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EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT 2

Report 2 (March 2023)

Revised (January 2024)

“Erasmus +” Project INTERBA

**“INTERnationalization at Home: Embedding Approaches and Structures to Foster
Internationalization at Western Balkans”**

610429-EPP-2019-AL-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP

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TABLE OF ABBREVIATIONS

HEIs	Higher Education Institution
CBHE	Capacity Building in Higher Education
IaH	Internationalization at Home
WP	Work Package
PC	Partner Countries
WB	Western Balkan
EU	European Union
HE	Higher Education
QA	Quality Assurance
SC	Steering Committee
QB	Quality Board
PCB	Project Coordination Board
KPI	Key Performance Indicators
ToR	Terms of Reference
TtT	Train the Trainers
PCIs	Partner Countries Institutions
GA	Grant Agreement
PA	Partnership Agreement



EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT 2

PROJECT TITLE AND DATA

Programme	Erasmus+
Sub-Programme	Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices
Action	Capacity Building in higher education
Sub-Action	Joint Projects
Call for Proposal	EAC-A03-2018
Project Number	610429-EPP-1-2019-1-AL-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP
Agreement/Decision Number	20192024
Project Title	INTERnationalization at Home: Embedding Approaches and Structures to Foster Internationalization at Western Balkans

PURPOSE AND THE METHODOLOGY OF THE EXTERNAL EVALUATION

THE OBJECTIVES:

The objectives of the external evaluation have been:

- to provide external view on the project implementation and its outputs,
- to make informed feedback about the performance of the project including the feedback of its efficiency and effectiveness,
- to indicate the lessons learned,
- to provide practical recommendations for follow-up actions



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The methodology:

Preparatory work included the completion of all available documents, project proposal, agreements, reports, and deliverables. The second step was focused on mapping the project activities. Based on that, it was prepared the first draft, which was distributed to the partners for the comments. Their comments were taken into consideration for the preparation of the Report 1. Taking into consideration the work progress since the First Report, it was prepared the Report 2, as below.

BASIC INFORMATION ABOUT THE PROJECT

Project Duration:

November 15th, 2019 - November 14th, 2023

Project Partners:

- P1 - Project Coordinator, University of Tirana, Albania
- P2 - Middlesex University London, UK
- P3 - Hamburg University of Technology, Germany
- P4 - University of Cagliari, Italy.
- P5 - CESIE, Palermo, Italy.
- P6 - European University of Tirana, Albania
- P7 - Universum College, Kosovo
- P8 - University of Prishtina, Kosovo
- P9 - University of Tuzla, Bosnia and Hercegovina
- P10- Dzemal Bijedic University of Mostar, Bosnia and Hercegovina
- In total: 10 academic partners, and 0 non - academic partners.



Lead partner: University of Tirana, Albania



The purpose of the project

- To formulate a coherent and detailed IaH concept that could be mainstreamed into the partner HEIs Roadmaps following on from their specific exigencies.
- To level up the scope and viability of IaH activities implemented in partner HEIs.
- To train expert pool capable of developing and integrating IaH into HEI environment.
- To launch an online platform as a tool for IaH implementation.
- To establish/modernize the existing structure/entities responsible for IaH at HEIs.

Internationalization at Home will include integration of international and intercultural dimensions into the formal and informal curriculum and curriculum delivery, managerial and administrative processes, industry cooperation, and social, political and cultural engagement for all students, staff and collaborators within domestic environments at HEIs.

SUMMARY OF WORK PACKAGE

Work Package Number	Title of the Work Package
WP.1	Existing knowledge capital analysis
WP.2	Creation a knowledge repository
WP.3	Developing training content
WP.4	Training key staff members
WP.5	E-Learning platform
WP.6	Sustainability
WP.7	Quality Assurance
WP.8	Dissemination and exploitation strategy
WP.9	Project management

Official project webpage: www.interbaproject.com



OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF THE PROJECT

ACHIEVEMENT OF THE GOALS

The INTERBA second external evaluator report aims to provide an overview of the current state of the INTERnationalization at Home: Embedding Approaches and Structures to Foster Internationalization at Western Balkans project and the progress made towards its implementation in the period between November 2021 and March 2023. The report approach is based in three key areas: impact and sustainability, the activities and their deliverables, and the dissemination actions carried out.

