the implementation of the Risk Management Plan in the institution,
- the appointment by the head of the institution of a person responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Integrity Plan (in particular for the measures set for improving integrity),
- regularly informing the executive body and representatives of the institution regarding issues or developments related to the risk management plan.

The aim of adopting integrity plans in universities is:

To explore the relationship between integrity, academia and disciplinary study.

To consider the issues and challenges of maintaining Academic Integrity through doctoral study. To identify useful strategies to manage academic integrity issues in research and writing.

## 4 DISCUSSION OF ACTIVITIES

Questionnaires to be submitted at university level: What does integrity mean to you?

Values, Fairness, Honesty, Rigour, Equality, Innovation, Originality, Respect, Courage, Empathy, Collaboration, Compassion, Imagination, Generosity, Quality, Responsibility, Trust

Write a Definition of Academic Integrity

The International Center for Academic Integrity 'The International Center for Academic Integrity defines academic integrity as a commitment to five fundamental values: honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility. We believe that these five values, plus the courage to act on them even in the face of adversity, are truly foundational to the academy'. (ICAI, 2014)

Agree or disagree? What does this mean for you? Your discipline? Can you give examples of where this has been challenging in the past?

How do these elements of integrity combine? • My Identity • My Doctoral Study • My Disciplinary Field • Who do I want to be and how do I want to be perceived? • What outcome and contribution do I want my doctoral study to make? • What is expected of me?

Relevant Aspects of Integrity • Integrity of Ideas • Integrity of Claims • Integrity of Effort • Integrity of Convention • Integrity of the Self • Integrity of Methods • Integrity of Other Aims?

Challenges of the Doctoral Journey, Distinguishing originality and legacy, Taking or conferring ownership of ideas, Respecting the Integrity of Ideas, Keeping Track of voluminous Data, Persevering, Becoming an Expert, Recognising our Influences, Any objections?

Realms of Misconduct • Plagiarism • Collusion • Contract Cheating • Falsifying Evidence • Other? Explain the difference between these realms of misconduct. What are the challenges of avoiding this in Doctoral Study? Why do you think these behaviours happen? What support mechanisms are available to prevent these?

University Academic Issues & Misconduct Attribution and Ownership Flawed Methods Blurred Lines Idea Distortion Idea Conflation Situating the Self Convention

Research Skills Findings Sources Choosing Sources Reading Sources Managing Data

Paraphrasing • Summarising • Structuring • Evaluating • Compare & Contrast • Positioning • Debate • Critique • Referencing • Style • Frameworks • Ethical guidelines • Reporting Verbs • New Language • Definitions • Specialist Terms • Precision Language Use Convention Language skills Idea Control Writing Skills & Features

How about you? Language Use Convention Language skills

What are the key challenges for your particular doctorate?

Returning To Learning Where now?



## 5 CONCLUSIONS

"Integrity, socio-economic and political transformations, intercultural communication and gender equality in academic HE Institutions need to be promoted by proposing and drafting a new Law/Regulation and Guidelines for achieving a higher quality assurance and performance of the teaching staff in Universities. Leading Towards Sustainable Academic and cultural transformation cooperation Plans in Universities and research institutions by drafting joint Modules and integrating the existing ones in response to today's developments by looking at the best practices and policies of transformation that have occurred in Europe by sharing the best values to the best interest of our communities and people". Universities and Academia should precede with the application of radical and constructive transformations from within as the main source of education of the younger generations.

Starting from June 2020, several meetings and activities must be held in the framework of a new project, for which the first meeting is to be held in June 2021. The scope of the meeting is to introduce the work packages and planning of the necessary activities.

During the meetings in July and September, specific problems and needs should be discussed.

The objective of the second meeting is the discussion on the activities related to the second work package of the project: "Conducting a study on the impact of socio-economic and political transformations on the Educational Reform, intercultural communication and current situation of Gender Equality Plans relating it to rotation of elites and elections as well".

