IEP
EUA-Institutional Evaluation Programme

THE FACULTY FOR TRAFFIC, COMMUNICATION AND LOGISTICS, BUDVA, MONTENEGRO

FOLLOW-UP EVALUATION REPORT

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1. Introduction

This report is the result of a follow-up evaluation of the Faculty for Traffic, Communication and Logistics (FSKL). European University Association's (EUA) Institutional Evaluation Programme (IEP) originally evaluated FSKL in 2014 with the report submitted to the University in July 2014.

This follow-up evaluation took place in the framework of the project "Higher Education and Research for Innovation and Competitiveness" (HERIC), implemented by the government of Montenegro with the overall objective to strengthen the quality and relevance of higher education and research in Montenegro.

While the institutional evaluations are taking place in the context of the project, each university is assessed by an independent IEP team, using the IEP methodology described below.

1.1 Institutional Evaluation Programme and follow-up evaluation process

IEP is an independent membership service of the EUA that offers evaluations to support the participating institutions in the continuing development of their strategic management and internal quality culture. IEP is a full member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and is listed in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR).

In line with the IEP philosophy as a whole, the follow-up process is a supportive one. There is no prescribed procedure, and it is for the institution itself to set the agenda in the light of its experiences since the original evaluation. The institution is expected to submit its own Self-Evaluation Report (SER), which will describe the progress made, possibly indicating barriers to change.

The rationale is that the follow-up evaluation can assist the institution in evaluating the changes that have been made since the original evaluation: What was the impact of the original evaluation? What use has the institution made of the original evaluation report? How far has it been able to address the issues raised in the report? The follow-up evaluation is also an opportunity for the institution to take stock of its strategies for managing change in the context of internal and external constraints and opportunities.

As for the original evaluation, the all aspects of the follow-up process are also guided by four key questions, which are based on a "fitness for (and of) purpose" approach:

- What is the institution trying to do?
- How is the institution trying to do it?
- How does the institution know it works?
- How does the institution change in order to improve?

1.2 Faculty of Transport, Communications and Logistics

FSKL was the first accredited faculty in the north of Montenegro and the only faculty in this field of study in the country. FSKL was established as a higher education institution in 2008 via a public-private partnership consisting of four private individuals and the Municipality of Berane. At the time of the initial evaluation in 2014, FSKL was located in both Berane and Budva. It had autonomy in forming and proposing study programmes, changing up to 30% of ECTS of accredited study programmes, planning and carrying out scientific research work, employing collaborators as well as registering new students. At that time it had no right to award academic titles to staff and was not permitted to offer doctoral studies.

FSKL is now located solely in Budva. The Assembly of the Faculty adopted the Decision to move the seat of the Faculty to Budva in 2015, and this was approved by the Ministry of Education of Montenegro. In December 2017, FSKL signed an Agreement on Association with the newly formed Adriatic University and changed its name to the Adriatic University - Faculty of Transport, Communications and Logistics. The faculty remains as a distinct legal entity, and has all rights and duties in accordance with the Law on Higher Education of Montenegro; it represents itself in legal matters and has full responsibility for all its activities. Due to the fact that the agreement was made after preparation for this evaluation started, the evaluation takes into account only the activities of the faculty itself, and not those of the new university of which it is now part.

The faculty has 25 teaching staff, including 14 full professors, five associate professors and six assistant professors. There are 13 full time employees of which 11 have master degrees and two are currently undertaking master studies. The faculty offers one first cycle programme of which there are six possible specialised outcomes and one second cycle programme. The total number of students in 2017/2018 was 155 in first cycle studies and eight second cycle students.

1.3 The evaluation process

The evaluation team was informed that from October 2017, all employees of the faculty, under the direction of a coordinator, were involved in a series of meetings to produce the self-evaluation report (SER) and paid particular attention to progress, plans or constraints related to the implementation of recommendations from the initial IEP evaluation in 2014.

The self-evaluation report of the the Faculty for Traffic, Communication and Logistics (FSKL)*,* was sent to the evaluation team in March 2018. The visit of the evaluation team to the faculty took place from 7 to 9 May 2018. The team also reviewed the report and recommendations from the initial evaluation that took place in 2014, as well as the university's progress report (2015).

The evaluation team (hereinafter named the team) consisted of:

- Krista Varantola, Former Rector, University of Tampere, Finland, Team chair
- Karol Izydor Wysokinski, Former Vice-Rector, Marie Curie – Sklodowska University, Lublin, Poland
- Will Stringer, student, the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, UK
- Andy Gibbs, University of Malaya, Team Coordinator

The team thanks the Dean Professor Dr. Vujadin Vesovic for the invitation to the faculty, the warm hospitality and access to staff, students and information. Additionally thanks go to Prof. Dr. Natasa Gospic for her liaison with the team, coordination of the site visit and leading the preparation of a helpful SER.

