

DRAFTING OF COMMON AND FLEXIBLE RULES AND LEGISLATION FOR THE ASSESSMENT OF HEIS IN LINE WITH NATIONAL REFORM PRIORITIES AND ONGOING EUROPEAN DEVELOPMENTS





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TABLE OF CONTENT

1. MAIN AIM OF THIS DOCUMENT	7
2. CUBRIK PROJECT	9
2.1. Background (in 2010)	9
2.2. Consortium	14
2.3. The project idea	19
2.4. Project main outcomes and implementation	24
3. NATIONAL ROUND TABLES	37
3.1. Round tables Description	37
3.1.1. Round table in the Republic of Serbia	37
3.1.2. Round Table in Bosnia and Herzegovina	39
3.1.3. Round table in the Republic of Macedonia	41
3.2. Round tables main outcomes	42
3.2.1. Main conclusions from the Round Table in the Republic of Serbia	42
3.2.2. Main conclusions from the Round Table in Bosnia and Herzegovina	43
3.2.3 Main conclusions from the Round Table in the Republic of Macedonia	44

4. DRAFTING OF COMMON AND FLEXIBLE RULES AND LEGISLATION FOR THE ASSESSMENT OF HEIS IN LINE WITH NATIONAL REFORM PRIORITIES AND ONGOING EUROPEAN DEVELOPMENTS	47
4.1. Other project activities from which we draw our recommendations.....	47
4.1.1. Conducting assessments and accreditation of Partner Countries Universities (ACT 5.1+5.2).....	47
4.1.2. Conducting assessments and accreditation of Partner Countries Quality Assurance Agencies (ACT 5.3+5.4).....	49
4.2. Survey	52
4.2.1. Survey for HEIs description	52
4.2.2. Survey for Quality Assurance Agencies description.....	53
4.2.3. Overview of answers from HEIs.....	54
4.2.4. Analysis for each HEI.....	55
 5. GLOBAL ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	 75
5.1. Basic Principles of European Standards and guidelines	75
5.2. Purposes of the European Standards and Guidelines	76
5.3. Objectives of the European Standards and Guidelines	76
5.3.1. Policy and procedures for quality assurance ESG 1.1	77
5.3.2. Approval, monitoring and periodic review of programmes and awards ESG 1.2	79
5.3.3. Assessment of students ESG 1.3.....	81
5.3.4. Quality assurance of teaching staff ESG 1.4.....	83
5.3.5. Learning resources and student support ESG 1.5	84
5.3.6. Information systems ESG 1.6.....	85
5.3.7. Public information ESG 1.7.....	86
 References.....	 89



1. MAIN AIM OF THIS DOCUMENT

The main aim of this document *"Drafting of common and flexible rules and legislation for the assessment of HEIs in line with national reform priorities and ongoing European developments"* has the main focus of bringing together the main conclusions drawn from the CUBRIK activities, mainly National Round Tables and pilot assessments processes of both the Higher Education Institutions and Quality Assurance Agencies members of the CUBRIK project. The results of this experience are some recommendations for national authorities to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republic of Serbia and Republic of Macedonia to improve their legislations in Quality Assurance in the field of Higher Education Institutions.

2. CUBRIK PROJECT

2.1. Background (in 2010)

The most radical changes in the educational systems of post-communist societies have occurred in the field of Higher Education. University autonomy, accountability, but also **quality assurance (QA)** has been identified as **one of the most critical area for countries in transition**, which have the mission to develop a strong and skilled workforce. Especially in South East European (SEE) countries are facing a growing demand for skilled labour force. Beyond the question of numbers of students, Balkan countries also face significant problems with the quality assurance that adversely affects the quality of Higher Education institutions (HEIs).

The World Bank publication *“From fragmentation to cooperation: Tertiary Education, Research and development in South Eastern Europe”* (2008) underlines several issues affecting the state of the art of the Quality Assurance in the South Eastern Europe Region: a) **procedures for internal and external quality assurance of Higher Education in SEE are to a large extent inefficient and out of line with recent European developments**; and b) the countries in SEE, in fact, face a **major challenge in establishing effective external quality assurance systems at the national level**.

Insufficient internal and external QA procedures in PCs

No structured and coherent QA system at HEIs

Indeed **SEE authorities are still facing challenges in assisting universities in establishing a structured and coherent system for quality assurance (QA)**. Most are recently created.

B&H: need for experience and use it to support HEIs

In **BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA (B&H)**, the Agency for Development of Higher Education and Quality Assurance has been fully operational only since January 2008. Newly charged with identifying and setting criteria in quality assessment for Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), it has expressed great interest in cooperating with EU organisations and universities in order to enhance its reach, especially in coping with demands from B&H universities, some of which have already begun reforms since 2001. As such, the Agency, like most of those in SEE, faces two challenges – in quickly and effectively **acquiring experience in quality assurance management** and after that **translating that newly acquired expertise into assisting universities** through policies and guidelines. Even when there are guidelines in place, a link between tools and strategies is missing.

