# Quality Plan

Project title: Reforming doctoral studies in Montenegro and Albania - good practice paradigm

Project acronym: MARDS

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# Introduction

Quality control and monitoring (QCM) are vital for achieving planned outcomes and provide trustful, prosperous study environment for prospective PhD students. QCM activities will span during entire lifetime of the project and will include establishment of the internal quality procedures, preparing evaluation forms and guidelines, carrying out internal evaluations, reporting and engaging external evaluators. Present Quality Plan (QP) will be used for the monitoring of all activities as well as project flow.

# Description of the Project

The General objectives of the project are:

* the restructuring doctoral studies in Montenegro and Albania in line with Salzburg Principles and establishment of sustainable and modern Joint Doctoral Schools in Montenegro and Albania that will serve as an example of “good practice” for the Western Balkan Region

MARDS's specific objectives are:

1. to reconsider the existing national policies/standards for doctoral studies in Montenegro and Albania and their compatibility with good EU practices

2. to develop and propose a new model of doctoral studies in Montenegro and Albania, adapted to the acquired experiences over past decades as well as to the current and future countries’ needs

3. to propose a sustainable method of financing doctoral studies in two Montenegro and Albania on national levels

4. to establish two Joint Doctoral Schools 1st) "Natural sciences and Technology for Sustainable Development" with chair in Montenegro (Podgorica) and “Economy and Tourism for Sustainable Development” with chair in Albania (Shkoder) as the recommended examples of cross-border programmes

5. to establish a sustainable cooperation with EU partners and established Doctoral Schools in order to achieve and maintain current standards.

# Objectives of the Quality Plan

Objective of Quality Plan is to guarantee high quality of project outcomes as well as the project as the whole. Quality plan will provide the guidelines for continuous monitoring and evaluation of the project activities in order. The deliverables of each project partner will be evaluated according to the specified indicators. Quality plan will define different aspects of the evaluation and key indicators that will be used.

Quality plan will assure:

* the project methodological quality, in terms of validity of the activities carried out and project products developed,
* practical applicability and sustainability of the project results,
* a sound project implementation in terms of partner cooperation and collaboration and project processes.

# Organizational Structure of Quality Control

Figure 1 shows the organizational structure of Quality control. Local QC officers in Albania and Montenegro guide working groups for internal QC at each university. Local QC officer reports to the Quality Monitoring Committee (QMC), which consists of the member from EU countries. QMC reports to the steering committee which is led by coordinator. Entire structure is subject to external QC experts.



Figure : QC Structure

Quality assurance is the obligation of all project partners. The QC tasks should be timely implemented as well as correction actions.

Two experts from non-participating EU institutions will be engaged (subcontracted) as external evaluators International tender. Inclusion of external QC experts will be initiated from beginning of second year (M13) and completed by M16. Terms of References (TOR) and Tender to engage External QC Experts will be prepared by QMC, while announced by SC.

During second year of engagement external experts will check all documents of internal QC. These experts will visit each partner universities in the beginning of the third project year. Inputs for visits will be prepared and delivered to the experts by the QMC and CPs (contact persons). During these visits, they will have the chance to talk with all target groups identified in the project and they will have access to all documents prepared during the project implementation as well to propose measures in written form to each of CP to improve the state.

Report on external quality control will be presented and discussed on the coordination meeting. This Report will also be part of the Final project report. These activities will be subcontracted.

A working group for internal quality control is to be created at each partner university in Albania and Montenegro (one academic staff, one student, and one ministry or chambers of commerce representative). The local responsible person for QC ~ Local QC Officer have already been assigned. Table 1 shows assigned local Quality Control Officers with institutions.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| No.  | Institiution | Name and surname |
| 1 | University of Vlora  | Prof. as. Elenica Pjero |
| 2 | Metropolitan Tirana University | Emre Cecen |
| 3 | Shkodra University "Luigj Gurakuqi" | Prof. Brilanda Bushati |
| 4 | Polytechnic University of Tirana | Mr. Gjergj Islami  |
| 5 | Univerzitet Donja Gorica | Prof. Dr. Dragica Zugic |
| 6 | University of Montenegro | Prof. Dr. Biljana Scepanovic |

Table : Local Quality Control Officers

Tasks of the local QC teams are:

* Preparation and use of all necessary material (questionnaires, forms, etc.) and guidelines.
* Report every six months to the QMC.