2. Governance and institutional decision-making

The mission, vision and goals of the faculty were reviewed and discussed at length in the 2014 evaluation report and in general terms the mission, vision and goals of the faculty were in line with and supported by the activities and plans of the faculty.

One of the concerns of the 2014 initial evaluation was the potential inequity of experience of students within the dual campus arrangement between Berane and Budva. The faculty has carefully considered these issues and noting, amongst other things, the declining numbers of students entering the Berane programme coupled with reduced support from the municipality, decided to locate all its activities at the Budva campus. Whilst this meant that the faculty had to reconsider part of its mission to contribute to the region of north Montenegro by providing higher education, it enabled the faculty to consolidate its activities on one site and address issues of sustainability.

Furthermore it enabled the faculty to join the newly formed Adriatic University, which consequently provided opportunities to offer doctoral education and academic titles as well as to engage in capacity building in conjunction with the other facuties that form the new university. The team regarded both the move to Budva and the decision to join Adratic University as actions which would strengthen the faculty in terms of its mission, vision and goals as well as contributing to longer term sustainability. The faculty has engaged in work to bring its structures, processes and procedures in line with those of the Adraitic University and the team recommends **continuing the process of integration with Adriatic University whilst actively planning for maintaining the faculty identity.**

The initial evaluation also recommended that the faculty develop a systematic market analysis based on actual rather than perceived needs. In response to this the faculty initiated and joined the preparation of a study on the current and long-term needs for graduate transport engineers in Montenegro, in order to adapt its programme content, and to better identify the numbers required in the industry in the future. The study is currently conducted in cooperation with the Chamber of Commerce of Montenegro and the Ministry of Transport and Maritime Affairs. Similarly the faculty has sought to more closely identify the numbers of logistics specialists required in the future. The team learned that while there are some challenges involved in securing the information from various sources, a clearer and positive view of future needs is emerging. The team encourages the faculty to continue this work and recommend to **revisit the business plan and develop the plan based on current and projected market needs.** The work which is currently being undertaken will also enable the faculty to continue the recommendation from the initial evaluation to **gather information on graduate employment and use this to promote the faculty.**

The SER indicated that the main academic priority of the faculty is the development of highly professional staff that will successfully meet the challenges and needs of the contemporary industrial environment; and better use and improvement of existing infrastructure and modern technologies in the field of traffic, communication and logistics. The team noted the age profile of staff within the faculty and that many would be beyond working age in the coming years. Although the faculty has recruited some younger staff in recent years, the team was concerned about the continuity of provision, particularly in terms of the leadership of the faculty and recommends that the faculty **create a human resource plan to ensure sustainability and continuity based on the age profile of faculty personnel.**

The team learned that the student parliament closely cooperates with student parliaments of other faculties within Adriatic University and student parliaments of traffic engineering faculties from southeast Europe in the organisation of Saobraćijada – an event during which students compete in sports and knowledge. Students found this activity enjoyable and engaging with other students pleasant. Whilst the team recognises this, they heard little of the student parliament engaging in governance activities of the faculty in terms of raising issues and concerns on behalf of students. The role of the student parliament does not seem to be that of an independent elected body in the governance structure but rather that of a students' club responsible for extra curricular activities. The move to Adriatic University provides an opportunity for the student parliament to represent the faculty more widely and assimilate into the university. The student parliament can play a pivotal role in creating networks within Adriatic University and similar faculties internationally. The team identified little independent thinking regarding governance amongst the student body and recommends to the faculty to **emphasise the autonomy of the student parliament's role in governance by facilitating their engagement more directly with management and the student body.**

3. Quality culture

The initial evaluation noted the presence of extensive quality assurance documentation, operational procedures and action plans which have targets and are monitored. There are demonstrable year on year improvements in programme development and decision making and the faculty is recommended to **continue to raise awareness of quality culture within the faculty.**

The SER describes the internal evaluation of the programme as being conducted in two ways: student surveys; and self-evaluation in preparation for the next re-accreditation. The SER goes on to explain the processes associated with these activities. In each the loop is closed by providing feedback and developing actions to address areas where need for improvement is indicated. The team agrees that the introduction of these procedures is in line with the recommendation of the initial evaluation regarding development of an internal quality system. The present team observed that these processes could be further developed, for example the student surveys could have a greater focus on learning rather than teacher performance, key performance indicators for programmes could be developed as triggers for intervention and training activity rather than only for identifying poor performance of teachers. For these reasons the team recommends to **further build on existing practice to implement an internal quality system.**