A series of meetings are to be held online during October to ensure the initiation and sustainability of the project even during pandemics. Activities will discuss the need to undertake exchange and multilateral meetings with valuable partners and colleagues in Europe in the context of the project to respond to new integration developments.

For the academic year 2021-2022, activities will aim at providing staff training with regard to Joint Modules with Partner Institution and discuss the Budget Plans in terms of Research. These training sessions will be held online, depending on the current situation, and most likely in four modules:

Module 1: Presentation with the concepts of a Radical Educational reform,

Module 2: Introduction of Integrity in HE Institutions and Gender Equality.

Module 3: The Context of Integration of HE Institutions and Necessary Reforms

Module 4: Budgeting

Different topics for mutual understanding in the context of the project

Proposal of Research plans for joint Modules

Academic activities, training

Multidisciplinary topics of integration matters, historical and current aspects of debate

Resolution and solution

In my opinion, culture unites people. That is why intercultural communication and discussion of common values should be at the core of integration and a more united Europe.

Participants in these training sessions will be members of the working group with integrity, mentors, administrative staff, interested members of the universities, and doctoral students.

In the context of increasing visibility, transparency and promoting participation in this training, information on the project and training will be organised in detail during the expected research planning period.



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Law no. 9131, dated 8.9.2003, "On the rules of ethics in public administration".

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Law no. 9367, dated 7.4.2005, "On the prevention of conflict of interest in the exercise of public functions" as amended.

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# **ABSTRACTS**



**Ignaz Bender**

President I.C.H.E., Former Rector University of Trier

**INVITED SPEAKER**

## **RANKING OF UNIVERSITIES - WHY CONTINENTAL EUROPEAN UNIVERSITIES - EXCEPT TU ZÜRICH - ARE NOT AMONG THE 25 HIGHEST RANKING UNIVERSITIES OF THE WORLD**

*Under the best ranked 25 universities of the world are 15 private universities, all based in North America. Five among the 25 are public universities in the United Kingdom. The majority of the 500 best universities of the world are public. The private status seems to be the first criteria for top universities.*

*The 25 best ranked universities are well funded and have (except Beijing University) a high degree of autonomy, further criteria for top universities. Basic research is also part of these universities.*

*On the European continent, German, French or Belgian Universities are not as rich as the 25 top universities. In addition, they differ in their nature from the best universities. In Germany basic research is organised outside the universities in special basic research units. In France, higher education is split in two organisational forms, in universities and in Grand ecoles. The elite of the country comes from the Grand ecoles. In the year 1968, many French universities were split into several universities (more than ten in Paris) which weakened the smaller institutions. In Belgium, because of ethnic differences between Flemish and French speaking people the famous university of Leuven was divided into the old Leuven and the French speaking University of Louvain. The former top library of Leuven was divided into two libraries. These are the reasons why Sorbonne (FRA), Munich and Berlin (GER) or Leuven (BEL) are not top ranked.*



**Arif Çağlar**

Steering Committee Member of ICHE

**INVITED SPEAKER**

## **ICHE AND ITS PIONEERING JOURNEY OF 40 YEARS**

*One of the longest-lived conferences in the higher education field globally, ICHE began its journey 40 years ago (7-10 December 1981, in Ankara, Turkey) through the efforts of Professor Ihsan Dogramaci, the doyen of Turkish Higher Education. 24 meetings were held in 16 countries on three continents. The current meeting is the 25th. This is the second time it is being held in Slovenia, the first time was in 2011 and again that was in Maribor.*

*Throughout its journey, the ICHE has been emphasising university values: academic freedom, institutional autonomy, accountability, social responsibility and equal access. The ICHE's past meetings have been far-sighted and witnessed a changing world and evolving Higher Education. This can be clearly seen in the themes of meetings ranging from university mission and values, ethics, governance, quality, structural organisations, to financing, market forces, globalisation, student mobility and internationalisation. As early as 1989, the privatisation of higher education, the entrepreneurial university and integration were among the discussion topics of the ICHE.*