The responsible person in local QC working group reports every six months to the QMC, which after visiting each partner university will prepare progress reports on activities and results and submit them to the SC for approval and decision on corrective actions.

The coordinator requests for all necessary actions, defined by SC, which should be taken in order to correct possible deviations.

# Areas of Quality Monitoring and Control

Figure 2 shows key areas where Quality Monitoring and Control will be conducted with responsible Quality Officers that will be responsible for the evaluations. Major quality monitoring activities will be made in Project implementation. Base areas according to Figure 2 are: Deliverables, Equipment and Dissemination Activities. Besides, the Project Meetings, Workshops, Seminars and Conferences as well as Partner Cooperation & Collaboration should be monitored and controlled.



Figure : Key areas where Quality Monitoring and Control will be conducted

Task of QMC members are:

* Participation at Quality Plan (QP) development – which will be presented and approved by the Steering Committee at the beginning of the project (procedures, sheets, templates, recommendations, guidelines etc.)
* QMC will receive reports each six months from Local QC Officer
* QMC will, after visiting each partner university, prepare yearly progress reports on activities and results and submit them to the SC for approval and decision on corrective actions.
* Prepare Terms of References (TOR) and Tender for engaging two External QC Experts

QMC Deliverables are:

* Quality Plan  M4
* Yearly progress report on activities and results
* TOR and Tender for Ext. QC Exps.

## Evaluation of the progress of the project and performance of the partners

According to the project documentation and project plan the deliverables and the duties of the partners were identified. Besides, the planned time of task executions was considered. According to these criteria the questionnaire was formed to self-assess particular deliverables and partner performance. Provided questionnaires should be filled in for each evaluation period. Questionnaires will provide the information about a) individual project partner performance, b) status of particular Work Package and c) cross-check by asking Work Package leaders to indicate the performance of other Work Package partners.

## Work Package Questionnaire Design

Work Package Questionnaire will be filled in by each individual project partner. This questionnaire will ask in detail about the activities that were carried out in order to deliver particular Work Package. Questionnaire will also ask about the state of the realisation of particular activities. The questionnaire will obtain the information about possible delays at particular task implementations and what has been done to improve the situation. People are encouraged to provide additional suggestions and comments.

Special questionnaire will be provided for the Work Package (WP) Leaders. This questionnaire will provide and information about the progress as well as the difficulties at the realization of the individual Work Package. It will show the activities carried out by each WP Team during the indicated monitored period. Questionnaire will provide and information about the current state of realization and if the state corresponds to the work plan. WP leaders are invited to explain, first, the reasons for the delay and, second, what has been done to improve the situation. The last section of the report sheet is dedicated to the assessment of the partnerships in the project consortium. In the case that there are complaints about the cooperation, there is space to identify the partners who did not meet commitments and to describe what measures have been employed for improvement.

## Evaluation Reports

For each evaluation period, an evaluation report will be prepared. The Internal Mid QC Term report will be delivered every six months. Yearly QC Reports will be delivered on M12, M24, M36.

Report on the overall implementation of the project activities as well as on the curricula development and implementation will be provided.

This report will contain a description of the method, the timeline, the response of the partners, the findings and the suggestions by the partners or WP leaders. In report’s conclusion, if necessary, suggestions for corrective actions will be submitted to SC for approval. A sample of the applied questionnaire and the documentation of the answers in an excel table complete the evaluation reports. The reports are confidential and used only within the project consortium. The necessary content of the Evaluation Report will be continuously managed and, if necessary, adjusted.

## Timetable for Quality Control

Internal quality control will be performed on: M2, M4, M6, M8, M10, M12, M13, M14, M16, M17, M18, M19, M20, M22, M24, M25, M26, M28, M29, M30, M31, M32, M34, M36.

External quality control will be performed on: M3, M6, M9, M12, M15, M18, M21, M23, M24, M27, M30, M33, M35, M36.

QC should be performed according to the Work Packages task timeline, that is shown in Table 2 (specifying only the start dates).

QMC will prepare midterm quality reports as well as end year reports. Each partner is responsible for Quality Control where leading the particular Work Package.

