

QA Annual Report 2

“INTERnationalization at Home: Embedding Approaches and Structures to Foster Internationalization at Western BAlkans/ INTERBA”

Project reference No.: 610429-EPP-1-2019-1-AL-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP

(Deliverable 7.2)

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Report prepared by

CESIE

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Document information

Project Acronym:	INTERBA
Programme:	Erasmus + Key Action 2 Capacity Building in the field of Higher Education
Duration:	15/11/2019-14/11/2022
Grant Agreement #:	2019 – 2024 / 001 - 001
Project Number:	610429 – EPP-1-2019-1-AL-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP
Start date:	15/11/2019
Related Work Package	WP7 – Quality Control
Lead Organisation	P5 – CESIE
Dissemination level	Institutional level

I. Introduction

INTERBA is a three-year European project funded by the Erasmus+ Programme Key Action 2 – Cooperation for Innovation and exchange of good practices – Capacity Building in the field of Higher Education. Its main objective is to strengthen the international, intercultural and global dimension via “Internationalisation at Home” (IaH) implementation at partner Higher Education Institutions (HEI) in order to enhance the quality of education and make a meaningful contribution to society.

The present report is part of the INTERBA project’s WP7 – Quality Assurance (QA), which CESIE is leading. As described in the QA Plan, the overall aim of Quality Assurance is to monitor and evaluate all project activities. To do this, a number of tools have been developed. The present Second Annual Report aims to provide a detailed overview of the progress and processes of each WP in the second project year (16 October 2020 – 15 October 2021). It will further provide an overview of the impact of the activities implemented on the target groups, taking into account the key progress and performance indicators which were defined in the QA Plan.

In order to track the progress and achievements of all project activities, we have asked WP leaders to fill in a Monitoring Questionnaire (see Annex 1). WP leaders were asked to provide information on the progress of the WP(s) they lead in the reporting period from 16 October 2020 – 15 October 2021 (one questionnaire for each WP leader). 3 WP leaders filled in the questionnaire.

For an overall monitoring and evaluation of the management, cooperation within the partnership and outcomes, a separate questionnaire was developed, which each partner organization was asked to fill in – one questionnaire for each partner organization (see Annex 2). This questionnaire was filled in by 6 partners.

In what follows, we will first present the results of the two surveys and then provide, in the Conclusions, an overall assessment together with suggestions for further implementation of project activities.

II. Analysis of progress so far

II.1 Implementation of activities according WP Leaders

To get a deeper insight into the progress of all work packages and to identify possible strengths and weaknesses during implementation, we asked all leaders of the work packages to fill in a specific questionnaire (Annex 1). The questionnaire was filled by University of Tirana, University of Cagliari and CESIE.

Cooperation with partners in Work Packages

The replies below show that so far, respondents are satisfied with the cooperation inside the partnership.

Table 1: Cooperation of WP leaders with partners and level of satisfaction

Work Package	Comments on cooperation
2 – Knowledge Capital Repository	University of Cagliari cooperated with all partners of the consortium in order to fulfill the activities of the work package 2. The cooperation was very satisfactory.
7 – Quality Assurance	CESIE cooperated with all partners of the consortium in order to fulfill the activities of the work package 7. The cooperation with all the partners is very satisfactory.
9 – Management	University of Tirana (UT) as the Leader of the project has to cooperate with all partners of the consortium in order to fulfill the activities of the work package 9. The cooperation with all the partners is very satisfactory.
1 – Gap Analysis 3 – Training Content 4 – Training of trainers and piloting 5 – E-learning platform 6 - Sustainability	no specific info was provided