*The international make-up of its steering committee and its commitment to being up-to-date as well as innovative have contributed to the ICHE's relevance and vitality. The ICHE, in the hands of capable new members, will continue to be a dynamic contributor to the future of Global Higher Education.*



**Franci Demšar, Nataša Kramar, Klemen Šubic**  
NAKVIS Slovenia

## **ONLINE EVALUATION AND ACCREDITATION: WHAT SHALL WE KEEP AFTER THE PANDEMIC?**

### **ABSTRACT**

*With the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic and the establishment of emergency remote teaching and learning, the Agency also faced new challenges. After the initial cancellation of all evaluation visits, the Agency started conducting online evaluation visits following the annual plan and ENQA recommendations. In order to facilitate and successfully prepare the Agency produced its Recommendations for Higher Education Institutions and Groups of Experts, more detailed Guidelines, which were updated in September 2020 after the first cycle of visits and analysis of the satisfaction questionnaire, and Technical Guidelines.*

*As the current situation still does not allow a permanent return to the classic forms of teaching and education, we recommend to HEIs the review of good practices and their inclusion in the regular pedagogical-research process. It is also necessary to ensure proper self-evaluation of the process and potential adjustment of quality assurance in the implementation of study programs.*

*At the same time, the Agency is already considering the future of evaluations, the preservation of good practices and their inclusion in other procedures. We are also intensively cooperating with other agencies in the European Higher Education Area and preparing joint approaches to the new way of working. We strive to continuously improve our work, both in the field of organisation and implementation, and communication, as online evaluation visits will to some extent certainly be one of the ways of working even after the end of the Covid-19 pandemic.*

**Keywords:** Covid-19, evaluations, European Higher Education Area



**Stane Božičnik**

University of Maribor, Faculty of Civil Engineering Transportation Engineering and Architecture

## **DIGITALISATION OF THE LABOUR THEORY OF VALUE – PROBLEM OR SOLUTION FOR MANKIND**

### **ABSTRACT**

*The theory of value deals with the basic problem of economics endeavouring to explain the relationship between the value and the prices of goods and services. Price can be also defined as the quantity of monetarily expressed value. The crucial question of economic theory is why goods and services are priced as they are, what is the correct price, and what is the origin of the value. Economic theory has so far developed two basic approaches: the subjective and the intrinsic theory of value. The subjective theory of value argues that the value of goods or services depends upon consumer tastes and preferences. The consumer selects from the market the purchases that provide them with the most benefit, and their self-interest leads them (without conscious calculation) to purchase an amount of goods such that marginal utility is as close as possible to the market price. According to the intrinsic theory of value, the value (prices) of goods and services are not a function of subjective judgement. The value is contained in the item itself. The labour theory of value, as part of the intrinsic theories of value, argues that the amount of "socially necessary labour" (including embodied labour) needed for production determines the value of goods and services. The labour theory of value suggests that the quantity and quality of consumed human psychophysical energy is the basis of the value of the goods. Two commodities will be traded for the same price (exchange value) provided they embody the same amount of labour time (psychophysical energy). Concrete measurement of the quantity and quality of the needed psychophysical energy (labour time) for production of different products and services was one of the problems in the field of implementation of the labour theory of value in practice. Digitalisation and modern technology are solving this problem. Microsoft patented a patent titled 'Cryptocurrency System Using Body Data Activity'. The patented system uses human biometrics such as body heat and brain-wave activity (used psychophysical energy) to mine cryptocurrency. The human body activity represents "proof-of-work" which is achieved when a user (worker) performs given tasks, or even online activities, such as viewing ads and using search engines. As to how body activity and biometrics will be communicated to servers and cryptocurrency hardware, the patent explains that "a sensor communicatively coupled to or comprised in the device of the user may sense the body activity of the user." The patented solution enables the total control of worker activity and simplifies the calculation of wages. This patent, on the other hand, if misused, represents a danger for all mankind, most likely paving the way towards modern slavery.*

