MARDS 2nd Bilateral Meeting Tirana
05 February 2020

<u>Minutes, 05 February 2020</u>

<u>Present:</u>

Prof. dr Radovan Stojanović, University of Montenegro

Ms Jela Radović, University of Montenegro

Prof. dr Arjeta Troshani, University of Shkodra "Luigj Gurakuqi"

Prof.as.dr Brilanda Bushati, University of Shkodra "Luigj Gurakuqi"

Dr Alma Afezolli, Polytechnic University of Tirana

Prof.assoc. Elfrida Shehu, Polytechnic University of Tirana

Ms Hyrjana Mocka, Polytechnic University of Tirana

Ms Uriana Thanasi, Polytechnic University of Tirana

Prof. dr Kristofor Lapa, University of Vlora

Dr Enkelejd Mehilli, University of Vlora

Prof. dr Betim Cico, Metropolitan University of Tirana

Prof. Nikolla Civici, Metropolitan University of Tirana

Prof. ass. Ozcan Asilkan, Metropolitan University of Tirana

PhD. Elton Domnori, Metropolitan University of Tirana

Ms Elvis Hazizi, Metropolitan University of Tirana

Ms Ingrit Jushi, Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth of Albania

Ms Klotilda Binjaku, Union of Chambers of Commerce and Industry of Albania

Ms Erida Curraj, National Erasmus + Office of Albania

The first bilateral coordination meeting between project partner (University of Montenegro) and partner institutions from Albania was opened by dr Alma Afezolli from Polytechnic University of Tirana, who welcomed everyone and expressed their satisfaction for hosting this event.

The meeting started with the overview of the project by prof. dr Radovan Stojanović, MARDS coordinator who presented current status of the project, its problems, deliverables done and those that should be finished soon.

- DE1.1 Reports on "state of the art of doctoral studies in Montenegro and Albania" and "funding of doctoral studies in Montenegro and Albania are finished;
- DE1.2 Proceedings/Notes from conference about doctoral education in Western Balkans postponed to collect more material;

- DE1.3 Legal documents to be sent to responsible bodies for adopting: from Montenegrin side this document was sent to the University Senate, Centre for doctoral studies, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Science;
- DE2.X Trainings are finished;
- DE4.1 Equipment partially done: tenders are finished at University of Montenegro, Metropolitan University of Tirana and Polytechnic University of Tirana; University of Donja Gorica is in process of purchasing the equipment; University of Shkodra and University of Vlora received money recently so they haven't started with this process;
- DE4.1 Curricula book for PhD school in Albania partially done, deadline for Accreditation is 15 February 2020;
- DE4.2 Curricula book for PhD school in Montenegro – so far we have PhD structure and courses syllabus;
- DE5.1 Quality control – excellent job done by University of Maribor; now is the time for selecting external experts;
- DE6.1, DE6.2 Dissemination events – ongoing but could be better;
- DE6.3 Dissemination to stakeholders – in Montenegro some work is done, in Albania could be better. Partners should organize events in Albania;
- DE7.1 Sustainability strategy not completed yet;
- DE8.X Management is going well, with regular meetings, providing documents. Now we are in phase of preparing mid-term report and collecting all necessary documents.

He reminded us of the main problems:

1. PhD Accreditation in Albania – finish Curricula book as soon as possible;
2. Equipment – should be purchased withing first year of the project; Ms Curraj from NEO informed us that it should be bought within first 18 months;
3. More dissemination to industry and services;
4. Sustainability strategy, prof. Stojanović and prof. Cico are responsible for it;
5. Management (collect all documents);
6. Low participation of Ministries;
7. Recruit young people and future students;
8. Prepare mid-term report. 70% of money should be spent = 304.000€

Tasks for 2020 overview:

- Adoption of bylaws on funding doctoral studies in Montenegro and Albania by May 2020;
- Development of the Curricula for joint Doctoral Schools by June 2020;
- Accreditaion of Doctoral Schools by September 2020;
- Dissemination, all the time;
- Sustainability, all the time;

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- External stakeholders involvement, all the time;
- Management, all the time;
- Quality control, all the time.