Overall achievements

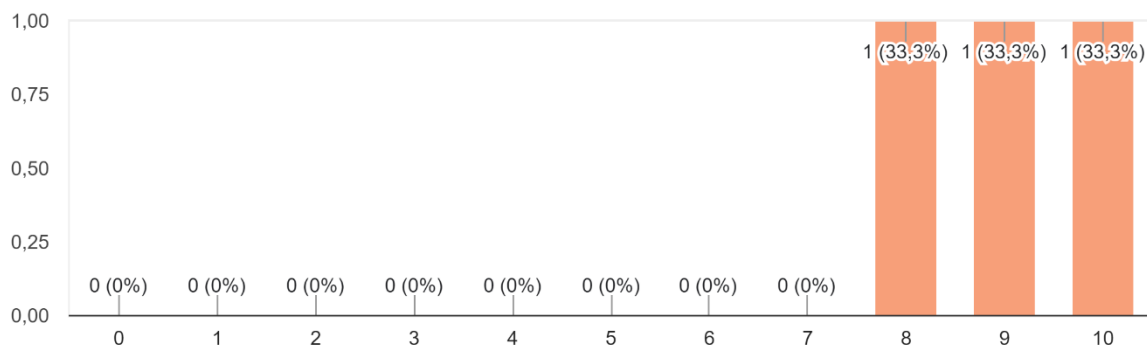
WP leaders were asked to list all activities that have been carried out in the evaluation period, together with all outcomes and outputs achieved. Work has been completed in WP1 and WP2.

Table 2: Overview of achievements – activities, outcomes and outputs

Work Package	Achievements
1 – Gap Analysis	All activities were finally successfully implemented.
2 – Knowledge Capital Repository	This WP was subdivided into three tasks, and all of them have been completed. Three deliverables have been created reporting the knowledge capital and the network of experts shared by the partners of this consortium.
3 – Training Content 4 – Training of trainers and piloting	Ongoing. A preliminary Train the Trainer programme structure was circulated in February 2021.
5 – E-learning platform	Ongoing.
6 - Sustainability	Ongoing. The financial and institutional sustainability strategy plan has been drafted.
7 – Quality Assurance	Almost completed. Activities / Outcomes: - Carried out monitoring and evaluation questionnaires for the second project year. Outputs: - Terms of Reference (ToR) for the selection of external evaluator - Second QA Annual Report completed. CESIE reviewed Deliverables on the background of quality criteria and indicators set out in the QA Plan and sent comments and suggestions of improvements to the WP Leaders.
8 – Dissemination	Fully implemented for the reporting period. Website: 7483 unique users during 2020; 7774 unique users during 2021 Social Network: Facebook page has reached 170 likes so far and posts have had about 300 hits on average.
9 – Management	Activities: 1. Management of consortium meetings (agenda, doodle, Skype, MoM). 2. Management of internal team meetings (UT). 3. Budget management for the consortium (Delivery of the first financing for all partners, financial control for partners activities, internal audit for all consortium). 4. Maintenance of the project management Gantt chart. 5. Creation and translation of ToR for the tender of equipment purchase. 6. Creation and translation of ToR for the tender of external quality evaluator. 7. Filling of timesheets and joint declaration for the period November 2019 - April 2021 and preparation of all

	<p>documents of the activities. Control of partners timesheets, joint declarations and other support documents.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. Finalizing the equipment purchase for UT. 9. Preparation of the Interim Report / Technical Report/ Financial report. 10. Preparing and sending the request for disbursement of the second 40% installment. 11. Continuous communication with EACEA representatives on various project issues. 12. Creation of the list of experts from the University of Tirana, as well as the collection of their data within the training process for the creation of the "Knowledge Repository". <p>Outcomes and Outputs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Interim Report, Technical Report and Financial Report - Equipment purchase - Subcontracting of the External Evaluator - Delivery of the second installment of financing
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Fig. 1: Level of achievement of each WP



Note: It seems that the above question regarding level of achievement may have been interpreted differently by partners, i.e. some partners seem to have referred to the overall level of achievement, while others seem to have referred to the level of achievement of activities in the reporting period.

Timeliness of activities

Although there have been some delays, the project is still on track to meet its deadline. The team has worked hard to catch up on lost time due to COVID-19 past and current restrictions. Overall, as reported by the coordinator, the project remains within its planned schedule.

Table 3: Overview on timeliness/delays in implementation of all Work Packages

Work Package	On track or delays
1 – Gap Analysis	Some delays due to impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, but all activities are completed.
2 – Knowledge Capital Repository	We experienced some delays due to the pandemic first, and then to the change of the project coordinator.
3 – Training Content 4 – Training of trainers and piloting	The training planned for online delivery was postponed for fall 2021.
5 – E-learning platform	The WP is on track.
6 - Sustainability	The WP will be implemented as planned.
7 – Quality Assurance	Internal QA: no delays. External QA: due to the delays from COVID19 followed by the changes of the coordination team in the lead partner, the consortium had to postpone the appointment of the expert.
8 – Dissemination	The WP is on track.
9 – Management	The WP is on track. We have followed the updated Gantt chart for implementing the project activities with respect to the project plan.

