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## EXTERNAL EVALUATION FINAL REPORT

**Report 3 (November 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 3

### **PROJECT TITLE AND DATA**

Programme	<b>Erasmus+</b>
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

### **INTRODUCTION**

INTERBA is a three-year European project funded by the Erasmus+ Programmed 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 “Internationalization at Home” (IaH) implementation at partner Higher Education Institutions (HEI) to enhance the quality of education and make a meaningful contribution to society.

### **PURPOSE AND METHODOLOGY OF THE JOB**

#### **The objective:**

The objective of the job has been:

- to analyze the implementation of the project and its outputs,



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- to judge the performance of the project including its efficiency and effectiveness,
- to show the lessons learned,
- to provide practical recommendations for the other projects.

### **The methodology:**

The analyzation of all available documents and activities, project proposals, agreements, reports, deliverables, and their follow up. The next step was focused on mapping the project activities, and based on that, was prepared the Draft Report 1, which was distributed to the partners for the comments. Their comments were taken into consideration for the preparation of Report 1. The same way was followed for the preparation of the Draft Report 2, which includes the activities between Report 1 and Report 2. This Report 3 covers the activities between Report 2 and the end of the project, including the final statement about the whole project as well.

## **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, Kosova
- P8 - University of Prishtina, Kosova
- P9 - University of Tuzla, Bosnia and Hercegovina
- P10- Dzemal Bijedic University of Mostar, Bosnia and Hercegovina



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- 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 PACKAGES***

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](http://www.interbaproject.com)

## **OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF THE PROJECT**

### ***ACHIEVEMENT OF THE GOALS***

The creation of a large international network and the internationalization of higher education is a tool to improve the quality of education and increase the relevance of (Higher Education Institution) HEIs within society. Notably, for higher education institutions from developing countries, internationalization brings significant benefits in terms of the improvement of the academic effectiveness, through the mutual exchange and experience of different practices in teaching and learning. Moreover, it fosters the development of human capacities through international collaboration, and students obtain intercultural competences by being exposed to an international setting. Internationalization of HEIs in the Balkan region has been primarily achieved through student and staff mobility as well as Erasmus + CBHE projects that involved a limited number of staff. HEIs have realized that trying to approach internationalization through these initiatives leaves room for fragmented and individualistic results which prevents internationalization to be embedded within the institutional structures. “Internationalization at Home” (IaH) is vital as it refers



to the policies and processes that purpose fully integrate international and intercultural aspects into the curricular and co-curricular activities for students. By leveraging on the potentialities of information and communication technologies, this project aims at removing the financial and formal barriers that prevent internationalization to reach a wide number of students and staff. The process to integrate learning material and teaching approaches, and the technical solutions that will be devised, will allow promoting a framework that can be re-used in other contexts, thus providing an additional tool for effective internationalization in higher education.

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### ***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 and Raport 2 have been taken into consideration.

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### ***INVOLVEMENT OF THE PARTNERS IN THE PROJECT***

The involvement of the partners in the project activities followed the approved project proposal. The partners' involvement was coordinated by the project coordinator. The collaboration was important especially in the countries with two project consortium members as Albania, Kosova and Bosnia Hercegovina to improve efficiency and complementarity. The division of the responsibilities for the coordination of the work packages worked effectively. 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 of the 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.

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## ***DISSEMINATION OF THE PROJECT***

The dissemination of academia addressed the issues as follows:

- best practice transfers inside of respective universities and information about available trainings and hardware/software (applications) for other study fields related to the topics of interest,
- spread of information about innovative approaches in the education,
- mediation of the best practice among universities.

For different groups of addresses were differentiated forms and communication channels used. Basic information was spread from the project website information, websites information at the webpages of the project partners, via seminars, trainings and meetings directly addressing specific groups, via participation of the interest groups at the model teaching, workshops, electronic communication, etc.

Special attention was paid to the dissemination among the students.

The efficiency of the dissemination was very high, addressing all the interesting groups of the project.

## **ASSESSMENT OF THE WP'S IMPLEMENTATION, RESULTS AND ACHIEVED GOALS**

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

The main goal of that Work Package (1) was to identify existing knowledge capital in a standardized way that will assist the creation of a knowledge repository at institutional and national level.

Specific tasks under this Work Package (1) includes:

1. Performing analysis of knowledge capital in partner countries
2. Conducting a needs analysis
3. Prioritizing internationalization areas



## RESULTS

### Summary – Finished

#### Deliverables under WP:

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

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

WP2 started from the results attained in WP1, which analyses the knowledge capital in partner countries, conducts a needs analysis and prioritizes internationalization areas. Considering these needs, WP2 established a method that helps to align knowledge capital cases to the uses that can bring clear benefits to other consortium institutions. Accordingly, WP2 is linked to WP6, whose goals were the following:

- Create links with local industry through a sustainability framework.
- Create synergies with WP2 to establish a sustainable network of trainers.
- Establish recognition of such training with each national entity (ministries) through certification or institutional recognition.