Table 2 shows Work Packages with the start date at which the quality control activities should start for particular task within Work Package

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Activities |  | Start date |
| Ref.nr/ Sub-ref nr  | Title  |  |
| WP1  | Monitoring and analysing of national systems and policies of doctoral education in Montenegro and Albania and comparing with EU practices |  |
| A1.1 | Evaluation of the existing doctoral education policy and standards in Montenegro and Albania and comparing with EU practices | M2 |
| A1.2 | Organization of a Conference on doctoral education in Montenegro and Albania | M5 |
| A1.3 | Recommendations and purpose of basic legal documents on university and national levels | M4 |
| WP2 DEV | Training of Montenegrin and Albanian academic staff and professionals/administration in doctoral education |  |
| A2.1 | Training of academic and professional staff on EU practices of doctoral education | M3 |
| A2.2 | Creating a Guidelines and recommendations for WB academics and professionals in doctoral studies | M11 |
| WP3 DEV  | WP3: Establishing a new model of funding doctoral studies on national levels.  |  |
| A3.1 | Evaluation of models for funding doctoral studies in Montenegro and Albania | M5 |
| A3.2 | Adoption of bylaws on funding doctoral studies in Montenegro | M8 |
| A3.3 | Adoption of bylaws on funding doctoral studies in Albania | M8 |
| WP4 DEV  | Establishment and start-up of Joint Pilot Doctoral Schools  |  |
| A4.1 | Development of the Curricula for joint Doctoral Schools | M11 |
| A4.2 | Equipping the laboratories and other infrastructure at partner universities | M2 |
| WP5:  | Quality plan |  |
| A5.1 | Internal Quality Control | M2 |
| A5.2 | External Quality Control | M3 |
| WP6:  | Dissemination of the project |  |
| A6.1 | Creation and updating project web site | M1 |
| A6.2 | Creating and distribution of dissemination documents | M1 |
| WP7:  | Explotation and Sustainability of the project results  |  |
| A7.1  | Regular meetings about MARDS flow with stakeholders | M2 |
| A7.2 | Universities – stakeholders networking in Montenegro and Albania | M4 |
| WP8:  | Management of the project  |  |
| A8.1  | Daily management of the project | M1 |
| A8.2 | Precise guidelines for management of the project | M1 |
| A8.3 | Regular meetings of project bodies | M2 |
| A8.4 | Reporting (progress, quality, financial) | M6 |

Table : Work packages with the start date

Key indicators, that should be considered in QC when evaluating the performance of partnes within WPs are gathered in Table 3 and Table 4.

Quality of short term impact should be assessed according to the following quantitative and qualitative indicators (Table 3):

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Short term impact**  | **Target groups/potential beneficiaries**  | **Quantitative indicators**  | **Qualitative indicators**  |
| Overview of the “state of the art in PhD education in Albania and Montenegro”  | Staff, students, industry, government and society at large  | SWOT analysis about all elements important to get conclusion and define policy, report  | Description and systemised text about this issue  |
| Conference about “state of the art in PhD education in Albania and Montenegro”  | Researcher, University leadership, professional staff, students, industry, government and society at large  | Number of interested and enrolled authors, proceedings from Conference  | Increased public awareness of this problem  |
| Training of Montenegrin and Albanian academic staff and professionals/administ ration in doctoral education  | Academic staff and professionals involved in doctoral education in Albania and Montenegro  | Number of trained staff (around 50)  | Improved possibilities of staff, professionals, administrative to implement new policy and Joint Programmes  |

Table : Overview of short term impact indicators

Quality of long term impact should be assessed according to the following quantitative and qualitative indicators (Table 4):