Macedonia: need for QA linked with strategy & policy making

In **MACEDONIA**, quality assurance is introduced by the introduction of 2000 Law on Higher Education QA. A quality cycle is therefore in place, providing for the mechanics of quality assurance. However, **quality assurance in Macedonia lacks stronger links with the larger question of institutional strategy and policymaking** (*Quality assurance in higher education: from analyses to improvement: Guidelines for Macedonia with a view to current practices in Europe, 2005*). Consequently, actions taken under quality assurance are merely reactive and **do not fully contribute towards enhancing long-term university management**. At institutional level, two issues affect SEE universities – the lack of training of personnel and of tools. Reviewing the universities of Kiment Ohridski, the 2008 report on Macedo-

nia supports stronger coordination with other universities and bodies involved in quality assurance in order to address challenges from the lack of training, evaluation tools and experience. It was also found that in cases there has been some international experience involving aspects of quality assurance, a few universities, departments or programmes in B&H has been undergone rigorous external review.

*Serbia: need for
QA & assessment
system*

Studies conducted in the **SERBIA** in January 2007 by the OECD and UNICEF demonstrably recommend a **clear need for an establishment of internal and external quality assurance and assessment system**. This is recognised by the Ministry of Education and Sports in their report on Serbian Higher Education Reform 2004. In the course for greater autonomy from external influences including the State, many Serbian universities have **poor management culture**. As such, there is a **lack of internal and external assessment**.

CHALLENGES:

*HEIs: no expertise
in QA*

*Nationally: poor
coordination among
HEIs & authorities*

*Regionally: lack of
cooperation*

Overall, the **UNIVERSITIES IN BOSNIA, MACEDONIA AND SERBIA FACE CHALLENGES AT THREE LEVELS**. At the university level, there is **insufficient expertise in quality assurance** both in terms of personnel, tools and information on the university performance criteria. At the national level, there is **poor coordination/communication between responsible national bodies and universities**. At the regional level **lack of cooperation between Ministries, Quality Assurance Agencies and Universities**. Serbia, Macedonia and Bosnia have signed the Bologna Process in the same year 2003, since then they have come into the stage of a wider Higher Education scheme. From isolation to cooperation, and as part of their European commitment, Ministers from the region have started to consider areas where

regional cooperation could be strengthened for the benefit of all. This is particularly important in relation to reaching the Bologna goals of developing quality assurance systems, and promoting the mobility of students, academic and administrative staff. However, very **few are the initiatives that foster regional cooperation in the region and the last Higher Education development at ministerial level has been taken unilaterally.**

Drawing conclusions and recommendations from the conference, *"Strengthening Higher Education and Research in South-east Europe – Priorities for Regional and European Cooperation March 2006"*, Ministries of Education and the EUA underlined the **need for regional cooperation particularly in developing quality assurance systems.** Regional cooperation is a must that has not been taken seriously so far.

CUBRIK:

- enhanced QA
- better coordination
- inter-institutional liaison
- networking
- sharing of good practices
- QA Observatory
- capacity building
- pilot assessment process
- dissemination

Thus, the **CUBRIK PROJECT HAS BEEN CONCEIVED TO SUPPORT INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS, EFFICIENCY AND INTERNAL GOVERNANCE IN SEE HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS.** By including universities and national QAA in the region, the outcomes of the action will result in an **enhanced capacity in quality assurance** in each institution while contributing towards **greater coordination.** Concretely, the action will **increase inter-institutional liaison, networking and sharing of best-practices** by the creation of a network of experts. Secondly, it will set up a **quality assurance observatory** in order to agree on common practices, track the last development and foster benchmarking initiatives. Foster the creation of **integral strategies** supported by data evidence and based on the constitution of **common values.** Strengthen **capacity building through targeted training programme** and improve technical capacity by the **conducting external institutional assessment**

within HEIs. Lastly, the action will widely **disseminate** project results within SEE institutions.

Results from the action will be **useful to other quality assurance agencies in the region** such as those in B&H, Macedonia and Serbia. Overall, the action will encourage a **vigorous and integral Quality Assurance culture implementation in the SEE higher education institutions.**

*CUBRIK consortium:
complementary skills
and expertise*

The consortium draws from the pool of European expertise in quality assurance, involving **various universities and agencies with complementary skills** and as such, featuring the wide range of **European excellence** in HE management. The **idea for the action has been designed in response to interest from institutions in target region.** Indeed many projects have established or are actually establishing internal quality assurance systems but **lack the external evaluation framework and regional cooperation focus.**

Exchange of information and **ideas** about the creation of multiregional project in the Balkans was discussed and supported partners Accreditation agencies, which expressed their **willingness to integrate the project.** The newly set-up Bosnian QAA contact was provided by the Bosnian Tempus Office, quickly they decided to join the project as they are looking for good-practices and international cooperation.

Last but not least, the development and implementation of a coherent external quality culture within the partner Universities and Quality Assurance Agencies provide a **benchmark for further Universities and for the development**

of a comprehensive quality system in the region and thus strengthen the inter-regional and governmental initiatives.

2.2. Consortium

*CUBRIK consortium:
main actors in QA in
the PCs*

The CUBRIK consortium has been designed to **bring together the main actors involved in QA in Partner Countries**: Universities, Ministries of HE and QA Agencies and also to have **EU partners of different nature** (HEIs and QAAs) to have a variety of good practices on both internal and external quality assurance processes.

