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FINAC
 FINancial management,
 Accounting & Controlling
 in public administration

Financial Management, Accounting and Controlling curricula development for capacity building of public administration

EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT

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The report is the outcome of the project activity "6.3. External quality control by external expert", and covers the project lifetime until January 31st, 2018. The evaluation is based on a variety of inputs. All materials on the project Web site and internal documents have been analysed. Furthermore, the evaluator conducted a series of information obtained in communication with representatives of the project consortium members. This report provides the expert opinion on the status and progress of the FINancial management, Accounting and Controlling for capacity building of public administration project, as well as the set of recommendations on how to further improve the implementation of the project activities and avoid some obstacles or weak points.

The project has been designed to contribute the higher quality of budgeting, money management, finance management, accounting and control, in Albanian and Serbian public administration. The aim of the project should be achieved throughout meeting specific objectives: firstly the designing and developing three new master degree programmes in Serbia and two new master degree programmes in Albania in the field of financial management, accounting and controlling for capacity building of public administration in Albania and Serbia, secondly the provision of trainings at university centres / institutes for public administration employees in Serbia, and thirdly modernisation of one master degree programme in the field of public financial management in Serbia.

To fulfill the aim of the project, the project team have undertaken a range of activities. Thus FINAC project have contributed to the better quality of financial management, accounting and controlling in the public administration. That has been possible to measure through: knowledge/competencies of public administrators at positions of financial, accounting, auditing and control managers; precise and visible budget formulated in line with national legal framework; level of cash liquidity in public administration; financial management that defines responsibilities and power in public administration; accounting statements reflecting internal and external standards that are in line with policy documents in public administration and throughout financial control procedures that are in line with controlling policy for documentation in public administration. The project tried to contribute to the better controlling procedure and higher level of transparency of finance and accounting in public administration according to national priorities, as well principles of the EU accession of the regional countries.

Thus the specific activities the project would be: 1. Mapping & reporting about current capacities of public administration employees in Albania & Serbia (WP. 1.). 2. Knowledge



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exchange at the EU partner institutions (WP. 2.). 3. Developing & accreditation of master degree programmes in Albania & Serbia (WP. 3.). 4. Implementation of master degree programmes at universities in Albania & Serbia (WP. 4.). 5. Development and implementation of short term trainings at university centres / institutes (WP. 5.). 6. Project quality control & monitoring (WP. 6.). 7. Project dissemination & exploitation (WP. 7.). The WP. 8. activity has been the project management.

The primary target group of the project is the academic community of the economic and organisational sciences (teachers, students, administrative staff and management), especially those academics who develop the new master programmes and those students who want to be participate in the new higher education programme. The target group of the project are the scientific research institutions, as well, because the curricula of the programmes would be based on international and domestic researches. A main target group are the bodies of the public administration in the Republic of Serbia and in Albania. The new model master programmes could help build administrative capacities in these countries, the public finance management could be more effective as a result of the institutionalisation of the new master programmes. Therefore the industry and civil services and the whole society will benefit directly or indirectly from the project actions, because of the more effective administrations (the effectiveness of public administration could be improved by these new, highly educated officials who are trained by these master programmes). The R&D activities in the field of business studies and organisational sciences could be improved by this project as well, because the development of the materials of teaching is based on R&D activities, and the newly trained experts can do new ways of research, as well.

The partnership in the project corresponds very well to the objectives of the FINAC project. The coordinator of the project is the University of Belgrade (especially the Faculty of Organisational Sciences – UB). The participants have given the highest level of priority to the initiative to prepare the project application. All these institutions are aware of an utmost importance of management studies for higher education (HE) in the West Balkan region and of the urgency to undertake necessary measures. The proposed Consortium is led by the UB, ensuring in such a way an impact of the project results at the national level and involvement of the most important Serbian and Albanian higher education institutions (HEI's) in the field of management of public finances (in Serbia: University of Kragujevac – UNIKG –, State University of Novi Pazar – SUNP –, Belgrade Metropolitan University – BMU (former Singidum University, the partner switch was approved by EACEA), FEFA /Faculty of Economics, Finance and Administration/ University, Belgrade; in Albania: University of Shkodra “Luigj Gurakuqi” – UNISHK –, European University of Tirana – UET). Because the aim of the project is the capacity building of the public