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Long term impact**  | **Target groups/potential beneficiaries**  | **Quantitative indicators**  | **Qualitative indicators**  |
| Reformed doctoral education system in both countries  | Students, Researcher, University leadership, professional staff , Industry, Society  | The increased percent of the enrolled students by new reformed scheme  | The reformatted system in both countries  |
| Reformed PhD funding system in Montenegro and Albania  | Students Staff Administrate Industry Society  | Number of funded student according the new scheme (about 30 in both countries)  | The reformatted system in both countries  |
| New Joint Doctoral Schools "Natural sciences and Technology for Sustainable Development" with place in Montenegro (Podgorica)  | Students Staff Industry Society Universities  | Number of enrolled students in first generation and by years For first generation is expected 30 students to be enrolled  | New joint PhD programme in Albania and Montenegro in one very interesting field  |
| New Doctoral Schoold Joint “Economy and Tourism for Sustainable Development”  | Students Staff Industry Society Universities | Number of enrolled students in first generation and by years. For first generation is expected 30 students to be enrolled  | New joint PhD programme in Albania and Montenegro in one very interesting field |
| PhD Internship programme provided   | Students Staff EU and PC    | At least 10 PhD students at each WBC HEIs involved in intership programme   | Students will gain research knowledge and skills from EU partners in the field of their intersts   |
| The university – stakeholder cooperation network established   | Academic staff students industry Ministries   | Students involved in the internship programme, industry involved in the creation of curricula, ministry supported   | PhD Students will gain new knowledge and skills, academic staff will have possibilities to create new projects with industry and to cooperate with Ministry   |

Table : Overview of long term impact indicators

# Definition of Project Quality

The MARDS project will be successful if the impact will be manifested as stated in Table 3 – short time impacts as well as long term impacts stated in Table 4. Here the main, goals of the project are stated. Surely, other outcomes should also be considered such as consortium cooperation, dissemination etc.

# Evaluation of the Project Implementation

Project implementation will be accessed according to the indicators in Table 3 and Table 4. Besides, the questionnaire will be used to gather assessment from the project partners as well as students.

Questionnaire should include the following information:

“Describe the activities that were carried out since the start of the project and describe to what extent, the results achieved are contributing to the project objectives”.

“Describe Strenghts / Weaknesess”.

# Evaluation of the Project Meetings

Meetings are important for the good outcome of the project. Evaluation of the meetings will be performed by the post-meeting surveys. The example of the survey for the Kick-off meeting is in the appendix. Leaders of the events are responsible for performing the post-event surveys and apply corrective actions.

# Evaluation of the Workshops, seminars, conferences

After each workshop, seminar or conference, that will be organized by the project consortium all participants should be invited to fill-in a feedback-form in order to evaluate the quality of the organization, the input provided by each speaker, etc.

# Evaluation of the Partner Cooperation & Collaboration

For the Evaluation of the Partner Cooperation & Collaboration members of consortium should answer the following questions:

How much you were involved at a different stage of the project (1-not involved, 5-very involved):

* Implementation of project activities ( ➀ ➁ ➂ ➃ ➄ )
* Dissemination of project results ( ➀ ➁ ➂ ➃ ➄ )
* Internal monitoring of the project ( ➀ ➁ ➂ ➃ ➄ )
* mOverall Management of the project ( ➀ ➁ ➂ ➃ ➄ )

What was the average time necessary to get answers to your questions by other co-beneficiaries?

* Less than 1 day
* 1 day
* A few days
* Over 1 week

How do you rate your satisfaction with communication standards and procedures?

(very poor <- ➀ ➁ ➂ ➃ ➄ very good ->)

Overall, how well did project partners work together?

* Very well
* Quite well
* Not well as

What were the main problems in the cooperation between members of the project consortia?

# Evaluation of the Deliverables

For the Evaluation of the Deliverables members of consortium should answer the following questions:

What are the main problems in the cooperation?

Did the project achieve the envisaged outputs? (Yes / No / Partially)

How would you assesss the quality of the outputs achieved?

* Exceded expectations
* Met expectations
* Did not meed our expectations

What do you see as the project’s main achievements at this stage?

# Evaluation of the Equipment

For the Evaluation of the Equipment members of consortium should answer the following questions:

Please, outline the equipment purchased.

Where has the equipment been installed?

Who will benefit from it and have access to it and what are the plans for future maintenance.

Please also describe the activities that you plan to carry out before the end of the project, in relation to the equipment purchased and installed. If unforeseen changes in your original plan occurred, indicate the type of changes and the measures taken to address them.

# Evaluation of the Dissemination Activities

For the Evaluation of the Dissemination Activities members of consortium should answer the following questions:

Please describe what has been done to disseminate the results of the activities carried out to date, both within the framework of the project and outside the project.

In particular, you should refer to the definition of tasks and the dissemination channels used to make the project results available to larger audience. Please indicate any change which occurred in comparison with the original plans for dissemination and the activities you plan to carry out before the end of the project, to disseminate the project results.