Problems or difficulties

There were some activities with some delays but not affecting the overall objectives of the project.

Table 4: Mains problems/difficulties in each WP and mitigation actions taken

Work Package	Problems/difficulties and mitigation actions
2 – Knowledge Capital Repository	The delay was not related to this WP only, but it affected the whole project. However, the delay did not affect the quality and completeness of the task and was aligned with the new schedule for the whole project. As the activities of the WP have been completed, no risk to mitigate has been identified.
9 – Management	A small delay happened in the purchase of equipment due to the lack of bidders and non-compliance with specifications. The postponement of the training activity in London due to the delay in receiving UK visas. An identified risk is the Covid-19 situation, and the sudden change of working group staff for all partners, which directly affects the successful implementation of WP9, where UT is the leader. UT as a lead partner in cooperation with all partners and with the approval from EACEA made possible the rescheduling of delayed activities due to the Covid-19 situation, as well as bureaucratic obstacles that were encountered during financial transfers to partners. As a result, the implementation of project activities is intended to be in accordance with the redefined deadlines. UT has intensified periodic meetings with partners to keep up to date with the implementation of activities every month.

7 – Quality Assurance	No problems or challenges encountered so far
1 – Gap Analysis 3 – Training Content 4 – Training of trainers and piloting 5 – E-learning platform 6 – Sustainability 8 – Dissemination	N/A

Further comments

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced partnership to adapt to remote work, and this has impacted the implementation of those activities requiring face-to-face interaction. These delays required UT to request a one-year postponement of project closing date, with no change to budget. The intention is to reorganize all remaining activities and bring project to a successful implementation. A higher frequency of online meetings with partners was necessary to ensure that all issues are addressed promptly.

II.2 Overall evaluation of project activities

The following replies have been provided in response to the second Evaluation Questionnaire, which aimed to gather feedback about general implementation of project activities at each HEI/organisation, about Management and Communication and Outcomes achieved so far.

Implementation at your HEI / organization

In regards to the implementation of the INTERBA project at their respective institutions/organizations, partners are highly satisfied, as seen in the pie chart below. The majority of partners rated the awareness level of the project between excellent (57,1%) and good (42,9%) (Fig.6). The proposed timeline of activities was considered both realistic and feasible by 85,7% of respondents (Fig.3) , with all indicating high levels of satisfaction with the progress of activities in their institution (Fig. 4). 42,9% of respondents reported difficulties with implementation (Fig. 5), these challenges were explained in responses to subsequent questions (Table 5) and were mainly related to external factors like having to switch to remote work, delays in visa processing and equipment procurement.

Fig. 2: How do you rate the work carried out by the project team at your own HEI/institution?

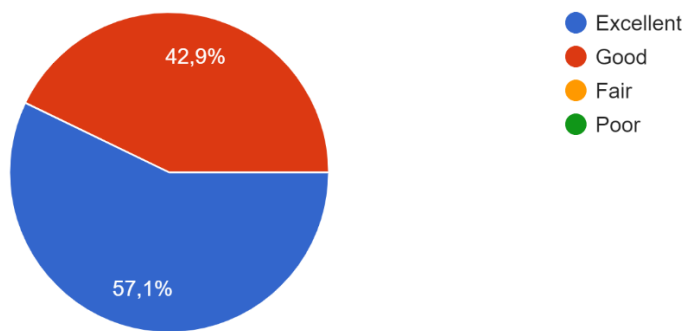


Fig. 3: Was the proposed timeline of activities realistic and feasible for Your HEI/organisation?