Universidad de Alicante (UA), grant holder of the project whose particular field of interest lays within the context of international cooperation, and particularly the training of university management staff to aid the integration of countries in transition and develops its international status and networks. Universidad de Alicante, offers over fifty degree courses and is home to more than 30,000 students. Since 2001 a complete strategy has been launched for UA institutional accreditation by the National Evaluation and Accreditation Agency (ANECA). The university has also a broad experience in managing international projects on quality assurance as ALTAIR (Contract N°144789-Tempus-2008-ES-JPGR Arab Countries) and AFRIQUNITS (Contract N° 9 – ACP/Edulink – RPR – 12 # 25) and has been involved in a number of Tempus Project in the Balkans: CONTINUED Project JEP- 41148-2006 (Serbia) and CREDIT Project SCM-C014A05, etc.

The main mission of the **Ministry of Education of Spain (MECD)** is to ensure the quality education is being provided for the students through the formulation of policies and the introduction of legislation. Apart from providing assistance to students to de-

velop their potential to the full, the Ministry also delivers professional services to institutions and to individuals.

The **Federal Ministry of Education and Science of Federation Bosnia & Herzegovina** performs administrative and professional tasks related to the competencies of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the areas of standards for university-level education, development and improvement of HEIs, coordination of activities...etc.

The **Ministry of Science and Technology of Republic of Srpska** (in B&H) is ambitious to strengthen the international collaboration and teams up with other organizations in scheme demonstration, assessment, acceptance and policy making of quality assurance projects. It also encourages the synergy of HEIs through tangible and intangible means as well as disseminates the importance of quality assurance in multi channels.

Focusing on education excellence for global competitiveness of the students is one of the objectives of the **Ministry of Education of the Republic of Serbia**. The Ministry tailors distinctive policies so as to bring enhancement to its education system and benefit to institutions at different levels.

The **Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Macedonia** involves and supports all kinds of educational activities in order to improve and maintain the quality of education. It draws up development plans and implements appropriate regulations to enhance the quality and effectiveness of education, and to encourage international collaboration.

Erasmushogeschool Brussel (EhB), also known as Erasmus University College Brussels offers 24 bachelor's and 11 master's degrees to more than 4,500 students at six different departments with about 20 areas of study. The adaptation of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) at the University facilitates both curriculum comparison and student exchanges. Moreover, the University created the Brussels University Association in 2003 together with the University of Brussels, so as to have their master's degree programmes parallel the academic requirements of the Bologna declaration. EhB employs the TRIS model (adaptation of the EFQM) to assess its study programmes.

University of College Cork (UCC) – National University of Ireland Cork was established in 1845 and it is one of the leading research institutions in the Ireland that attracts an approximate 16,000 full-time students, including about 2,000 students around the globe. The quality assurance has engaged UCC and the Quality Promotion Unit was then founded. The University has a great amount of experience in working on QA in the Balkans.

ASIIN Consult GmbH is the Accreditation Agency for Degree Programmes in Engineering, Informatics, Natural Sciences and Mathematics. As a membership-based association, ASIIN represents German (technical) universities and universities of applied sciences, associations from the fields of technology and natural sciences, scientific societies and umbrella organisations from industry and trade unions. ASIIN has been a project partner in the EUR-ACE project and is currently involved as project partner in the EUR-ACE Implementation Project and the TEMPUS PRO-EAST Project.

Austrian Agency for Quality Assurance. The independent and non-profit organisation, Austrian Agency for Quality Assurance (AQA), was born in 2004, which aims at promoting and maintaining the quality assurance for the entire higher education sector. Being a member of international networks for QA (ENQA, CEENetwork and INQAAHE) and cooperating with European and international agencies, AQA offers quality audit, support for the developing of QM processes in HEIs and, evaluation and accreditation of study programmes and organisation units.

The **Higher Education Accreditation Board of the Republic of Macedonia** is an independent body, which has brought into force in 2000 is accountable to both external evaluation and overall quality assessment of the faculties within the HEIs in the Republic of Macedonia.

Bosnia and Herzegovina agency for Development of Higher Education and Quality Assurance (HEA) is an independent public organization whose competences are to set quality standards, analyse and advise HEIs regarding to matter of QA.

The **Accreditation and Quality Evaluation Commission of Serbia (CAQA)**, established under the new Law on Higher Education of 2005, is now responsible for quality assurance in higher education jointly with the Higher Education Council.

The **University of Banja Luka (UBL)** provides a scholarly environment to an approximate 17,000 students in B&H. Since the establishment in 1975, a diversion of project involvement can be seen in its participation of more than 45 European projects: Tempus, FP6 and FP7 projects. UBL has

an office for QA, and the Senate has appointed Quality Assurance Committee.

University of Mostar: Serving as a higher education institution for approximately 15,000 at 9 faculties, the University of Mostar was established in 1977 in B&H. One of the main interests of the University lies within the field of quality assurance and it has continuously taken part in projects of QA: JEP-41055-2006; JEP-41078-2006.

University of Tuzla: Pioneered the implementation of ECTS in B&H. The 37 year development, since 1976, has brought the University of Tuzla to become one of the important universities in the country and it is home to 20,000 undergraduates and postgraduates. The University has a long history of cooperation in different aspects as well as distinctive projects with TEMPUS, FP 7...etc.

The **University of Zenica** is home for some 5,000 students. The Office for quality at UNZE has actively involved in different projects with other universities in B&H and project partners from abroad. Tempus QA projects undertaken are: JEP-19074-2004; CM-SCM-C024A06-2006; JEP-41078-2006.

University St. Kliment Ohridski: Established in 1979 and being the second state university in Republic of Macedonia is educating 13,000 students. Given the significance in its region, one of the main interests is in the framework of quality assurance enhancement, which can be seen in its participation of several Tempus projects: C022A06-2006; C016A06-2006; C011B05-2005.