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administration by the higher education training and by the short-term training of public administration experts, an important partner of the project is the Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government. The project is supported by an independent multidisciplinary research centre, by the Centre for Education Policy. The consortium is international one: the main aim of the project is to develop new master programmes in the Republic of Serbia and in Albania, but the consortium tried to fulfill based on a wide international cooperation. The foreign partners have been selected to improve the knowledge transfer: none partner is from an “old” EU Member States, from Italy (Università degli studi “Guglielmo Marconi”, Rome, Italy – USGM), two from Eastern Central European new Member Countries (Masaryk University, Brno, Czechia – MU – and Matej Bel University, Banská Bystrica, Slovakia – MBU) and one partner is from a new Member State of the West Balkan region (University of Split, Croatia – UNIST).

Activities that should be implemented to October 14th, 2019 in accordance with the work plan and work packages will be presented in the following text.

W(orking) P(ackage). 1. Mapping & reporting about current capacities of public administration employees in Albania & Serbia

Within Working package 1 of the FINAC project eight reports have been envisaged as project deliverables based on agreed research exercise (four reports for Serbia and four reports for Albania): Report 1.1: Mapping of current level of knowledge of employees in public administration in the field of financial management, accounting and control; Report 1.2: Mapping of current qualification structure of public administration employees in financial management, accounting and control activities; Report 1.3: Teaching outcomes and harmonization of national strategies and EU directives in public administration; Report 1.4: Mapping of knowledge and expertise of trainers at the regional partner universities.

The reports were based on different methods: the report 1.1 was based on a mixed-method research. Quantitative segment had a form of an on-line survey – participants were provided with a link to an on-line questionnaire. Qualitative part, in its data gathering segment, was done in a form of semi-structured interviews. Within data analysis both sources of information were complementary used to provide findings that depict the prevalence of certain phenomena, but also the meaning that interviewees attach to them. The report 1.2 was based on an online survey questionnaire, the report 1.3 was based on the analysis of the literature and the legal regulation and the report 1.4 was based on an on-line survey questionnaire. The research was coordinated and the reports were written and edited by the Centre for Educational Policy from



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Belgrade, Serbia. For the part of the research conducted in Albania, the main partner was the European University of Tirana - its representatives were responsible for the planning and execution of various segments of the research process. The research has been based on the methodology of the European comparative studies, especially the former pre-Accession reports. The reports are based mainly on the questionnaires, because the official data and the former researches had different approach and those data are hardly compatible. Although the methodology is clear, the representativeness was satisfying, but the examined time window could be longer. The report was defined as an evidence based analysis, but it could be more based on the comparative analysis of the project (thus the connection between the comparative, knowledge exchange based side of the project and the empirical analysis could have been a bit stronger). Although the connection between the WP 1 and other WPs could have been strengthened but this independency is has been a strong quality control element: the reports were based on a research of an independent research centre thus it could be partly interpreted as an internal quality management element of the project.

The Working Project fulfilled the requirement of the publicity as well. The publicity of the reports have had different levels. First of all, it was available for the project participants, thus it could be a base for the development of the master projects. Secondly, it was shared with the decision makers therefore the findings of the reports could be utilized by the development of the public sector in Albania and in Serbia. Thirdly, the reports are widely available for the scientific community, therefore it can be used for the comparative public sector analysis. The research has been displayed in the social media, as well: as it will be present in the analysis of the WP. 7.5. distribution of country reports - the findings of the WP. 1, as well – were disseminated by social media tools (Facebook page, LinkedIn etc.), as well.