The further development of an internal quality assurance system, together with the aforementioned study on employment needs will, the team believes, assist in enabling the faculty to **devise and maintain a database of relevant information for planning, to avoid generalisations and facilitate evidence-based management decisions.** This will be beneficial not only in developing the internal quality assurance system but also for the integration with the Adriatic University and for succession planning for the faculty. Currently, the founders of the faculty have considerable energy, drive, experience and knowledge of the field and much of the faculty's success is related to this. Basing decision-making on procedures and processes underpinned by good quality and reliable information will facilitate succession planning.

The SER indicated that the faculty keeps track of and applies European standards for internal quality assurance, especially when it comes to quality policy. This was demonstrated in a number of ways during meetings with staff and students. However, the team was unable to see how the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) were being addressed systematically. This is not only important for the development of internal quality but also now that Montenegro has a national quality assurance agency these links will need to be demonstrated explicitly. The team recommends that the faculty map its quality processes and procedures and **make explicit links with the ESG.**

The initial evaluation had recommended that information on employment prospects provided to students prior to enrolment should include factual information on employment of graduates. The present team could not see that this action had been undertaken and therefore repeats the recommendation that **information to students on employment prospects should include factual information on employment of graduates.**

4. Teaching and learning

The faculty action plan and SER mention, in general terms, improving teaching in line with European best practice. Specifically, the increased use of multimedia methods for teaching and learning are mentioned. Teaching and learning approaches include many elements proposed by the European higher education reforms, such as degree structure and use of learning outcomes, however, there is no overall plan of what is to be improved and how. Nevertheless the faculty has taken a number of steps to improve the learning infrastructure. In order to ensure efficient support for students, the faculty has created a MOODLE platform (virtual learning environment), made available contemporary literature in the easily accessible library, and ensured internet access anywhere in the faculty building as well as a properly equipped computer room.

The initial evaluation noted that activities of the faculty were in line with European higher education reforms and in both the current SER and in meetings with staff an intention to implement student-centred learning was highlighted. In meetings the team noted some lack of clarity amongst staff regarding both student-centred learning and the use of learning outcomes. The faculty provides support for teachers and training on key developments (e.g. use of the MOODLE platform), however there is no systematic way in which the teaching and learning is developed through, for example, an appraisal system. To meet the aims of the faculty with regard to teaching and learning, the team recommends that the faculty **ensure that all staff are supported in developing student-centred teaching, learning, and assessment approaches.**

The initial evaluation noted that practical placements were part of the curricula; however, overall the practical work was unstructured with no formal evaluation. The initial evaluation recommended that the faculty provide a structure for work placements, which has clear aims and is evaluated. In accordance with this recommendation, the faculty has developed a structured rulebook on internships that contains the objectives that are being evaluated. The team welcomes this and recommends that it is developed further to **provide an informational portal for internships across all fields, which has learning outcomes, is evaluated and provides feedback for both students and enterprises that provide placements.**

5. Research

The initial evaluation noted that the faculty does not have a clear research strategy nor research infrastructure. Research appears to be an activity based on individuals and individual activity. The faculty has an institute for scientific research through which, the SER states, the faculty realises its staff potential for scientific research by conducting studies, projects, preparing expert witness reports, etc. The team could not discern a clear aim for the institute beyond providing an umbrella for diverse individual activities and could not see any coordinated actions led by the institute which would build capacity. The team recommends that the faculty **clarify the role and aims of the research institute.**

The faculty cooperates with other faculties that are part of Adriatic University as well as with other higher education institutions in Montenegro and the region (10 faculties) under mutually signed agreements which provide for: exchange of teachers and students, joint research projects, joint postgraduate study programmes, joint organisation and participation in seminars and other academic meetings, professional development programmes, exchange of scientific and professional publications as well as other forms of cooperation in common interest. The team recommends that the faculty continues to **build research networks and relationships with other higher education institutions in Europe and worldwide to build expertise.**

The team further recommends that the faculty **reflects on what expertise would improve the bid writing process for research grants, maybe internationally or through cooperation with other higher education institutions and within Adriatic University.**