## RESULTS

### Summary – Finished

#### Deliverables under WP:

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

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#### ***WP.3 DEVELOPING TRAINING CONTENT***

The main outputs of deliverable WP3-D3 provide the necessary tools which were used for creating Request for Knowledge (RfK) entries to the INTERBA project repository and Network of Experts. These outputs include the following:

- RfK framework – it describes the knowledge synthesis process and helps to manage knowledge transfer activities.



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- RfK flowchart – it paves the process from training needs analysis to identification of knowledge source and request for training.
- RfK process guidelines – they document the entire process and support the creation of formal requests.
- RfK template – it uses spreadsheet structure to support formal requests for training.

## RESULTS

Summary – Finished

### Deliverables under WP:

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

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## ***WP.4 ORGANIZATION OF TRAINING AND RE-TRAINING***

## RESULTS

Summary – Finished

### Deliverables under WP:

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

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

## RESULTS

Summary – Finished 100 %

### Deliverables under WP:

- 5.1 Moodle structures for delivery of e-learning
- 5.2 Support of the introduction of materials

Summary – Finished 100 %



- 5.3 Monitor the translation of key documentation.
- 5.4 Monitor the use of the platform during training and re-training.

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## **WP.6 SUSTAINABILITY**

### RESULTS

Summary – Finished

#### **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

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## **WP.7 QUALITY ASSURANCE**

Summary – Finished

### RESULTS

#### **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. Report 1 was drafted in November 2021, Report 2 was drafted in March 2023, Report 3 was drafted in November 2023.*



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

### **RESULTS**

#### **Summary – Finished**

##### **Deliverables under WP:**

- 8.1 Project website (including project visual identity - logo)
- 8.2 Dissemination and Exploitation Strategy
- 8.3 Two papers on project activities and results
- 8.4 Four dissemination events
- 8.5 Final International Project Conference in Tirana
- 8.7 Sustainable cooperation with labor market
- 8.8 Partner network

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## ***WP.9 PROJECT MANAGEMENT***

#### **Summary – Finished**

##### **Deliverables under WP:**

- 9.1 Kick-off meeting
- 9.2 Project team meetings
- 9.2 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 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 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 reports are not yet delivered.

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

## ***COOPERATION IN THE REGION***

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 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 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.

## PROJECT 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 in the future the collaboration 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 in the future 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 towards serious scientific working places.
- There is the need to understand the potential developed not only as the capacities in the education but as the capacities for transfer and development of the know-how as well. The network developed big potential in the form of understanding regional



specifics in combination with the links to know how development centers in the EU.

- The network 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 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

- The Process evaluation clearly shows that the 10 partners composing the project consortium collaborated in a very efficient and pleasant way. Overall, all three evaluation surveys gave very positive results on every aspect involved. In particular, the cooperation among partners was very positive (participation to the meetings by all organizations involved), and the coordinator was effective in managing all administrative and financial aspects of the project (financial reporting, interim report, etc.), communication, and evaluation and monitoring.
- Similarly, the progress evaluation shows that the project proceeded according to the original plan. In the First Progress Evaluation Report there were a few deviations including a Major Deviation because of Pandemic.
- The situation improved significantly, indeed, there are clear improvements in the progress of project activities as reported in the various Progress Evaluations with

Only minor deviations and the indicators showed that the project was moving forward on a strong note. All partners were satisfied with the progress of the project and have given positive feedback.

- The External Evaluation Report assessed the quality and impact of the main products/services developed by the project, including educational programmed, trainings and the conference concept. The results were highly positive.
- The concept was considered very innovative since it can be individualized, and it has an immediate practical application on the learners' work/academic development. The collaboration between private companies and HE Institutions





was considered rather successful, since it substantially contributed to shaping a learning course concept of immediate practical utility for participants, thus reducing the gap often perceived between educational contents and business needs.

- The learning courses developed within the project are found all easily replicable, so that their value is not exhausted with the end of the project, but it will continue even after that date, which is a rather important perspective for the future. This is true both for HE Institutions and private companies involved.
- In addition, professionals involved learnt how to use Design Thinking in the teaching/training process, as well as some of the most used online collaboration tools, so that they will be able to introduce them in future courses.
- The learning programme is considered of high quality and with a high variety of learning formats and modalities. In particular, the evaluator stressed that the combination of synchronous learning environments with an asynchronous Moodle platform where learning materials and activities can be enjoyed and used at any moment by the registered learners is a strength. Also, the materials are of high quality and are offered in a rather abundant quantity.
- Moreover, the format of the “active” conference was evaluated as rather innovative: the attendants became presenters themselves competing for an innovation award and showcasing the pilot projects developed in the days preceding the event. It was considered innovative also from a methodological point of view, due to the consistent and considerable use of design thinking and design-based collaborative learning formats, enriching the debate and the creative dimension of the conference. Then, the evaluator highlighted the variety of profiles gathered: students, academics, business representatives, VET operators and technicians.
- Finally, quality monitoring took places for all WPs from month 1 to month 24. All project activities progressed as envisaged in the project plan and all quantitative indicators were met by the partners for all WPs and some of them were positively exceeded.
- Despite the great challenges posed by the restrictions and uncertainties due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the project was highly successful, and the partnership was able to transform such challenges in opportunities to develop innovative learning formats and methodologies.