W(orking) P(ackage). 2. Knowledge exchange at the EU partner institutions

The project has been based on a strong international cooperation and one of the core element of the project is the knowledge exchange at the EU partner institutions. The project planned a very wide international collaboration. As I have mentioned earlier, the collaborator partners were from an “old” (“founder”) Member of the European Union (from Italy), from two Eastern Central European (ECE) new member states (from Czech Republic and Slovakia) and one from a new West Balkan member states if the European Union (from Croatia). This wide collaboration was based on the effective knowledge transfer. The hypothesis of the project was that the international patterns could not copy directly to another country because the given countries have specialities and their economy, society and their administration and education are different.



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The partners were selected to collect the most applicable solutions and to develop an effective knowledge transfer. The classical methods and models of the European Union in the field of public finances and in the field of the education of the financial management, accounting and controlling could be observed in Italy, which is a founder member state of the European integration. Thus the “Guglielmo Marconi” University (USGM) in Rome offers good practices for the Serbia and Albanian partners. It could be an advantageous element of the collaboration, that this university is a relative new one, it was founded in 2004. Therefore their experiences to develop new financial master programs are relatively up-to-date. Although this advantage is partly a disadvantage: their experiences are from the 21st century and they could not give experiences on the accommodation to the changing environment and on the change management of the modernisation of the master programmes.

The two partners from the Eastern Central European region are the Masaryk University in Brno (Czech Republic) and the Matej Bel University in Banska Bystrica. These universities have been founded during the 20th century and they have long tradition in the field of public administration programmes, especially in the field of education of public finances. One of the most significant European professors of public administration, Prof. Dr. Juraj Nemeč is professor at both universities. The homeland of these higher education institutions could have enough knowledge on the accession to the European Union as post-socialist states. These Visegrád countries have had similar social, economic and political challenges like Serbia.

The other partner is the University of Split. Croatia is the newest member state of the European Union and it is a West Balkan country which was a member state of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, thus their public finance experiences are very similar to the Serbian (and to Albanian, as well) situation.

Therefore the network of the collaboration was planned very carefully, it could result that the specialities, the experiences of the accession procedure and the challenges of the new public finance system can be changed.

Therefore the network was appropriate and the planned forms of cooperation was ambitious, as well. It was planned regional visits which includes meetings, presentations and informal knowledge exchange. Firstly the delegates of the participant universities from Serbia visited the project’s partner institutions in Albania on April 24-29, 2017. The coordination meetings took place in Tirana and Shkodra and were organized by project team member from European University of Tirana and Shkodra University "Luigj Gurakuqi". This regional visit could be



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interpreted as a conference, as well. However it was focused on the academic knowledge transfer, but a meeting with the “costumers” have been organized: the leaders of the Albanian Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Innovation attended at several meetings.

Three study visits were organized till January 31st 2018: 1st: June 2017, University of Split, Split, Croatia, 2nd: September 2017, Marconi University, Rome, Italy, and 3rd December 2017, Matej Bel University, Banska Bystrica. Fourth study visit to Masaryk University was on schedule for February 2018. One regional visit was organized in Serbia in November 2017. These visits are primarily based on the formal types of knowledge exchange, they could be primarily interpreted as scientific conferences. Presentations are held by the experts of the partner institutions, these presentations are available for the academic community and several presentations have been published. Various topics are discussed: the theoretical background, the practical experiences of the education and trainings. If we look at the topics of the presentations the whole spectra of the public finance education is covered by them. I have just one **remark**: although the integrity issue is especially important in these countries, the topics of the presentation on the education and training on integrity have been not as crucial as it could be. The presentation was not based on the scientific questions of the development of master programmes, but the academic administration and management have been an important element of the knowledge exchange. Therefore several presentations were on the management and administrative challenges and tasks of the development of new higher education (especially master) programmes.

Secondly, these regional and study visits were important element of the project management, as well. The Steering Committee of the Project has meetings during these visits.