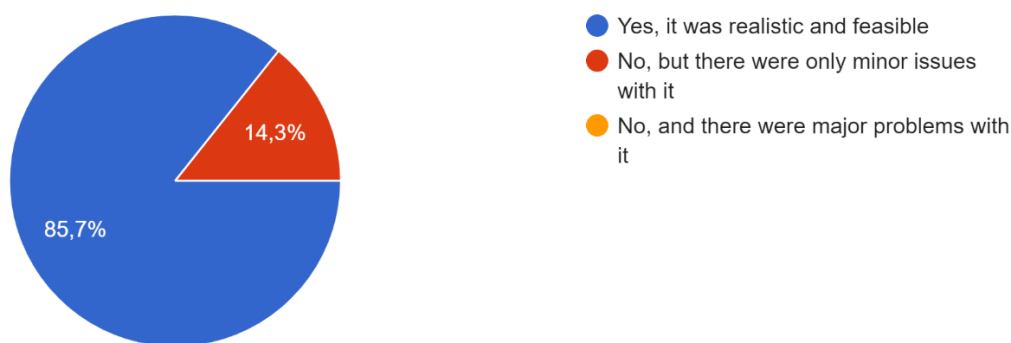


Fig. 4: How satisfied are you with the progress of activities in your institution?

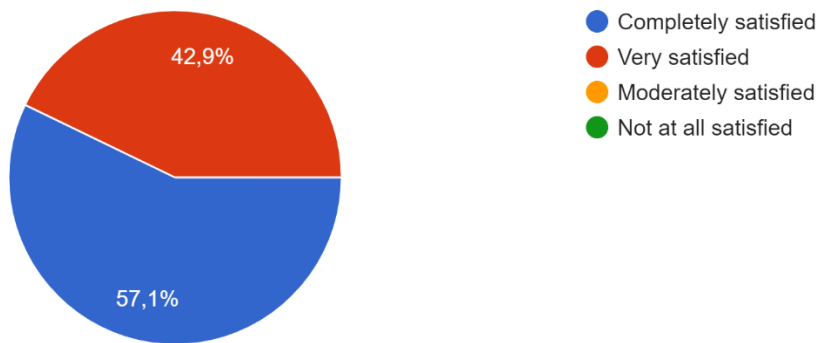


Fig. 5: Did you have any difficulties/challenges in the implementation of the activities?

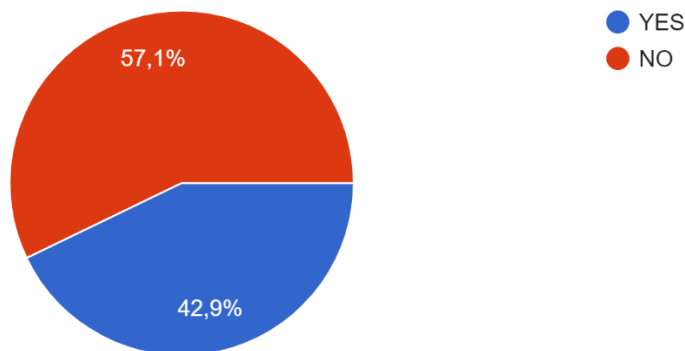
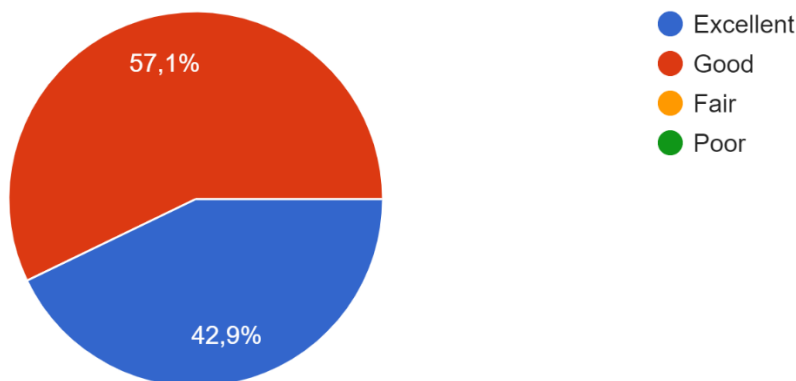


Table 5: Details on difficulties and challenges experienced during the implementation of activities.

The work has been carried out remotely without face-to-face meetings. Thus, we experienced some difficulties in reaching a complete mutual understanding on the information that each partner has to provide.
Some delays due to COVID-19 pandemic and due to change of the coordinator
Postponement of some activities due to the pandemic
A small delay happened in the purchase of equipment due to the lack of bidders and non-compliance with specifications.
The postponement of the training activity in London due to the delay in receiving UK visas.

Fig. 6: What is the awareness level about the project in your institution?