FOLLOW-UP OF THE PREVIOUS RECOMMENDATION

It is very important that all the suggestions from the EACEA's and the external evaluation recommendations published in the External Evaluation Report 1 have been taken into consideration.

Previous recommendations from the external evaluation report 1 were:

- Meetings between partners, stakeholders, and other groups of interests as well, needs to be organized face to face in order to be more effective and more present physically. **(Realized)**
- If it is a need based in the objective reasons to revise the project in terms of time frame, objectives, and budget, now is the time to do it. **(Done)**

INVOLVEMENT OF THE PARTNERS IN THE PROJECT

The involvement of the partners in the project activities followed the approved project proposal. The partner's involvement was coordinated by the project coordinator. The collaboration was important especially in the countries with two project consortium members as Albania, Kosovo and Bosnia Hercegovina to improve efficiency and complementarity. The division of the responsibilities for the coordination of the work packages worked effective. The consortium partners, although in different modes and times mirroring specifics of their national environment achieved proper up to high quality of performance.



Important role played the involvement of the project partners coming from the EU countries (Germany, Italy) and UK as well. They mediated the involvement of the benefiting universities into international networks as a precondition for sustainability of the quality at educational process at these universities. Their efficiency of their involvement and responsibility for model teaching and on job training was strengthened by the elaboration of the reports including the teaching documentation and cooperation with the respective staff at the hosting universities in the future overtaking responsibilities for teaching activities. The transfer of innovations via cooperation between EU partners and benefiting universities is very important for the modernization of the educational process at the benefiting universities as such and with this to their improved competitiveness and competitiveness.

The detailed description of the WP activities and involvement of the respective partner are included in the next chapters and reports submitted. Based on that, all partners have taken active part in the project realization, following the approved project activities plan and budget.

DISSEMINATION OF THE PROJECT

Different actions were carried out related to the dissemination and exploitation of the INTERBA project. A website (<https://interbaproject.com/>) was created as a deliverable of Work Package 8.1 It is the central point of information and updates about the project and will be updated in line with the project progress. In order to reach a broader audience, which includes students, policymakers, university staff and other organizations, a **Facebook** and an **Instagram** account have been set up. The number of followers on Facebook has increased from 149 to 294 and for Instagram from 31 to 69 up until now. Another component of the dissemination strategy was the development of branding with the colors, the logo, templates to be used during reporting and documentation. Also, it was prepared and applied a roll-up banner, E-newsletter, and leaflets. (These materials can be found in the project's website section).



ASSESSMENT OF THE WP’S IMPLEMENTATION, RESULTS AND ACHIEVED GOALS

WP.1 GAP ANALYSIS AND EXISTING KNOWLEDGE CAPITAL ANALYSIS IN PARTNER COUNTRIES

Summary – Fully Implemented.

Deliverables under WP.1:

- 1.1 Analysis of Knowledge Capital in partner countries
- 1.2 Needs analysis
- 1.3 Internationalization Priority Areas

WP.2 SUGGESTION OF A COORDINATION MODEL FOR USE OF EXISTING RESOURCES BASED ON A KNOWLEDGE CAPITAL REPOSITORY

Summary – Fully Implemented.

Deliverables under WP:

- 2.1 Knowledge repository
- 2.2 Network of knowledge experts
- 2.3 Bridging model to align knowledge cases to knowledge gaps

WP.3 DEVELOPING TRAINING CONTENT

Summary – Fully Implemented.

Deliverables under WP:

- 3.1 Training content
- 3.2 Short training opportunities
- 3.3 Guidelines for Request for Knowledge (RfK)

WP.4 ORGANIZATION OF TRAINING AND RE-TRAINING

Summary – 80% Implemented.