Thirdly, it is shown by the minutes and the documentation of the study and regional visits, that the informal knowledge exchange is an important element of these events. Thus the networking and strengthening of the connections between the academics – and partly between the public administration officers and experts – is a significant aim and element of these programmes. It could be highlighted that these connections are very important and these events have a multiplicative impact as well, because the networks of the partners can be connected, thus a large scientific and professional network has evolved by the aid of this project. (Practically, universities from Slovenia, Romania, Portugal and other institutions from Slovakia and Italy are affected by this network.)

The timing of the regional and study visits follows the annex of the grant agreement. The accountability and the publicity of these visits are provided by the publication of the minutes of



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the meetings and by the publication of the presentations. These documents are available at the homepage of the project and several important information have been shared by the newsletter of the projects. The major information and data have been published at the social media, as well.

Thus it can be stated, that the goals of the project is not only fulfilled but it can be stated that the group partly over-fulfilled. This was based on the extensive networks of the partners which have been partly involved to the fulfillment of the goals of the project (especially the NISPAcee, which is presided by Prof. Juraj Nemec and the extensive network of the University of Belgrade).

WP 3 and WP 4 are closely related to each other. Therefore, it is rational to analyse them together.

W(orking) P(ackage). 3. Developing & accreditation of master degree programmes in Albania & Serbia

W(orking) P(ackage). 4. Implementation of master degree programmes at universities in Albania & Serbia

The main goal of the project has been the design and development of 3 new master degree programmes in Serbia and 2 new master degree programmes in Albania in the field of financial management, accounting and controlling for capacity building of public administration in Albania and Serbia. Therefore the WP 3 and the WP 4 can be interpreted as the key elements of the project. The WP 1 and WP 2 is practically the background for the WP 3 and 4. The requirements, needs and demands were surveyed by the activities of WP 1, thus the “customer’s demands” were reviewed. The international experiences have been collected by the WP 2. The development and implementation of the master programme should be based on the demands of the public administration and it should be apply the most recent results and methods of the administrative sciences and business studies.

These activities – as the key elements of the Erasmus+ project – has a longer time window. Therefore the activities have not been fully completed, but it can be stated, that the implementation follows the planned timetable. In this chapter I would like to review the procedure and the fulfilled elements of the Working Packages.

The main goal was to design and develop 3 master degree programmes in Serbia and 2 in Albania.



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Firstly, the formal fulfillment of this goal has been reviewed. The master programme “FINancial management, Accounting and Controlling for capacity building of public administration” of the University of Belgrade has been accredited by the decision No. 612-00-02775/2017-06 (dated at January 19th 2018) of the Commission for Accreditation and Quality Control of the Republic of Serbia. The master programme is accredited for 35 students a year. The master programme “Capacity building and development in the public sector” (15 students/year, master of economies – MA) has been accredited by the decision No. 612-00-02776/2017-06 (dated at January 19th 2018) of the Commission for Accreditation and Quality Control of the Republic of Serbia, as well.

As in February 2018 the following accreditation procedure are in progress in the Republic of Serbia: University of Kragujevac – master degree programme “Financial management of public utilities” (30 students/year, master of economies – MA).

In Serbia one master degree programme has been modernized: the (general) master of economies (MA) programme of the Metropolitan University of Belgrade, where new facultative subjects have been developed and introduced: the business negotiation, the global economic and business trends, the green economy, the decision making on investments, the business revision, the financial risk management and especially the financial management and control.

As in January 2018 the accreditation procedure of the University of Shkodra “Luigj Gurakuqi” on a master degree programme in financial management accounting and auditing in public administration is in progress in Albania. The European University of Tirana has not been submitted a request for accreditation till the January 31st 2018.

In Serbia one master programme is accredited and the accreditation procedure for two master degree procedures are in progress, in Albania one accreditation procedure is in progress. Therefore in Serbia the fulfilment of the project basically follows the timetable, but in Albania a small delay can be observed for The European University of Tirana.