Management and Communication

The INTERBA project's overall management and communication have received positive feedback. Pie chart below (Fig. 7) show that 28,6% of respondents rated the project management and coordination as "excellent," and 57,1% rated it as "good", with 14,3% rating it as "fair". Financial management received a rating between "excellent" and "good" from all respondents (Fig. 8). The evaluation of overall time management had 57,1% rating it as "good," 28,6% as "excellent," and 14,3% as "fair" (Fig.9). Communication between partners was evaluated by 42,9% of respondents as "excellent" and by 42,9% as "good", with 14,3% rating it as "fair" (Fig 10).

Recommendations partners expressed are related to:

- Increase the number of meeting each one addressing specific topics and tasks.
- Clearly assign to each partner the task and monitor its progress, in order to early detect any difficulty or obstacle in the implementation.

Fig. 7: How do you rate the overall project management and coordination of the project?

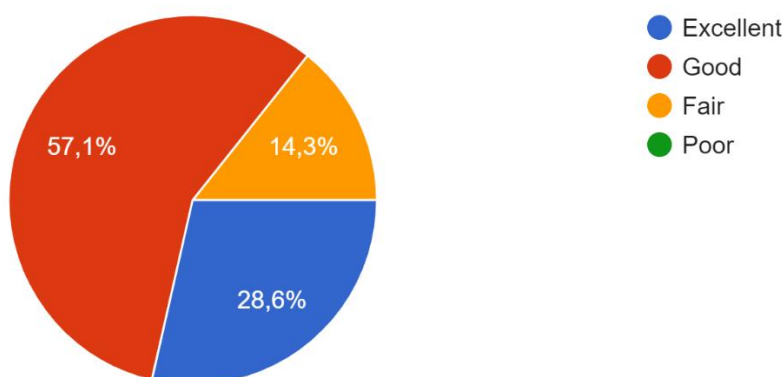


Fig. 8: How do you rate overall financial management of the project?

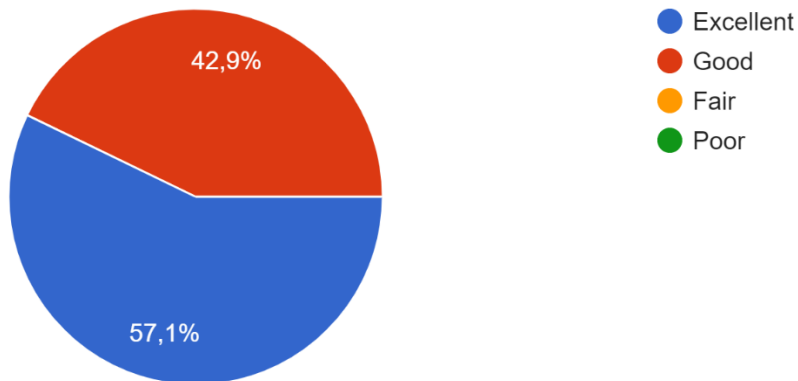


Fig. 9: How do you rate overall time management and respect of agreed deadlines in the project?

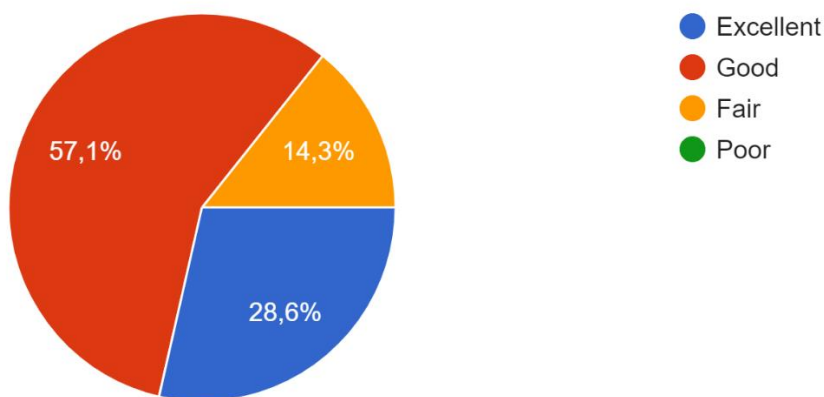


Fig. 10: How do you rate the quality of communication among partners and project management team?