**Keywords:** Theory of value, digitalisation, workers



**Rasto Ovin**

DOBA Fakulteta za uporabne poslovne in družbene študije Maribor

## **LEADING A FORMAL RESEARCH GROUP IN A DIGITAL ENVIRONMENT**

### **ABSTRACT**

*The Covid – 19 crisis abruptly pushed forward the digital approach, including in the field of higher education. Here, institutions with at least some online technology expertise could leverage their advantage. So, their teaching staff and students did not face such a shocking experience as faced by those with a strictly traditional concept of study. Especially throughout 2020, literature brought vivid discussions on the damage that such a sudden change of conditions could have on the quality of study. Interactive learning especially requires solid knowledge and technology expertise if it is to be carried out in the online environment. Additionally, in the field of research in higher education, the COVID – 19 crisis brought changes especially by cancelling the very important personal contact of researchers within research groups and projects. On the other hand, however, cancellation of meetings and contacts brought a new challenge to research groups and the leadership of communities. Especially “noise” appearing in each teamwork situation emerges for different reasons, manifesting differently and requiring different leadership approach to maintain team progress. The paper addresses the main differences in leadership approaches as experienced by the author whilst acting as an academic leader in a classical and in a digital environment. The general conclusion is that the digital environment requires more personal engagement with management and leadership.*

**Keywords:** Covid 19, knowledge and technology expertise, research



**Maruša Hauptman Komotar**

AMEU – ISH

## **QUALITY ASSURANCE OF INTERNATIONALISATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION: SLOVENIA IN THE COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE OF WESTERN BALKANS COUNTRIES**

### **ABSTRACT**

*This presentation addresses the relationship between internationalisation and quality assurance in higher education from the perspective of quality assurance of internationalisation in Slovenia and seven Western Balkan countries (Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, Northern Macedonia, Kosovo, Albania). To this end, it questions how the quality of internationalisation is assured, assessed and measured at the national and institutional level of higher education systems in Slovenia and the Western Balkans countries. Initially, it highlights the broader European-level development of initiatives and tools in this field over the past two decades. On this basis, it provides a proper starting point for exploring policies, strategies, activities, instruments and other initiatives aimed at ensuring the quality of internationalisation in Slovenian higher education. Afterwards, it places the Slovenian example in the comparative framework of the higher education systems and institutions of the Western Balkans, identifies similarities and differences in their development and implementation at the national and institutional level of higher education, and explains why they actually appear. In conclusion, it highlights the need to consider the unique characteristics of diverse (supra-) national, institutional and disciplinary environments, which either encourage or hinder the development of policies and practices aimed at ensuring the quality of internationalisation. Methodologically, the presentation is based on a (critical) analysis of various documentary sources, findings from semi-structured interviews with various stakeholders and actors working in the field of internationalisation and quality assurance in selected countries, and expert interviews. Research results derive from the postdoctoral research project (Z5-2658), funded by the Slovenian Research Agency.*

**Keywords:** *quality assurance of internationalisation, Slovenia, Western Balkans, comparison*



**Ridvana Mediu, Ntovolis Kostandinos**  
University College Logos Albania

## **IMPLEMENTATION OF E-LEARNING IN MEDICAL EDUCATION AS AN INNOVATIVE PROJECT FOR BETTER RESULTS AFTER THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