State University of Tetovo: Situated in the western Macedonia, SUT has a combination of both Albanian and Macedonian students. SUT has collaborated with various international academ-

ic units and the Quality Assurance Office has been set up. University of Tetovo has participated in the Tempus project QUALIMUM – Quality Management at Universities in Macedonia in 2007.

The **University of Kragujevac** was founded in 1976 with a total student population of 15,500. University of Kragujevac has implemented QA system in both faculty- and university-level and the QA system at university-level. UK has joined different projects to improve the QA management.

University of Novi Sad: As a second largest among six state universities in Serbia, the University of Novi Sad embraces over 40,000 students at undergraduate studies and doctoral degrees. Founded in 1960, the 14 faculties cover four major towns of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina.

The **University of Niš** is a unique university in the area of southeast Serbia. Since its establishment in 1965, almost 5 decades ago, more than 40,000 students have graduated and a thousand doctoral dissertations have been defended. Given the importance of the University of Niš, it attracts approximately 25,000 students while numbers of them are from abroad. The University has also set up a Centre for Quality Improvement, which aims at enhancing the quality of the University of Niš as a whole.

2.3. The project idea

*QA is a challenge
for the Western
Balkans Region*

The creation of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) is taking place in parallel with a process of increasing globalisation of higher education. The education systems of South East Europe have chosen to express their commitment to Europe at the same time as having to function in

an increasingly global environment. **In the wider context of the globalization of higher education, quality assurance has become a key challenge for national authorities and institutions across the region.**

Systematic and effective QA mechanisms at HEIs

Almost all countries have **established national agencies** in charge of **quality evaluation** and **accreditation**. So far the evaluation has focused on study programmes and internal assessments of university. Given the small size of the respective higher education systems, the introduction of **more systematic and effective institutional quality assurance mechanisms**, including a wider European dimension, becomes ever more important.

QAA needs to be evaluated

Agencies of quality evaluation and accreditation also need to be properly evaluated.

Regional QA with HEIs QAA and Ministries

Whereas internal quality assurance systems at national level have been implemented or are being implemented (Tempus project for internal quality assurance in Bosnia 2004-2008, Serbia currently running, and Macedonia 2006-2007) within universities, the **external dimension of Quality Assurance at regional level integrating universities, Quality Assurance Agencies and Ministries of Higher Education has been left behind**. Integrated structural measures need to recognize the importance to work in **parallel with internal and external Quality Assurance policies** in order to multiply the effects of the benefits and positive outcomes.

Internal & external QA policies

CUBRIK main objective & specific objectives

Taking into account the initial need analysis and the experience of European partners in the relevant domain, the project aims to contribute to **"Strengthening Quality Assurance System within Western Balkans HEIs in support of National and Regional Planning."** More explicitly the project specific objectives are:

- Creation of a **quality assurance framework** through the development of **common QA practices** and **network** at **national** and **regional level**.
- Strengthening **capacity building** through **targeted training programme** and **pilot assessment** activities for the external institutional assessment of Universities and Quality Assurance Agencies in Western Balkans.

To address these specific objectives the following outcomes will be realized:

CUBRIK milestones

- Creation of a **functional framework for the QA implementation**: Increase inter-institutional liaison, network-ing and sharing of best-practices by the creation of a net-work of expert, development of an information system and drafting of study trend analysis
- Set up a **Western Balkans Quality Assurance Obser-vatory** in order to agree on common practices, track the last development and foster benchmarking initiatives
- Defining **common guidelines and methodologies for QA at national and regional level** that foster the cre-ation of integral strategies supported by data evidence and based on the constitution of common values
- Strengthen **capacity building** through **targeted training programmes**
- Improve technical capacity by the conducting **External Institutional Assessment within HEIs**
- Widely **disseminate project results** within Western Bal-kans institutions and contribute to the Bologna process by creating attractiveness of the European higher edu-cation

4 implem. levels:

- National
- University
- Regional
- Agency

The reform content of the project is based at **four level of implementation** towards the achievement of the specific objectives. At **NATIONAL** and **UNIVERSITY** level the reform content gave as result the implementation of internal and external quality assurance practices in line with the European experience of the EFQM Excellence Model and ESGs (HEIs+QAA). A common methodology for the institutional assessment has been introduced and benchmark will be made possible.

At **REGIONAL** level the project achieved the creation of the QA Observatory to foster regional initiatives as an excellent starting point in order to encourage regional cooperation. The experience of the national round tables followed by the regional ones on the same topic serves to create a precedent in making the national issues a regional concern. Also the review and adaptation of legislation conducted to the improvement of new legislation that will be integrated within the SEE higher education reform.

CUBRIK
sustainability

The **project methodology** has been developed according to the **experience of the EU partners** in the implementation of similar actions. The consortium believes that the creation of **SUSTAINABLE QUALITY ASSURANCE STRUCTURES** through the creation of a **Network of Experts** and the setting up of the **QA Observatory** followed by the revision of existing quality assurance would set up the basis for regional cooperation.

Capacity building
+ infrastructure
+ assessment
activities

Additionally, the core project methodology consists in **building capacity through targeted trainings and strengthening of physical infrastructure** followed by **practical implementation of assessment activities**. Indeed the trainings have been designed according to the **needs identified** during the preparation of the project proposal and cover the full spectrum necessary for the implementation of the **external quality assurance culture**

within the **partner Universities and QAA** including the practical observation session within the European Partners institutions.