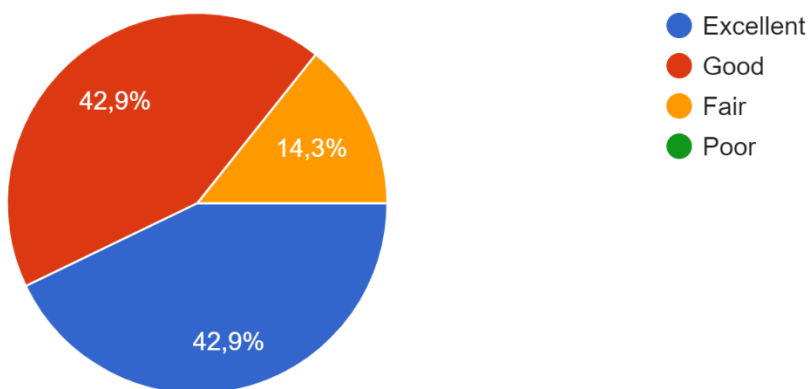
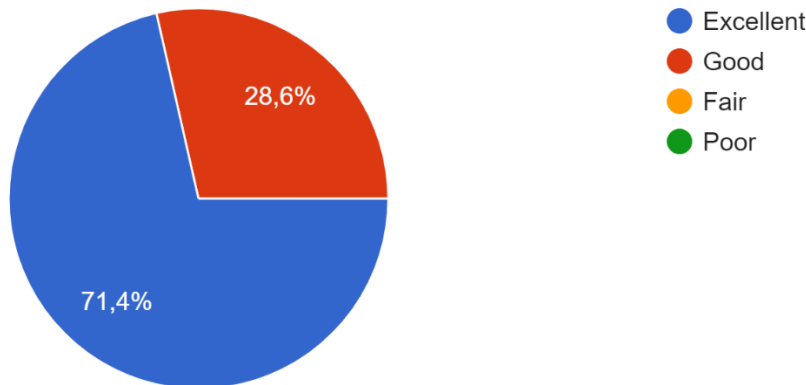
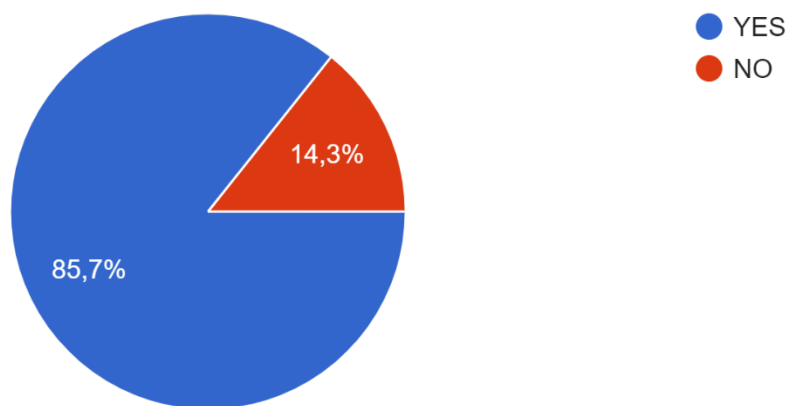


Fig. 11: How do you rate the efficiency of visibility and communication means at project level?



Visibility/communication activities undertaken

Fig. 12: Did your institution undertake any visibility/communication activities to promote INTERBA?



Overall visibility and communication activities received a positive evaluation of 71,4% as "excellent" and 28,6% as "good." 85,7% of respondents reported to have undertaken visibility/communication activities in the evaluation period (Fig. 12).

- Meetings with partners
- The University provides visibility to all funded project, and to any event organised within the University of Cagliari.
- Communication/ visibility in project website and social media presence; Visibility in each institutional platforms/websites; On-time visibility/communication of all project activities;
- Different visibility/communication activities were undertaken to promote and disseminate information related to the INTERBA project using the web site of the home institution, social media, different events organized at the home institution, and radio and television of Tuzla Canton.
- Organisation of meetings with the academic staff and students to inform them about the purpose and achievements of this project.
Participation in Erasmus Info Days.

Creation of a computer laboratory and a conference room in the Faculty of Economy with the equipment purchased with the financing of the INTERBA project.

Promoting the INTERBA activities in the project website, faculty website, university website, and social media platforms.

- Dissemination of the project at least twice a year. During International week staff members from 10 different universities were informed about the project.
- Online activities.

Lessons learnt

Partners respond that they personally learned:

- Sharing experience, competences and challenges from other partners.
- Different methods/approaches to the Internationalisation.
- Risks management.
- SCATE model.