Secondly I tried to review the internal elements of the master programmes have been reviewed. It could be stated, that the development and design of these programmes were firstly based on the statement of the capacity reports on the Serbian and Albanian public administrations. These reports stated that the experts in public administration have been trained in general economic university (after the Bologna system: master) programmes and partly general public administration college and university (in the Bologna system: bachelor and



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master) programmes. These former programmes were focused on the management, finance and controlling of the private sector, the specialities of the government sector are trained by these general programmes just partially. The specialities of the public sector requires a new type of education as it was highlighted by the knowledge exchange, as well. Therefore new subjects have been developed – focused on the special accounting regulation of the public sector, the specialities of the public utilities and the management of the services of the government sector, the public-private partnership and the administration and management of public procurement. The development and the design have had a solid background: the researches of the partner institutions were the base for these activities (for example the coordinator of the project has several significant and internationally well-recognised researches on the specialities of the public-procurement and PPP).

The Serbian structures of the programmes have a well-built structure. The master programme of the University of Belgrade could be interpreted as a general public finance master programme. This general program has the largest number of the students: 35 students will be educated by this programme. This programme was accredited firstly, thus the education can be begin firstly. The master programmes of the University of Kragujevac and the State University of Novi Pazar focuses on given special fields of the public finances. The master programme of the University of Kragujevac focuses on the management of the public utilities and the organisation and provision of the public services and major point of the master programme of the State University of Novi Pazar is the capacity building in the public sector. Thus a general public finance training programme is supplemented by two special programmes. This structure refers to the results of the capacity report and try to strengthen the capacity of the public administration of the Republic of Serbia.

Thirdly, the structures of the given programmes have been reviewed. I would like to note that my opinion is related to the proposed programs till the end of the observed period (primarily till January 31st 2018). These programmes follows the curricula of the modern public finance educations in Europe. The development and design of the curricula are based on the capacity report and the international knowledge exchange. The majority of the presentations were based on the development of these curricula. However the international patterns have been followed, the Serbian and Albanian partner institutions tried to pay attention to the specialities of the Serbian and Albanian public finance and public administration. If we look at the curricula it can be stated, that several specialities of the post-socialist states and the states of the West Balkan regions could be taken into account stronger. (These elements will be reviewed by the recommendations of the external evaluation).



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As a quality management element, the accreditation procedure can be interpreted as an official quality management procedure provided by an external body, by an authority. Therefore the accreditation procedures provide another external evaluation, as well. The modernisation of a master programme does not require the consensus of the Serbian accreditation committee, therefore it has not an external evaluation by an authority. If we look at the modernisation of the master programme of the Metropolitan University of Belgrade, it is a supplementation of a general economy and business master program with several subjects on the specialities of the public finances and management. These subjects are facultative subjects.

Therefore the key elements of the projects have been fulfilled or their fulfilment is in progress. The programmes in Serbia have a well-built structure and the modernisation of the programme at the Metropolitan University of Belgrade refers to the changes and challenges of the business education.

W(orking) P(ackage). 5. Development and implementation of short term trainings at university centers/institutes

The WP 5 refers to the result of the survey in the WP 1 and partly to the knowledge exchange of WP 2. It is strongly connected to the WP 3 and 4. WP 3 and 4 is a long-term capacity building: a master programme is a 2-4 semester long programme and the numbers of the students are limited (in Serbia at the three university 80 student per year). Therefore the master programmes are not the only answer to the capacity building of the public administration. Thus the second specific goal of the project was of the provision of trainings at university centres/institutes for public administration employees in Serbia.

Therefore the project team – particularly the Belgrade Metropolitan University – organised short term trainings for strengthen the capacity of the experts in Serbia. These trainings were held in autumn and winter 2017. The first one was on the financial managing and control in the public sector (which was held November 16th and 17th 2017), the second was on the internal and external audit in the public sector (which was held November 23rd and 24th 2017), the third was on the risk management in the public sector (which was held on December 15th 2017) and the fourth was on the programme budgeting (which was held December 21st 2017). In Albania the training have been prepared, the preparatory meetings were held during the summer and autumn 2017.