# Sustainability

For the Evaluation of the Sustainability members of consortium should answer the following questions:

Will elements of the project and practices created be continued in your organization after the end of the project? (Yes / No)

Please indicate which elements will be continued and how?

Do you anticipate to have regular contact with your project partners after the endo fo the project

(Yes with all of them / Yes with some of them / NO))

Do you plan any joint activities with consortium members after the project? (Yes, No).

Please specify those activities

# Risk Management

The following possible risks were identified:

* Lack of communication between partners
* Workforce Capacity
* Prolonged tenders for the purchase of the equipment
* Lack of engagement, poor attendance and drop-out
* Disagreement between partners
* Timely delivery and quality
* External events

For each identified risk the mitigation actions should be taken.

# Annexes

# Annex A: Sample of the meeting evaluation (Kick off Meeting)

MARDS Erasmus+ February 2019 Kick off Meeting Questionnaire

Kick off meeting questionnaire of MARDS Erasmus+ Project held in Podgorica from 20.2. to 23.2. 2019 [Reforming doctoral studies in Montenegro and Albania - good practice paradigm 598465-EPP1-2018-1-ME-EPPKA2-CBHE-SP].

Your responses will be treated in strict confidentiality.

\* Mandatory

# General data

1. Country of origin

 Albania

 Austria

 Croatia

 Montenegro

 Slovakia

 Slovenia

1. Institution \*

*Mark only one.*

 University

 Ministry

 Chamber of Commerce

 Association

 Other

# Meeting organization

1. Information (about travel, accommodation etc.) received before the meeting from host partner, responding in time \* *Mark only one.*

 1 2 3 4 5

Not good at all

Very good

4 General organization during the meeting \* *Mark only one.*

 1 2 3 4 5

Not good at all

Very good

5. Domestic arrangements (accommodation, transport, meals etc.) \* *Mark only one.*

 1 2 3 4 5

Not good at all

Very good

# Meeting contents

1. Goals of the project and workpackages were explained well. \* *Mark only one.*

 1 2 3 4 5

Strongly disagree

Strongly agree

1. How would you rate the quality of the presentations from the lead partner and other partners? \*

*Mark only one.*

 1 2 3 4 5

Not good at all

Very good / outstanding

1. The role of your organization in the project was very well explained. \* *Mark only one.*

 1 2 3 4 5

Strongly disagree

Strongly agree

1. Do you know what is required of you for the next phase of the project (up to the next project meeting)? \*

*Mark only one.*

 1 2 3 4 5

I don't know at all

The requirements are well defined

# Quality of Project partnership

10 The perceived commitment to the project by each partner (fulfilling the responsibilities set out at this project meeting) is very high \* *Mark only one.*

 1 2 3 4 5

Strongly disagree

Strongly agree

1. Communication amongst partners was effective \* *Mark only one.*
	1. 2 3 4 5

Strongly disagree

Strongly agree

1. Development of teamwork and positive attitudes was evident \* *Mark only one.*
	1. 2 3 4 5

Strongly disagree

Strongly agree

# Management and coordination

1. The information (on tasks, materials for the meeting etc.) received before the meeting from the coordinator \* *Mark only one.*

Not good at all

Very good

1. The coordinator facilitated understanding of the objectives and work plan for the next period \*

*Mark only one.*

Strongly disagree

Strongly agree

1. The coordinator facilitates communication and collaboration between partners. Everyone was encouraged to contribute to discussion. \* *Mark only one.*

Strongly disagree

Strongly agree

16 The meeting has been prepared and managed in the most (resource) efficient way in order to make best use of the available meeting time \* *Mark only one.*

 1 2 3 4 5

Strongly disagree

Strongly agree

17. How satisfied are you with the overall communication amongst the partners to date? \* *Mark only one.*

* + - 1. 2 3 4 5

Not at all

Very satisfied

# General impression

1. Please write at least two strengths (positive aspects) of this project meeting

1. Please write at least two weaknesses of this project meeting

1. What should be taken into account for the next meeting / suggestions?

# Literature

PRIDE (2016). “Evaluation and Quality Plan”, Project number: 540332-LLP-1-2013-1-AT-ERASMUS-EIGF.

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