6. Service to society

The initial evaluation highlighted a high level of activity related to service to society, particularly in the region of Berane and surrounding region. The present team notes that much of this is continuing. The team heard from local stakeholders including the municipality of Budva that the presence of the faculty was welcomed and already there had been a number of new initiatives discussed. Changes in the faculty location bring about a set of new relationships and the team recommends that the faculty **further develop regional alliances with employers, municipalities, the Adriatic University and other providers to facilitate alignment of development priorities.** At the same time, to ensure that the views of stakeholders are reflected in curriculum design and delivery, the team reiterates the recommendation from the initial evaluation to **establish a more systematic involvement of stakeholders including alumni, employers, municipalities and students.**

The team was told by faculty staff that the skills and knowledge that students gained in their programmes were more up to date than those of currently employed practitioners and that methods currently utilised by enterprises were often outdated. At the same time the faculty indicated that they wished to introduce income streams other than student fees. The team recommends that the faculty take advantage of this opportunity and **consider providing lifelong learning opportunities and continuing professional development to external partners** in order to improve current workplace practices.

7. Internationalisation

Whilst there are some limited pockets of international activity within the faculty, an internationalisation strategy was not evident for the development of student and staff mobility, joint programmes, internationalisation of the curriculum, or joint research. Although staff talked about international quality, standards, academic work, professors and activity, there was no overarching concept of what internationalisation means for the faculty.

The initial evaluation noted that programmes are principally focused on the Montenegrin market; however, the team was told that the employment market in transport, logistics and communications is international, starting with the neighbouring countries. The team felt that students may be disadvantaged by not having an international experience and recommends that the faculty **review the role and purpose of internationalisation for programmes offered in the faculty** as part of developing a vision and strategy for internationalisation. The team reiterates this earlier recommendation of the initial evaluation and further suggests the possibility of **developing joint programmes with similar faculties outside Montenegro as a way of introducing internationalisation.**

The team learned from both staff and students that students did not want to spend a semester studying abroad. The team could not identify a clear reason for this but heard that one of the possible reasons is lack of finance. The faculty may wish to **consider funding opportunities such as Erasmus+ to support staff and student mobility** to stimulate interest in student mobility. To support this the faculty may wish to **create a post or designate a person responsible for mobility possibly in co-operation with other faculties or with the Adriatic University.**

8. Conclusions and summary of the recommendations

The faculty offers higher education in the field of transport, communication and logistics. It has a well developed and clear mission and vision, committed leadership, enthusiastic staff and students. The recent move to Budva has enhanced student recruitment. However this is not at the level desired by the faculty to ensure sustainability. In this context there is an opportunity to revisit the strategic plan to make it more evidence-based in order to address current challenges. In doing so, it is also advised to take into account the integration of the faculty into the Adriatic University and the opportunities and challenges that this brings. The recommendations within this report are intended to offer support to the faculty, which contributes particularly to the region and whose presence is valued by the local municipality and its students.

Summary of Recommendations

Continue the process of integration with Adriatic University whilst actively planning for maintaining the faculty identity.

Revisit and develop the business plan based on current and projected market needs.

Gather information on graduate employment and use this to promote the faculty.

Create a human resource plan to ensure sustainability and continuity based on the age profile of faculty personnel.

Emphasise the autonomy of the student parliament's role in governance by facilitating their engagement more directly with management and the student body

Continue to raise awareness of quality culture within the faculty.

Further build on existing practice to implement an internal quality system.

Devise and maintain a database of relevant information for planning, to avoid generalisations and facilitate evidence-based management decisions.

Make explicit links with ESG in quality processes.

Provide information to students on employment prospects that includes include factual information on employment of graduates.

Ensure that all staff are supported in developing student-centred teaching, learning, and assessment approaches.

Provide an informational portal for internships across all fields, which has learning outcomes, is evaluated and provides feedback for both students and enterprises that provide placements.

Clarify the role and aims of the research institute.

Build research networks and relationships with other higher education institutions in Europe and worldwide to build expertise.

Reflect on what expertise would improve the bid writing process for research grants, maybe internationally or through cooperation with other higher education institutions and within Adriatic University.

Further develop regional alliances with employers, municipalities, Adriatic University and other providers to produce alignment of development priorities.

Establish a more systematic involvement of stakeholders including alumni, employers, municipalities, and students.

Consider providing lifelong learning opportunities and continuing professional development to external partners.

Review the role and purpose of internationalisation for programmes offered in the faculty.

Develop joint programmes with similar faculties outside Montenegro as a way of introducing internationalisation.

Consider funding opportunities such as Erasmus+ to support staff and student mobility.

Create a post or designate a person responsible for mobility possibly in co-operation with other faculties or with the Adriatic University.