The short trainings were focused on those topics, which are important element of the projects co-financed by the European Union, thus the Serbian public administration could prepare to the



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receiving of the EU funds. The knowledge of these topics are required for understanding the operation and management of these resources, which are practically based on the program (project) budgeting, which are strongly audited internally and externally and the control mechanism are based on the risk management.

The syllabuses of the Serbian trainings are available on the homepage of the project and the presentations and other materials are available on the closed network/intranet, but they are practically widely available for the administrative officers.

Therefore this goal was fulfilled in Serbia. The materials were primarily developed by the Belgrade Metropolitan University, and the trainings were held at Belgrade Metropolitan University. The trainings were organised by the Belgrade Metropolitan University and by the Human Resource Management Service of the Republic of Serbia. Thus wide range of the civil servants from Serbia participated at these trainings.

Therefore in Serbia the goals of the WP 5 were fulfilled and a wide range of the civil servants got useful information on these new model of public finances. Thus the logic of the operation of the EU funds could be understood better by the Serbian civil servants and the absorption of the EU pre-accession funds can be encouraged.

W(orking) P(ackage). 6. Project quality control and monitoring

As a project which is co-financed by the European Union internal and external quality control is required. The kick-off meeting of the quality control was held at Belgrade on November 24-25 2016. This kick-off meeting focused on the evaluation of the events. The Steering Committee passed a Quality control plan. The responsible partner for the quality control became the University of Split.

This plan (which was passed on November 24th and 25th 2016) defined a two-pillar system which is based on the grant agreement, the EU regulation on the quality management of the projects co-financed by the EU and on the decision of the participant organisations.

The first pillar of the quality control is the internal evaluation which has two elements. Firstly the events are evaluated especially by anonymous questionnaire. The main elements of the questionnaire are defined by the plan. The plan is relatively abstract and general and the event evaluation questionnaire follows the general evaluation model of the projects co-financed by the EU. It could be interpreted as a value, because the evaluation of the events could be



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compared by the evaluation of other projects but the specialities could just partially analysed by this pattern. The second element of the internal evaluation was the project evaluation. The plan defined that the internal project evaluation should be done by the meeting of the Steering Committee in Split during June 2017. A Steering Committee evaluation was done on the meeting at Rome in September 2017. It is stated by the reports, "that the overall picture shows that the quality of the of FINAC project management and its activities is located at the level of high or very high out of grades defined from: 1 (very low) to 5 (very high) which is the result we can be absolutely satisfied with."

The Quality Control Plan was fully revised by the meeting of the Steering Committee in Banska Bystrica December 3-6 2017. The revised plan is much more specific and clear, and the indicators of the quality control are defined clearly. The responsibilities of the project coordinators and the Steering Committee and the WP leaders are defined clearly. A new, multilevel internal evaluation system was introduced by the revised plan and the indicators of the quality management have been defined. Thus the second plan has a significant additional value, the system of the quality control became more precise. However a new, more clear and precise model have been introduced but the definition of the indicators are relatively abstract, which could be developed by the further amendments of the plan (the amendment procedure of the plan is defined by the revised plan, as well).

The first and the second plan define the external evaluation as the second pillar of the quality control and monitoring. The first plan is strongly based on the EU regulation and three forms of external evaluation are defined by the plan. The first one is the evaluation by an external expert (which is this report), the second one is the evaluation by the national Erasmus+ office and the third one is the external financial evaluation. The first plan is based on the general rules of the EU regulation and has only a few project specific elements. The revised plan concretised these forms of evaluation as well and the external expert was chosen.

The revised plan has been followed by the Steering Committee Report which has been presented at the Meeting of the Steering Committee at Masaryk University in Brno (February 11-14 2018).