Deliverables under WP:



- 4.1 Training key staff members
- 4.2 Training pilots
- 4.3 Re-training
- 4.4 Training toolkit

WP.5 P E-LEARNING PLATFORM AND TOOLS FOR DELIVERY, SUPPORT AND EXCHANGE OF EXISTING AND NEW KNOWLEDGE CAPITAL

Summary – 50% Implemented.

Deliverables under WP:

- 5.1 Moodle structures for delivery of e-learning
- 5.2 Support of the introduction of materials
- 5.3 Monitor the translation of key documentation
- 5.4 Monitor the use of the platform during training and re-training.

WP.6 SUSTAINABILITY

Summary – Not initiated, but will be finalized in last year: 2023

Deliverables under WP:

- 6.1 Elaboration and dissemination of the methodology for the sustainability strategy
- 6.2 Sustainability plan for training and re-training courses and Moodle platform
- 6.3 Sustainability plan for Train-to-Trainer’s workshop
- 6.4 Sustainability plan for network of knowledge experts
- 6.5 Sustainability interim reporting
- 6.6 Sustainability final reporting



WP.7 QUALITY ASSURANCE

Summary – Fully implemented for the related reporting period.

Deliverables under WP:

- 7.1 Quality Assurance Plan (QAP) and Tools
- 7.2 Quality Annual Report
- 7.3 Final QA report
- 7.4 External evaluation

The external evaluator was appointed in July 2021, and first report was drafted in November 2021. The second report was drafted in March 2023.

WP.8 DISSEMINATION AND EXPLOITATION ACTIVITIES OF PROJECTS RESULT AND ACHIEVEMENT

Summary – Fully implemented in line with the project timeline.

Deliverables under WP:

- 8.1 The project’ website is online and updated.
- 8.2 Dissemination and Exploitation Strategy is finalized and online.
- 8.3 Two papers on project activities and results will be soon prepared and published, one under UET and UC team and the other under the UT team.
- 8.4 Organizing 4 dissemination events with relevant stakeholders.

Related to Task 8.4, the following are the Info Days held in this period of reporting:

Info Day #1 (European University of Tirana) INTERBA Project Info Day took part at the European University of Tirana on April 26th, 2022. In this event was presented the progress of the project, and the impact it will have on the PA Internationalization at Home of the partner institutions. This event targeted academic staff from UET and UT, students, and international stakeholders.

Info Day #2 (University of Tirana) In the framework of INTERBA project, on 11 October 2022, at the Faculty of Economy of the University of Tirana, the activity "INTERBA INFO DAY - INTERNATIONAL PROJECTS UT" (Dissemination and Exploitation Meeting in Albania) took place. During this meeting, the focus was on one of the main products of this project: the e-learning platform (Moodle), training courses and experts. This activity welcomed about 40 academics and academic staff, in the role of



project coordinators and members of working groups in international projects implemented by the University of Tirana, which they contributed with their expertise gained from the international projects implemented by the University of Tirana over the past 5 years.

Info Day #3 (Universum College) Universum College organized a two-day Info Session to promote the INTERBA project, starting on March 30, 2022. The target groups were students from Albania and Montenegro as well as senior researchers from Kosovo. During both days the participants were introduced to the objectives of the INTERBA project and the benefits of the project in general.

- 8.5 Final International Project Conference in Tirana. It will be held in October 2023.
- 8.6 Financial and Institutional Sustainability Strategic Plan. Related to Task 8.6 the document where are highlighted the main actions to be undertaken by the INTERBA project's consortium to ensure the sustainability of the project and its results after the end of the project in December 2023.
- 8.7 Sustainable cooperation with labor market (To be prepared in 2023).
- 8.8 Creation of the partner network between all institutions involved in the project (To be prepared in 2023).

WP.9 PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Summary – Fully implemented in line with the project timeline.

Deliverables under WP:

- 9.1 Kick-off meeting
- 9.2 Project team meetings
- 9.3 First annual report on project activities
- 9.4 Second annual reports on project activities
- 9.5 Third annual reports on project activities

9.1 Kick off meeting

The kick-off meeting was held at Tirana University in Tirana. All partners participated in order to:

- establish relationships.
- present their organizations and study programs.