Comments during presentation:
- University of Shkodra wanted to change initial equipment as they need to buy PCs, printers; it was agreed they can make changes and describe that this teleconferencing systems consists of laptops, printers, etc. but Ms Curraj from NEO Albania said that, if they already have approved specification by EACEA, they should not make changes now as they could seem unreliable.
- University of Vlora finished tendering procedures, and their equipment should be ready in a few days. All partner universities should complete inventory lists and send reports to prof. Cico from Metropolitan University, as he is in charge for this WP in Albania.
- Dissemination could be better. Union of Chambers of Commerce and Industry of Albania need to organize event with general topic of necessity of Doctoral School for industry and services. Northern Chamber of Commerce should organize event in Shkodra – prof. Troshani will inform them.
- **PhD Accreditation in Shkodra** – all partners should find a way to be involved in this school with courses they could offer within this programme. Prof. Cico considers that project is divided and states that University of Shkodra didn't invite partners to be involved. Ms Jushi from Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth of Albania reminds everyone that in project proposal it was written that Doctoral School would be opened at the University of Shkodra with contribution of all partners. Prof. Cico states that all universities should benefit from this project, not only the University of Shkodra. All universities have right to include students but main subjects are from Shkodra. Professors from Metropolitan University express their disagreement and remind us that previously it was agreed to have Rectors from four Albanian universities to speak about this school. Ms Jushi reminds again that this school was supposed to be opened in Shkodra, and that all universities will benefit as well. Green light is finally open and programmes could be submitted within or outside of this project. Prof. Civici asks about meaning of joint doctoral school and Ms Jushi answers that it is a common school between Montenegro and Albania. Prof. Civici says that it is not a problem for Metropolitan University to be part of it as long as their roles are clear. Prof. Cico says that he doesn't see point of equipping the rooms at Metropolitan University only for four courses provided. He wanted to show in front of EU that Albanian universities are together, giving contribution to the improvement of doctoral studies in their country. Prof. Civici says that he sees this project as big umbrella where everyone works under the same programme and each partner can give contribution and expertise. Ms Jushi points out that big step has been made by the Ministry, which prepared guidelines. As regards financing of PhD studies, she can ask at the responsible Directorate but thinks that doctoral studies will be subfinanced or financed under projects; research is not within funds universities take for

teaching. She will check if there is any opportunity for scholarships as budget is decreased. She also mentions that partners within project should decide how the school will be organized.

Meeting was continued with presentation by prof. Cico from Metropolitan University who introduced us to the activities performed after Consortium Meeting held at the University of Vienna in December 2019.

1. Preparation of the PhD Application in Albania;
2. Installation of equipment and preparation of video-conference room;
3. Curricula preparation – five courses will be offered by Metropolitan university:
   - Research methods in tourism;
   - Hospitaliy Inf. System and technology;
   - E-commerce;
   - Hospitality distribution channel mng;
   - E-CRM.

Academic staff involved: prof. Betim Cico, prof. Nikolla Civici, prof. Ozcan Asilkan, PhD Elton Domnori.

Metropolitan university will organize two days event on Smart Tourism on 17 – 18 February 2020, with invited keynote speakers from Tourism and Technology companies, including Albania, Turkey, Greece.

He is expecting from other Albanian partners:
- **Report on equipment;**
- **Report on dissemination activities.**

After this, prof. Arjeta Troshani gave her presentation on PhD structure and preparation of Accreditation for PhD School at the University of Shkodra "Luigj Gurakuqi". Twenty academic staff with highest title will be involved in this programme. She first introduces us to the mission, purpose and objectives of PhD programme. She emphasized strong link between academic and business sector, which was always important for the Faculty of Economics. Business community is very important and part of mission of this school. She presented PhD structure and explained that she had sent to all partners modul of syllabus. Courses offered by other universities:
- 3 courses from the University of Montenegro – elective,
- 4 courses from the University of Vlora – elective,
- 1 course from the University of Maribor,
- 4 courses from Polytechnic University.

Apart from sending course syllabus, all professors must provide their CV, employment contract, scanning of academic title).

She mentions that 23 agreements with tourism business from their region is included in this application.

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She explains that stability of school can be stronger if presented not only for Shkodra area, and that they would have more success if they have support and courses from European partner universities – Matej Bel University, University of Vienna, University of Zagreb.

Prof. Cico comments that in presentation there is no role of Metropolitan University of Tirana. Prof. Stojanović asks how Metropolitan University wants to be included. Prof. Civici answers that it is better to have a meeting between Rectors, everyone will take part in organization and they could discuss economic issues. Their vision is to have an umbrella and within it each university has the right to include students, everyone from universities can give expertise. Metropolitan university feels excluded from this project because there is no clear role for them. Prof. Troshani explains that she sent proposal to the Metropolitan University like to all others but there was no feedback from them. Prof. Cico answers that letter should be sent by their Rector and that everything was supposed to be done on institutional way. They furnished laboratory for smart tourism and can offer from 3 to 5 courses. They came to present it. Suggestion by prof. Stojanović is to decide as a bilateral steering committee if they should include 3 or 5 courses in the proposal.

Ms Curraj from NEO points out that is is important to see what has been proposend until now. Everything can happen and be agreed between Consortium, NEO interferes if there is problem with Agency or outside partners. As it is agreed that Metropolitan University should send courses, prof. Cico doesn't agree to send something that might not be taken into consideration tomorrow. Ms Curraj asks him how this issue could be solved. Prof. Cico answers that they should have agreement signed for 5 years that courses will be delivered by Metropolitan University, Polytechnic university and University of Vlora. Ms Curraj suggests that partners speak to each other and speak to the Rectors.

Prof. Cico express his concerns that if agreement is not signed for 5 years, maybe after 2 years some of the partners will not contribute anymore.

Prof. Civici gives solution – university of Shkodra should send the agreement, Metropolitan University defines its role and sends it back. Metropolitan University want to have their name as contributor to this school.

Conclusions:
- Prof. Troshani to continue working on the application with support from other Universities, and to work with prof. Civici from Metropolitan University.
- Prof. Troshani should invite again European partners to contribute to this application by offering courses from their own universities, as it would strenghten the application.