W(orking) P(ackage). 7. Project dissemination & exploitation

The Implementation of the project dissemination has been provided through five work packages that will contribute to higher level of visibilities of project deliverables after the dissemination and sustainability plan of the project.



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Therefore this master degree programmes and trainings will be promoted and all interested parties will be informed about project outcomes: I. Throughout public administration publications, II. At the educational fair stands, III. Conferences (national and international) dedicated to issues of public administration, IV. By disclosing information at the University/Faculty websites, V. Through social networks, like LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook page.

The dissemination of FINAC project activities and results, have been implemented through: 1. Project newsletter, to be sent regularly via e-mail, 2. FINAC website platform for exchange of knowledge, expertise, baseline measurement reports, papers, brochures, assessment reports, 3. Presence through addressing of Ministry representatives in media space, 4. Presence at the educational fair stands representatives of project teams with promoting words and materials, 5. Participation at the international and domestic Conferences dedicated to issues of public administration of project partner teams and representatives, 6. University/Faculty websites with information about accredited master degree programmes, 7. University/Faculty websites with information about short term trainings, 8. Social networks LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook page.

The timetable of the dissemination was defined by the plan and it was based on the activities mentioned earlier. Regarding the latter, it should be noted that through shared activities in work packages an extensive network of organisations and individuals engaged in the project has been established as I have mentioned earlier, during the evaluation of WP 2. It presents a hierarchical network structure that links all levels of higher education on public finances in Serbia. Continuously dissemination on the project activities to the stakeholders of higher education in Serbia, Albania and in the partner countries has been done via this network.

The partner institutions of the project fulfilled the plan, and the timetable has been followed. An extensive presence in the scientific community has been ensured: the researchers of partner institutions participated at several significant conferences and the networks of these institutions have been strongly used for the dissemination activities. For example, the researchers of the Faculty of Organisational Sciences of the University of Belgrade attended regularly the Lex Localis Annual Conferences and several conferences on public service management and they published their findings in peer reviewed and reference journals.

The quality control management plan defines that the EU finance should be shown by the documents and outputs of the project. The hands-on manual is the appendix 1 of the revised



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quality control and monitoring plan. The elements of the manual were defined earlier in other documents, but it was summarised by this revised plan. These regulations were followed by the partner institutions.

I would like to emphasise that the dissemination of the project has been organised very professionally. The main goal is the project to develop and sustain master programmes in the Serbian and Albanian higher education. Therefore the information of the students is a key element of the sustainability of the project. The coordinator of the project and the organisations responsible for the project dissemination realised a multi-level dissemination system which is focused on the visibility of the project. Therefore the Facebook and other social media platforms are extensively used by the coordinators and the main information on the projects could be found on these platforms.

W(orking) P(ackage). 8. Project Management

The Steering Committee of the Project was established at the kick-off meeting with representatives from all partner (12) institutions. The Steering Committee had three meetings in accordance with the Project Management and Risk Plan. In the project application is planned that Steering Committee would have regular sessions and the minutes of the sessions will be available. Every meeting minutes can be found on the Workspace which is the FINAC project intranet (it can be connected by a username and password). The minute of the kick-off meeting is available on the open website of the project.

The main elements of the project management are defined by the project management and risk plan and by the institutional and financial sustainability plan which has been followed and applied during the project.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

After a year and a half of the project implementation, the project is progressing overall well. The real start of the project was in time, delay could not be observed. The kick-off meeting did its tasks, the project organisation was established. It should be noticed, that seemingly the project is a simple one, because the main goal of the project is to develop, design and implement three master degree programmes in Serbia and two master degree programmes in Albania, but the project consists different and activities under each work package. Another risk



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of the project that it is practically an international one, because it covers activities in Serbia and in Albania. The majority of the partner institutions are from Serbia and the project is centred in Serbia, the project coordinator is a professor of the University in Belgrade. It can be stated, that the Serbian activities were in time, and the timetable was followed most accurately by the University of Belgrade which accredited the first master degree programme so it is not only developed but it can be implemented this year.