The **network of experts** has been created as well as the **QA Observatory** and data have been collected and analysed within the ***Study trend analysis of SEE-Universities and EES-QAA***. Stakeholder's expectations have been assessed and possible path of collaboration identified. After having implemented the set of activities foreseen, the consortium defined **common methodologies and guidelines for QA at national and regional level**.

Indeed top managers from SEE universities, QAA and Ministers have been invited to make a **national round table** for the adjustment and review of existing national legal frameworks, the analysis have been then made at regional level with a special emphasis on adopting regional legislation on the HEIs assessment in line with national reform priorities and on-going European developments.

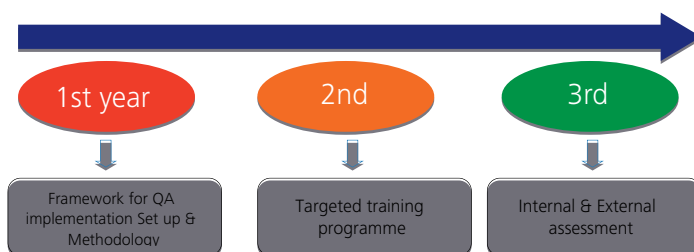
After that, the **external assessment of universities and QQAs** took place. Concerning the SEE universities, **training** has been first provided by EU partners on the Institutional Assessment Model and EFQM/TRIS Excellence Model, then self-assessment methodologies and external review and accreditation followed by the particle exercise of assessing the university at the institutional level. As the **involvement of stakeholders** has been identified as critical for the successful implementation of quality culture within an institution, the assessments will include identification of methods and practical implementation of processes for the inclusion of different stakeholders and in particular the inclusion of stu-

dents. Furthermore, Ministries and QAA will be invited to participate in the process.

The final step of the CUBRIK project consisted in the **training of the external assessment of QAA** following the European Standards and Guidelines for the evaluation of European Higher Education Institutions. Here also **stakeholders** have been invited to participate in the assessment activities. The exercise provided a unique opportunity for capacity building through training workshop and the acquirement of practical knowledge in the external assessment of QAA.

2.4. Project main outcomes and implementation

The project has been divided in three main phases that correspond to each year as showed below:



CUBRIK is a 3 years project	As we can see from the figure above, the first project year was devoted to set up the basis for the project implementation and make a more in-depth analysis of the trends in Quality Assurance among HEIs. Then, during the second project implementation year, the trainings on the pre-established topics were deployed to the different targets involved; and finally during the third year, both HEIs and QAAs carried out their pilot process: Universities evaluated one of their study programme and Agencies carried out the process of external evaluation. In both cases they prepared their Self Evaluation Report and received the site visit from EU partners. More details are available in next section. Below we present a Gantt chart with the detailed project tasks and their duration in time for a better understanding of the process. As you may notice the final total project duration has been 42 months. This was due to the fact that due to the complexity of the pilot processes in progress the UA, project coordinator requested for a 6-month extension in order to finalise the planned tasks correctly and add something else for the benefit of HEIs and QAAs after their consultation.
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FIRST project year

Activities		M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6	M7	M8	M9	M10	M11	M12
Ref. N°/Sub Ref. N°	Title												
1	Functional Framework for QA Implementation												
1.1 C: UA P: ALL	Setting up of a QA network of experts within partner institutions at local and regional level												
1.2 C: UA P: ALL	Purchase and installation of equipment, software and programmes												
2	Western Balkans Observatory for Quality Assurance												
2.3 C: UA P: ALL	Meetings with local, national and regional stakeholders (in the Round Tables framework)												
3	Defining Common Methodologies and guidelines for QA at National and Regional level												
3.1 C: UA P: ALL	National round tables with ministries, QA Agencies and Universities for the adjustment and review of existing national legal frameworks (we include here the ACT 2.3)												
4	Targeted Training Programme												
4.1 C: UA P: EU	Workshop I: Practical Observation Session: day to day management practices of Quality Assurance Agencies and Vice-Rectorates for Quality Assurance and Strategic Planning												
6	Dissemination												
6.1 C: UA P: ALL	Development of a Project Website												
6.2 C: UA P: ALL	Standard Project Package Development: PPT and posters												

Activities		M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6	M7	M8	M9	M10	M11	M12
Ref. N°/Sub Ref. N°	Title												
6.3 C: UA P: ALL	Presentation Package												
6.5 C: UA P: ALL	Press Publications at local, national and regional level												
8	Quality Control												
8.1 C: UA P:	Monitoring of the project progress. Day-to-Day Assessment												
8.2 C: UA P: ALL	Internal quality control												
8.3 C: UA P: ALL HEIs	External Evaluation												
9	Project Management												
9.1 C: UA P: ALL	Setting up Steering Committee												
9.2 C: UA P: ALL	Project Management and Reporting												
9.3 C: UA P: ALL	Kick-off meeting and Coordination Meetings												