Further to that, also the institutions have gone through a learning process, learning the following:

- The potentiality of networking with universities located in the west Balkans.
- Different methods/approaches to the Internationalisation.
- The train the trainers was a great program for capacity building.
- Our institution learned about different practices used in other INTERBA partner universities which can be useful for our home institution. Also, thanks to this project, we extended our knowledge related to internationalization at home and involved more people at the home institution in these activities.
- Variety of approaches to the topic.
- The practice of internationalization fosters an immersive and inclusive academic environment. It goes beyond recognizing an international student's culture. It understands, embraces, and integrates diverse cultures into the educational experience.

The purposes of Internationalization strategy means a process geared towards integrating global, international and intercultural dimensions into the objectives and content of higher education and into its entire teaching and learning environment.

- Members of the project team acquired new knowledge and improved their teaching skills.

Missing information or knowledge

There seem to be no major lack of information or knowledge. Some comments of partners, however, show that partner institutions need:

- “to share and disseminate our knowledge gained from the INTERBA project with people at the home institution to achieve a higher degree of Internationalisation at the home institution.”
- “Knowledge related to innovative teaching and training methodologies, which we intend to gain during the Train the Trainers activities, which will be held in the near future.”

Further recommendations and comments

Partners have provided a number of further recommendations and comments:

- “Encourage the organisation of workshops were each institution can better know the other institutions”

- “Improve the support of Internationalisation activities.”
- “In future activities, I think, we should be focused on the implementation of activities related to the proposed plan within work packages. One of these activities can be related to the sustainability of the project after the EU funding period.”
- “UT will try to include as many individuals as possible (students, academic and administrative staff) in the trainings that will take place within the project, to increase as much as possible the dissemination and sustainability of the project's results.”
- “More active role of the coordinator of the project as well as WP leaders.”

III. Conclusions and Recommendations

The Second Annual Report is based on feedback from two surveys conducted among partners and WP leaders. The surveys asked for feedback on activities, cooperation with partners, overall management and communication. All respondents provided an overall positive assessment of the project activities and progress, despite some delays still due to restrictions to face-to-face activities, and reported that the project provided them and their institutions with several lessons learned.

All respondents positively assessed management and communication activities of the project. WP leaders reported no issues with partners during cooperation, and no major concerns were raised. As for visibility activities all respondents deployed their best efforts to make the project visible among relevant actors and target groups despite restrictions of COVID and making use of the tools created (project website mainly).

Regularly organised meetings at shorter intervals, clear communication about project activities and deadlines, and sharing of responsibilities were still suggested for the partnership to support the overall management and coordination of activities, communication between partners, and timely implementation of activities.

Annexes

Annex 1 Monitoring Questionnaire for WP Leaders

INTERBA Project - Monitoring Questionnaire for WP Leaders

INTERBA

Erasmus+ Capacity Building for Higher Education

Monitoring Questionnaire for WP Leaders

EVALUATION FORM

Period: November 2020 – October 2021

About this Questionnaire

This questionnaire aims to monitor the progress of each WP. Each WP leader, please fill in one questionnaire for each WP you lead (i.e., if you lead more than one WP, please fill in two separate questionnaires, one for each WP).

Please answer referring to the above-mentioned period of performance (November 2020-October 2021).

Your responses will be treated in strict confidentiality according to the rule of data protection. They will be aggregated and the identity of those completing particular questionnaires will not be disclosed.

Thank you very much for cooperation!

For any doubt or further comment, please refer to Jelena Mazaj: jelena.mazaj@cesie.org

1. Organisation's name *
 - University of Tirana
 - Middlesex University
 - Hamburg University of Technology
 - University of Cagliari
 - CESIE
 - European University of Tirana
 - University of Pristina
 - University of Tuzla
 - Dzemal Bijedic University of Mostar
 - Universum College
2. Leader of WP (in case you lead more than one WP, please select the one for which you are filling in the present questionnaire and fill in a second questionnaire for the other WP). *

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9

3. With which partner(s) do you cooperate in this WP? *

4. How satisfied are you with the cooperation with partner organisations? *

- Completely satisfied
- Very satisfied
- Moderately satisfied
- Not at all satisfied

5. Overall achievements: Please provide a list of the activities carried out under your WP lead during the reporting period (November 2020-October 2021). *