### **ABSTRACT**

*E-learning is a method of working with students which became an important element of contemporary academic education especially due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The aim of this paper is to analyse the implementation of e-learning in medical education, exemplified by classes in basic medical sciences. Our University College offers Bachelor and Professional Master studies in medical laboratory science. In our opinion, the organisation of the teaching process, with the use of electronic contents in all education processes and also in medicine training, is not only a response because due to COVID-19 or the demand of contemporary students, but most of all a proof of the high awareness of medicine teachers regarding the possibility of using technological solutions in education, which doesn't appear as an obvious use after COVID-19 and comes with many concerns about the quality of the education that is provided. By presenting our experience, and the advantages and disadvantages of the e-learning method we can encourage educational institutions that offer medical science studies to implement innovative teaching methods for better results. The field research has taken place in the institutions and will consist of interviews with people involved in the development of the e-learning strategy. The opinions of teachers and researchers are particularly interesting and useful because student mobility always comes after the establishment of links between teachers and researchers who cooperate with their foreign colleagues.*

**Keywords:** e-learning, distance education, medical education, implementation



**Glediana Zeneli**

Department of Applied Statistics and Informatics, Faculty of Economics, University of Tirana

**Arsen Benga**

Department of Engineering and Technology, American College of the Middle East Kuwait

## **ALBANIAN STUDENT'S PERCEPTION ABOUT ONLINE LEARNING UNDER THE CONDITIONS OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

### **ABSTRACT**

*The measurements taken worldwide in order to tackle the spread of the COVID-19 virus caused a direct disruption to the higher education institutions as all their activities were transferred to the online mode. This is a great challenge for the students, who, in addition to the pandemic situation and economic hardships, have to deal with a new learning environment, tools and methodologies. Given that their approaches to learning are influenced by this situation, we aim to examine the Albanian student's perception about the transition to the new learning environment. This study offers several implications for educational institutions and policy makers offering online learning at a higher level.*

**Keywords:** Online learning, student's perception, pandemic situation





**Venisha Jenifer Dmello, Ambigai Rajendran**

Department of Commerce, Mahe. Manipal India

## **ADOPTION OF UNIFIED THEORY OF ACCEPTANCE AND USE OF TECHNOLOGY (UTAUT) IN ANALYSING THE EMERGENCE OF E-LEARNING AT HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS – A STUDY OF THE LEARNER’S PERSPECTIVE**

### **ABSTRACT**

*The integration of information and communication technology into the education sector has emerged as the eminent medium for learning. Massive benefits and rapid advancement of the technology has promoted the growth of online courses. However, the literature has evidenced the lower acceptance, lower completion and higher attrition rates of the online courses. Therefore, evaluation of online courses is vital for successful implementation, adoption and retention of the learner. The current study aims to examine the role of government policy in implementing and promoting online courses and evaluate the significant factors that enhances the adoption and retention levels of the e-learners. A preliminary study was conducted on a sample of 102 learners. The descriptive analysis of the data shows that YouTube was the commonly known platform among the students. KOLB learning style was used to assess the type of learning style, and the majority of the respondents emerged as divergent learners. Addressing the proposed research objectives contributes to giving constructive feedback to policy framers and various higher education institutions which are on the verge of implementing the e-learning platforms. Understanding the learner's perspective aids in overcoming the challenges faced in retaining learners in the e-learning platforms and assists the e-learning marketers to float courses in accordance with the learner's requirements and maximise the retention levels among the learners.*

**Keywords:** Success factors, E-learning, Learner Retention, Higher education.



**Adriana Dervishaj**  
University of Tirana

## **INTEGRITY, SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL TRANSFORMATIONS, INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION AND GENDER EQUALITY IN ACADEMIC HE INSTITUTIONS NEED TO BE PROMOTED BY PROPOSING AND DRAFTING A NEW LAW/REGULATION AND GUIDELINES FOR ACHIEVING A HIGHER QUALITY ASSURANCE**