- discuss the planning for contents development and quality control.
- discuss project management.
- agree on administrative rules and procedures.

9.2 Project team meetings for decision-making and management

Project team meetings were held in order to review and endorse annual reports, as well as for strategic decision-making purposes.

9.3 Annual reports (3)

Reports on project activities during the first, second and third year of the project, including a description of deviations from the project plan and revised risks and risk management at each stage. The first report was delivered, while the second and the third not yet.

CROSS-REGIONAL NETWORKING AND COOPERATION BETWEEN UNIVERSITIES AND INDUSTRY IN THE WESTERN BALKAN COUNTRIES

COOPERATION IN WESTERN BALKAN COUNTRIES

Cross-regional networking and cooperation between universities and industry in the Western Balkan countries. This project tries to strengthen international, intercultural, and global dimensions via Internalizations at Home (IaH) implementation at partner HEIs in order to enhance the quality of education and to make a meaningful contribution to the society. Thus, its success is clearly dependent on cross-cutting issues, which constitute the pillars of its implementation. Europeanization/internationalization; disadvantaged groups; social cohesion and cross-regional cooperation are few of the keywords.

The project is approaching internationalization in a more holistic way, by embedding and strengthening “internationalization at home”, as vital. Internationalization at Home refers to the policies and processes that purpose fully integrate international and intercultural aspects into the curricular and co-curricular activities for students.



Strengthening international, intercultural, and global dimension via Internalization at Home (IaH) implementation at partner HEIs in order to enhance the quality of education and to make a meaningful contribution to the society, by increasing social cohesion as a necessary tool for a fair and equal opportunities and access to education. The INTERBA project is committed to continuing the development of cross-regional cooperation between Western Balkans countries, between Albania, Kosova, Bosnia and Herzegovina, with particular focus on the development of the knowledge transfer process in the regions and the deployment of the cross-regional networking between PC universities and industry. Through the deployment of cross-regional networking and cooperation between universities and industry in the Western Balkan countries, PC universities will create opportunities for regional and national direct investments and promote individual initiatives to increase the research activity and knowledge transfer in the business environment.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Based on the assessment of the project, reports summarizing first experience from the project implementation and based on the benchmark of the project outputs with similar projects realized in the EU following advises can be formulated:

- There is the need to continue the collaboration among the consortium partners in the teaching by proper form of teachers and students' mobility, especially using the advantage of common language among the partners but strengthening the potential of the students to communicate in English in the educational process. This should be understood as a challenge for all universities in the region increasing the competitiveness of their graduates at globalized labor market as well as their ability to cooperate with the foreign professional in their own country.
- There is the need to extend the collaboration among the consortium partners in the teaching by proper form of professional and research activities using outstanding potentials of synergies among the partners, accumulated capacities, and knowledge as well as complementarities among laboratories equipped by the project. This can improve the efficiency of the investments.
- There is the need to continue in further development based on their specialization and complementarities of the partners towards serious scientific working places



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- There is the need to understand the potentials developed in the project not only as the capacities in the education but as the capacities for transfer and development of the know-how as well. The network of the consortium partners developed big potential in the form of understanding regional specifics in the combination with the links to know how development centers in the EU.
- The network of the project consortium partners should focus very carefully on market absorption capacity given by social and economic situation in the region, the profile of the students should include not only technology knowledge but proper proportion of economic and managerial issues as well. The overall profile of the students should be strengthened by smartness as a common denominator.
- The challenge for the project consortium for the future is the creation of joint regional competence center with efficiency as the professional authority in the region supporting the state and self-governmental bodies, entrepreneurs, and broad public with the high professional expertise and practical advises integrating the knowledge of top technologies, approaches and techniques with awareness about regional and local specifics.

CONCLUSIONS

1. The project was progressed according to the revised time schedule.
2. All the partners have participated successfully in the project, fulfilling their responsibilities and their duties according to the action plan of the project.
3. The budget was used effectively, according to the budget plan.

RECOMENDATION

1. Partners may speed up the realization of all deliverables of the project to keep the time schedule of the project.