6. Which outcomes and outputs have been achieved? *

7. Please try to quantify the level of achievement of your WP so far. *

No activity implemented so far

- 0
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10

All activities completed

8. Is your WP on track or are there delays in implementing activities with respect to the project plan? *

9. If there are there delays: please explain shortly why, and if they could be an issue for overall project implementation (e.g. delay of activities of other WPs)? *

10. With regards to future implementation of activities in your WP, which possible risks/difficulties have you identified? *

11. Please describe your plans to mitigate possible risks/difficulties (also in relation to Covid-related issues that might come up).*

12. As a participant of other WPs, which risks for the implementation do you see? *

13. Do you have any further comments regarding the project management and implementation processes? Do you have any further recommendation for project implementation (also with regards to other WPs)? *

Annex 2 Internal QA and Monitoring Questionnaire

INTERBA Project - Internal QA and Monitoring Questionnaire

INTERBA

Erasmus+ Capacity Building for Higher Education

Internal QA and Monitoring Questionnaire

EVALUATION FORM

Quality Assurance Partner Cooperation and Progress of Project Activities

Period: November 2020 – October 2021

About this Questionnaire

This questionnaire examines a number of issues relating to the INTERBA project; your answers will be a valuable resource for drafting the First Annual QA Report. They will also support future implementation of the project by identifying both positive aspects and difficulties in project implementation so far.

Please answer referring to the above-mentioned period of performance (November 2020-October 2021).

For each partner, one questionnaire should be filled in and submitted. Your responses will be treated in strict confidentiality according to the rule of data protection. They will be aggregated and the identity of those completing particular questionnaires will not be disclosed.

Duration: Approximate 30 minutes

Thank you very much for cooperation!

For any doubt or further comment, please refer to Jelena Mazaj: jelena.mazaj@cesie.org

Organisation's name *

- University of Tirana
- Middlesex University
- Hamburg University of Technology
- University of Cagliari
- CESIE
- European University of Tirana
- University of Pristina
- University of Tuzla

- Dzemal Bijedic University of Mostar
- Universum College

Implementation at your HEI / organisation

In the following questions, please rate the implementation of activities at YOUR HEI/organisation.

1. How do you rate the work carried out by the project team at your own HEI/organisation?*

- Excellent
- Good
- Fair
- Poor

2. Was the proposed timeline of activities realistic and feasible for Your HEI/organisation? *

- Yes, it was realistic and feasible
- No, but there were only minor issues with it
- No, and there were major problems with it

3. How satisfied are you with the progress of the activities in your institution? *

- Completely satisfied
- Very satisfied
- Moderately satisfied
- Not at all satisfied

4. Did you have any difficulties/challenges in the implementation of the activities? *

- Yes
- No

4.a If YES - please explain difficulties and challenges you have experienced during the implementation of activities.

5. What is the awareness level about the project in your institution? *

- Excellent
- Good
- Fair
- Poor

6. Which activities have you implemented in the second year of the project at your HEI/organisation? *

Management and Communication

In the following questions, please rate overall management of the project and communication among partners.

7. How do you rate the overall project management and coordination of the project? *

- Excellent
- Good
- Fair
- Poor

8. How do you rate overall financial management of the project? *

- Excellent
- Good
- Fair
- Poor

9. How do you rate overall time management and respect of agreed deadlines in the project? *

- Excellent
- Good
- Fair
- Poor

10. How do you rate the quality of communication among partners and project management team? *

- Excellent
- Good
- Fair
- Poor

11. How do you rate the efficiency of visibility and communication means at project level? *

- Excellent
- Good
- Fair
- Poor

12. Do you have recommendations for improvement of the overall project management and communication among partners? *

13. Did your institution undertake any visibility/communication activities to promote INTERBA? *

- Yes
 No

13.a Please shortly describe visibility/communication activities undertaken

Outcomes

14. Do the project results achieved up to date meet your initial expectations? Please motivate your answer. *

15. Today, do you think you have a clearer understanding of "Internationalisation at home"? *

16. Have you personally learned something during this period thanks to this project? *

17. What did your institution learn thanks to this project? *

18. What information, knowledge are still lacking at your institution to improve the implementation of the activities? *

19. Please, provide your recommendations and comments to the future activities to be implemented.*