SECOND project year

Activities		M13	M14	M15	M16	M17	M18	M19	M20	M21	M22	M23	M24
Ref. N°/Sub Ref. N°	Title												
1	FUNCTIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR QA IMPLEMENTATION												
1.1 C: UA P: ALL	Setting up of a QA Network of experts within partner institutions at local and regional level												
1.3 C: UA P: HEIs	Information system development as a tool for decision-making process												
4	TARGETED TRAINING PROGRAMME												
4.2 C: UA P: ALL	Workshop II: Student and Stakeholders Assessment and Involvement in decision-making bodies												
4.3 C: UA P: ALL	Workshop III: Institutional Accreditation and EFQM Excellence Model												
6	DISSEMINATION												
6.1 C: UA P: ALL	Update Project Website												
6.3 C: UA P: ALL	Dissemination via existing channels: good practice example												
6.5 C: UA P: ALL	Press Publications at local, national and regional level												
8	QUALITY CONTROL AND MONITORING												
8.1 C: UA P:	Monitoring of the project progress. Day-to-Day Assessment												

Activities		M13	M14	M15	M16	M17	M18	M19	M20	M21	M22	M23	M24
Ref. N°/Sub Ref. N°	Title												
8.2 C: UA P: ALL	Internal quality control												
8.3 C: UA P: ALL HEIs	External Evaluation												
9	PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND QUALITY ASSURANCE												
9.1 C: UA P: ALL	Project Management and reporting												
9.2 C: UA P: ALL	Coordination Meeting												

THIRD project year

Activities		M25	M26	M27	M28	M29	M30	M31	M32	M33	M34	M35	M36
Ref. N°/Sub Ref. N°	Title												
1	FUNCTIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR QA IMPLEMENTATION												
1.1 C: UA+ALL	Setting up of a QA Network of experts within partner institutions at local and regional level												
2	WESTERN BALKANS OBSERVATORY FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE												
2.1	Setting up of the Observatory legal status, functioning and membership requirements												
2.2 C: UA P: AGENCIES	Observatory Web site creation and maintaining												
NEW	Inviting other Quality Assurance Agencies to join the Network												
NEW	Meetings with the Observatory members to agree on future activities and funding schemes												
3	COMMON METHODOLOGY AND GUIDELINES												
3.2 C: UA P: AGENCIES HELP OF EXPERTS	Drafting of common and flexible rules and legislation for the assessment of HEIs/Creation of legislative and methodological basis on internal and external QA												
4	TARGETED TRAINING PROGRAMME												
4.4 C: UA P: AQA+ASSIN	Workshop VI: External Assessment Mechanism for Quality Assurance Agencies with ENQA standards and guidelines												
NEW	Workshop V: experiences on the SER drafting (Bosnia and Herzegovina, site visit (Serbia) and SER drafting planning (Macedonia)												

Activities		M25	M26	M27	M28	M29	M30	M31	M32	M33	M34	M35	M36
Ref. N°/Sub Ref. N°	Title												
5	CONDUCTING ASSESSMENTS OF SEE UNIVERSITIES AND QA AGENCIES												
5.1 C: UA P: HEIs	Institutional assessment of universities with the EFQM Excellence Model												
NEW	Improvement plan follow up												
5.2 C: UA P: EHB+CORK	Conducting the institutional assessment of EES Universities												
5.3 C: UA P: ASSIN+ AQA	Practical framework for the external assessment of QA Agencies –Self-Assessment												
5.4 C: UA P: AQA + ASSIN	Conduction of External Assessment of EES QA agencies (SER BOSNIA+PLANNING MACEDONIA)												
6	DISSEMINATION												
6.1 C: UA P: ALL	Development of a project website												
6.3 C: UA P: ALL	Dissemination via existing channels: good practice example												
6.4 C: UA P: AGENCIES	Press conference on the creation of the Western Balkans Observatory (ACT with 6.6 + 6.4 +7.3 + 7.4)												
6.5 C: UA P: ALL	Press Publications at local, national and regional level												
7	SUSTAINABILITY												

Activities		M25	M26	M27	M28	M29	M30	M31	M32	M33	M34	M35	M36
Ref. N°/Sub Ref. N°	Title												
7.1 C: UA P: ALL	Expert Network Selection Process												
8	QUALITY CONTROL AND MONITORING												
8.1 C: UA P:	Monitoring of the project progress. Day-to-Day Assessment												
8.2 C: UA P: ALL	Internal quality control												
8.3 C: UA P: ALL HEIs	External Evaluation												
9	PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND QUALITY ASSURANCE												
9.1 C: UA P: ALL	Project Management and Reporting												
9.2 C: UA P: ALL	Coordination Meetings												

6 months extension

Activities		M37	M38	M39	M40	M41	M42
Ref. N°/Sub Ref. N°	Title						
1	FUNCTIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR QA IMPLEMENTATION						
1.1 C: UA+ALL	Setting up of a QA Network of experts within partner institutions at local and regional level						
2	WESTERN BALKANS OBSERVATORY FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE						
2.2 C: UA P: AGENCIES	Observatory Web site creation and maintaining						
NEW	Inviting other Quality Assurance Agencies to join the network						
NEW	Meetings with the Observatory members to agree on future activities and funding schemes (CON EL FINAL EVENT)						
3	COMMON METHODOLOGY AND GUIDELINES						
3.2 C: UA P: AGENCIES HELP OF EU	Drafting of common and flexible rules and legislation for the assessment of HEIs/Creation of legislative and methodological basis on internal and external QA (RESULTS OF ACT 3.3 together with 5.3)						
4	TARGETED TRAINING PROGRAMME						
5	CONDUCTING ASSESSMENTS OF EES UNIVERSITIES AND QA AGENCIES						
NEW	Improvement plan follow up						
5.2 C: UA P: EHB+CORK	Conducting the institutional assessment of EES Universities						
5.3 C: UA P: AASSIN+ AQA	Practical Framework for the External Assessment of QA Agencies-the Self-Assessment						
5.4 5.4 C: UA P: AQA + ASSIN	Conduction of External Assessment of EES QA agencies						