The international nature of the project as a risk can be observed in the field of the accreditation procedure. In Albania only the Shkodra University submitted their petition to accredit their master programme in Albania. Such a petition could not be found by the European University of Tirana. Therefore the time-table is not fully followed by the Albanian partner institutions. This delay now does not exclude the possibility of the fulfilment of the project in time, but it can be interpreted as a risk, and Albanian partners should be monitored more carefully during the upcoming months of the project implementation. Lack of the cooperation in accordance of project timeline from one partner may caused damage for the whole project consortium and may have financial impacts.

The structure of the project is a well-built one. This statement is verified by the internal evaluation documents, as well. Satisfaction is shown by the evaluation of the events and of the working packages. It can be highlighted that the project was prepared very carefully. The structure of the project is a very logic one. The Working Package 1 is the practically the assessment of the situation. The Working Package 2 is the international knowledge experience which serves also as a theoretical background of the project, especially by the project meetings which can be interpreted as a series of small conferences, as well. In my interpretation the core activities of the project are the activities of the Working Packages 3, 4 and 5. The WP 3 and 4 is based on the implementation of the master degree programmes, which mainly follows the timetable of the project. The WP 5 is a very important, short-term goal of the project: the Serbian public bodies can receive the pre-accession funds therefore it is very important to prepare the civil servants to the logic of the EU funds and to teach the new methods of public finances.

It should be emphasise that the project tries to build a sustainable training system which follows the European trends and the Serbian specialities are taken into account by these project. I have one recommendation on this element of the project. If we look at the curricula, the specialities of the post socialist states can be observed and the risk management is an important element of the newly developed and modernised master programmes, but I think the integrity risk management could have a stronger theoretical education in the programmes.



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Although the project activities have been well documented, the **methods** of the trainings and the methodological papers on the development of master programmes could not be found on the workspace of the project. Therefore it could not be stated which training and education methods (frontal presentations, team work, project tasks etc.) These questions were not included by the documents and by the Quality Control and Monitoring Plan. I think these questions are very important in the development of new master programmes, because the quality and efficiency of the education is strongly impacted by the teaching methodology. The developed courses have relatively small student groups (the largest one is at the University of Belgrade and it will have only 35 students a year), therefore the team work and the project tasks could be used widely.

Related to this recommendation it could be stated that the **indicators** of the project are relatively general ones. However the revised Quality Control and Monitoring Plan developed the system of the indicators it could be further improved. Especially the indicators on the implementation of the master programmes (for example the number of the applicants to the master programmes, the number of the actual students of the programmes and the number of the graduate students, and students evaluation of the programme etc.). These indicators are not out of the Quality Control and Monitoring Plan, but it could be useful for the evaluation and the quality control.

The project management is a well-organised operation. This statement can be backed-up by the internal evaluations, as well, because the partner institutions are very satisfied by the quality of the organisation. It can be observed one risk: however the minutes and the activities of the project management organisation are available for the partner institutions, but the not so recommendable score in the internal evaluation could be observed in the field of project management between partner institutions. Only general satisfaction could be observed in the field of the clearness of the tasks and roles of the other partner institutions. However a good internal communication system has been developed but it can be improve after the findings of the internal evaluation.

Therefore I recommend:

- to document development of the teaching methodological elements of the project and to improve the activities in the field of teaching methodology as well;
- to improve the indicators of the project: the first phase of the project has been done, the master programmes have been mainly developed and the second phase will begin,



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in which the indicators of the participant students is a very important element of the project.

Although the internal communication is a well-built system, but it is shown by the internal evaluation that it can be improved. I recommend publishing of the project newsletter more often.

The partner institutions should consider in detail and verify all of the above recommendations, from the First Half Project Evaluation Report. Based on that, should be given recommendations for the development of the system of the indicators and for the improvement of the internal communication between partner institutions.

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