### **ABSTRACT**

*Reform in academic institutions and society at large is currently essential in the context of the overall integration of our institutions into the EU. Having been involved in projects and participating in conferences and working groups introducing 'Integrity' in public institutions has been a stimulus for applying it firstly in our daily professional life in the universities and then throughout all aspects of life in our country. Historically, integrity has been inherent and rooted in the inner world and behaviour of educated people in our country. Economic and political transformations have somewhat changed the way people look at values they once thought were more important than any material gain or personal interest. "Integrity, socio-economic and political transformations, intercultural communication and gender equality in academic HE Institutions need to be promoted by proposing and drafting a new Law/Regulation and Guidelines for achieving a higher quality assurance and performance of the teaching staff in universities. Leading Towards Sustainable Academic and cultural transformation cooperation Plans in Universities and research institutions by drafting joint Modules and integrating the existing ones in response to today's developments by looking at the best practices and policies of transformation that have occurred in Europe by sharing the best values to the best interest of our communities and peoples". Universities and Academia should precede with the application of radical and constructive transformations from within as the main source of education of the younger generations.*

**Keywords:** Integrity, research activities, Sustainable Academic transformation



# INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

## PREVIOUS MEETINGS

Maribor, Slovenia	2021	Competitiveness in Higher Education
New York City, USA	2015	Quality of Undergraduate Education
Tel Aviv, Israel	2014	Globalisation and Integration in Higher Education
Ankara, Turkey	2011	Quality in Higher Education
Trier, Germany	2010	University Values - University Integrity
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia	2008	The Role of the University in Bridging Civilisations
Cluj Napoca, Romania	2007	The Cultural Mission of the University
Ankara, Turkey	2005	Strengths and Weaknesses of Public and Private Universities
Luxembourg	2004	Fundraising for Universities
Krakow, Poland	2002	Data Accessibility and Protection: Legal and Ethical Issues
Irbid-Amman, Jordan	2001	The Impact of Higher Education on the Development of Community and Society
Maribor, Slovenia	2000	Ethical Considerations in Research and Teaching
Prague, Czech Republic	1999	Comparability of Academic Qualifications - Managing the Accreditation Process
Qingdao, China	1998	Supply and Demand for Higher Education in the Market Economy
Leicester, UK	1997	Managing Global Co-operation in Higher Education
Ankara, Turkey	1996	Increasing Flexibility in University Financing
Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada	1995	Balancing Teaching and Research
Marseille, France	1994	Managing the Autonomous University
Stockholm, Sweden-Turku, Finland	1993	Staffing Issues in Higher Education
Washington, DC, USA	1992	Funding in Higher Education
Edinburgh, UK	1991	Buffer Institutions in Higher Education
Maastricht, The Netherlands	1990	Multiversity vs Specialised University
Trier, Germany	1989	University Leadership
Ankara, Turkey	1988	University Governance-II
Ankara, Turkey	1981	University Governance-I

# STUDY PROGRAMS ACCREDITED AT AMEU ECM

UNDERGRADUATE STUDIES	GRADUATE STUDIES	DOCTORAL STUDIES
SOCIAL GERONTOLOGY	SOCIAL GERONTOLOGY	SOCIAL GERONTOLOGY
HUMANITIES	HUMANITIES	HUMANITIES
DIGITAL HUMANITIES <sup>‡</sup>	DIGITAL HUMANITIES <sup>‡</sup>	
MANAGEMENT	PROJECT MANAGEMENT	STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT
	EUROPEAN BUSINESS STUDIES	PROJECT MANAGEMENT
	INNOVATIVE MANAGEMENT IN TOURISM <sup>‡</sup>	
PHYSIOTHERAPY	HEALTH SCIENCES Nursing, Public Health, Physiotherapy, Integrative Health Sciences, Autism, Logopedia	PHYSIOTHERAPY
NURSING		
ARCHIVAL SCIENCES	ARCHIVAL STUDIES AND RECORD MANAGEMENT	ARCHIVAL SCIENCES
	ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES	
DANCE, CHOREOGRAPHY	DANCE STUDIES	
WEB AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES	WEB SCIENCES <sup>‡</sup> Cyber Security and Artificial Intelligence	WEB SCIENCES <sup>‡</sup> Cyber Security and Artificial Intelligence

<sup>‡</sup> in the accreditation process