Activities		M37	M38	M39	M40	M41	M42
Ref. N°/Sub Ref. N°	Title						
6	DISSEMINATION						
6.1 C: UA P: ALL	Development of a project website						
6.3 C: UA P: ALL	Dissemination via existing channels: good practice example						
6.4 C: UA P: AGENCIES	Press conference on the creation of the Western Balkans Observatory (ACT with 6.6 + 6.4 +7.3 + 7.4)						
6.5 C: UA P: ALL	Press Publications at local, national and regional level						
6.6 C: UA P: ALL + EXPERTS	Final Conference (merged with ACT. 1.4 + 6.4 +7.3 +7.4)						
7	SUSTAINABILITY						
7.1 C: UA P: ALL	Expert Network Selection Process						
7.3 C: UA P: ALL + EXPERTS	Performing Swot Analysis and Strategic Planning)						
7.4 C: UA P: ALL + EXPERTS	Draft and Adoption of a memorandum						
8	QUALITY CONTROL AND MONITORING						
8.1 C: UA P:	Monitoring of the project progress. Day-to-Day Assessment						

Activities		M37	M38	M39	M40	M41	M42
Ref. N°/Sub Ref. N°	Title						
8.2 C: UA P: ALL	Internal quality control						
8.3 C: UA P: ALL HEIs	External Evaluation						
9	PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND QUALITY ASSURANCE						
9.1 C: UA P: ALL	Project Management and Reporting						
9.2 C: UA P: ALL	Coordination Meetings						

3. NATIONAL ROUND TABLES

3.1. Round tables Description

QA in HE:

- *Ministries*
- *QAAs*
- *HEIs*

Quality Assurance in Higher Education is an extremely complex process since it **involves many different actors** such as Higher Education Ministries, Quality Assurance Agencies, and Universities with their management, academic and administrative staff, students, stakeholders, society.

Thus, with the aim of bringing them together a set of 3 **Round Tables at national level** (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia and Serbia) have been organized **to discuss on the situation (legislative and practical) of Quality Assurance** implementation and the challenges the national systems are facing.

This was an excellent opportunity also for discussing with EU partners on their practice in Quality Assurance system implementation for HEIs and have their opinion and suggestions on the topics and challenging Partner Countries are facing.

3.1.1. Round table in the Republic of Serbia

The first Round Table was carried out with the support of the Ministry of Education of Serbia and the Commission for Accreditation and Quality Assurance (CAQA). CUBRIK held its roundtable meeting in Serbia at the University of Novi Sad on 10th of December 2010.

The agenda of the event is presented below:



CUBRIK (158999-TEMPUS-ES-TEMPUS-SMGR)
www.cubrik.eu

NATIONAL ROUND TABLE ON QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HE

ROUND TABLE WITH MINISTRIES, QA AGENCIES AND UNIVERSITIES FOR THE
ADJUSTMENT AND REVIEW OF EXISTING NATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORKS

Friday, 10th December 2010

Venue: Room 2, Ground Floor, Faculty of Philosophy, Dr. Zorana Đinđića 2, Novi Sad

AGENDA

Time	Topic	Speaker
10.30-11.00	Registration of participants (Room 2, Ground Floor)	
11.00-11.10	Opening of the National Round Table	Prof. Dr Miroslav Vesковиć University of Novi Sad Rector
11.10-11.40	Quality Promotion at UCC	Norma Ryan, University College Cork Director of Quality Promotion
12.40-12.10	Accreditation in Serbia, The Review Process	Prof. Dr Vera Dondur Ministry of Education President of HERE team for Serbia
12.10-12.35	Role of the CAQA in Serbia	Prof. Dr Vera Vujčić Commission for Accreditation and Quality Assurance President
12.35-12.45	Presentation of the publication 'Akreditacija u visokom obrazovanju' ('Accreditation in HE')	Prof. Dr Endre Pap Commission for Accreditation and Quality Assurance CUBRIK Steering Committee Member
12.45-13.00	Quality at University of Novi Sad - yesterday, today, tomorrow	Prof. Dr Zorana Lužanin University of Novi Sad Head of the University Board for QA and Internal Evaluation
13.00-13.15	Quality Assurance at University of Niš -Current and Future Activities	Prof. Dr Zoran S. Nikolić University of Niš
13.15-13.30	QA at University of Belgrade - Recent Achievements and Future Directions	Prof. Dr Miodrag Lazarević University of Belgrade Contact Person for Tempus SIQAS for University of Belgrade
13.30-14.00	Discussion	all participants
14.00-15.00	Lunch (Teachers' Lounge, Ground Floor)	all participants
15.00-16.00	Final Conclusions	all participants

3.1.2. Round Table in Bosnia and Herzegovina

The second Round Table was organized in Bosnia and Herzegovina on December 13th 2010. In this occasion the President of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education was also invited to share his experience during the Round Table meeting at the University of Banja Luka, organized by the Agency for Development of Higher Education and Quality Assurance.

The agenda of the event is presented below:



EU TEMPUS PROJECT "STRENGTHENING QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM
WITHIN WESTERN BALKANS HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN SUPPORT
OF NATIONAL AND REGIONAL PLANNING"
www.cubrik.eu

Project activity:

National round tables with ministries, QA Agencies and Universities for the adjustment and review of existing national legal frameworks

ROUND TABLE FOR BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

**Agency for Development of Higher Education and Quality Assurance
Banja Luka, December the 13th 2010**

AGENDA

10.30 – 11.00	Registration of Participants
11.00 – 11.45	Opening remarks: • Professor Valerija Saula, Vice-Rector at the University of Banja Luka (tbc) • Professor Nihad Fejzić, Director of the Agency (tbc) • Carolina Madeleine, project coordinator, University of Alicante
11.45 – 12.00	Coffee break
12.00 – 12.30	European Standards and Guidelines Achim Hopbach, ENQA President
12.30 – 13.00	QA system in Bosnia and Herzegovina – undertaken activities Boris Ćurković, Deputy Director of the Agency
13.00 – 13.30	Internal QA system – case at University of Zenica Ibrahim Plančić, QA manager at University of Zenica
13.30 – 14.30	Discussion
14.30 – 15.00	Conclusions
15.00 – 16.00	Lunch

CUBRIK is a project co-financed by the European Union in the framework of the TEMPUS IV Programme



3.1.3. Round table in the Republic of Macedonia

The third Round Table was organized with the support of the Ministry of Education of Macedonia. CUBRIK held its roundtable meeting in Macedonia at the University "St. Kliment Ohridski" on 20th May 2011.

The agenda of the event is presented below:

  		
CUBRIK (158999-TEMPUS-ES-TEMPUS-SMGR)		
www.cubrik.eu		
NATIONAL ROUND TABLE ON QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HE		
ROUND TABLE WITH MINISTRIES, QA AGENCIES AND UNIVERSITIES FOR THE ADJUSTMENT AND REVIEW OF EXISTING NATIONAL LEGAL FRAMEWORKS		
Friday, 20 th May 2011		
Venue: Bitola / Conference Room, Faculty of Law, Partizanska Street		
AGENDA		
Time	Topic	Speaker
09.00-10.00	Registration of participants (Great Lecture Room 10, First Floor)	
10.00-10.15	Opening of the National Round Table	Prof. Dr Zlatko Žoglev <i>St. Kliment Ohridski University - Bitola</i> Rector
10.15-10.30	Introduction of the new Law of HE	Ms. Ester Boldrini <i>University of Alicante</i> Coordinator of the project Ms. Aspasiya Hadzisce <i>Ministry of Education and Science</i> Advisor, EU department
11.00-11.30	Short break	
11.30-12.10	Evaluation and Accreditation of Study Programs	Erasmus University, Brussels Mr. Ignace Van Dingenen Director Strategic Planning, quality assurance and Datamangement
12.10-12.50	QA procedures of the Austrian Quality Assurance Agency	Austrian Quality Assurance Agency Vienna Dietlinde Kastelliz, M.A.
12.50-13.00	Quality at University St. Kliment Ohridski-Bitola	Prof. Dr Božin Donevski <i>St. Kliment Ohridski University - Bitola</i> Contact person for TEMPUS - SMGR
13.00-13.10	Experiences, Achievements and Future Quality Assurance at State University in Tetovo	Prof. Dr. Agron Reka Rector, State University in Tetovo
13.10-14.00	Current and further activities	
13.10-14.00	Discussion	all participants
14.00-15.00	Buffet Lunch	all participants
15.00-16.00	Final Conclusions	all participants

3.2. Round tables main outcomes

The outcomes drawn from the three Round Tables can be summarised as follows:

3.2.1. Main conclusions from the Round Table in the Republic of Serbia

Recent improvement in QA

The key stakeholders in the field of Quality Assurance, in particular staff and students of HEIs, the QAA and the HE Ministry, in the past four years have completed **substantial steps in developing a quality assurance system** for HE in Serbia, in line with international best practice. With the **European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG), criteria for accreditation of HEIs**, as well as **guidelines for interpreting the criteria** in place, most part of the preparatory work has been accomplished and the HEIs are now in the phase of preparing for self-evaluation. The ESG for QA in European Higher Education Area and the criteria for accreditation of HEIs are a good approach both to supporting quality enhancement in the HEIs and demonstrating accountability towards the public. This is recognised by all stakeholders to be of a high importance.

Common understanding of purpose, principles & procedures

In order to foster a **common understanding of the purpose, principles and procedures** of quality assurance, further cooperation between HEIs, the Commission for Accreditation and Quality Assurance and Ministry of Education, as demonstrated successfully in the CUBRIK project is of a high relevance.

Serbian standards in line with ESG

The **national standards and criteria for quality assurance are basically in line with ESG**. Notably the participation of students and labour market representative in the experts groups can be highlighted as a European good practice.

Training of experts

The Commission strengthens the **importance of the training of experts** in its development strategies and activities. Having a pool of well-trained and competent experts is of essential importance **for the development of a well-established quality assurance system**. The appointment of experts, following an international call was recognised as very valuable and it is intended to continue to strengthen and improve the process for appointment and training. Further training of expert reviewers is necessary to ensure alignment of recommendations of outcomes of institutional reviews from all parties involved.

CAQA independence

The **need for independence of the Commission** was stressed and noted that this is in line with the ENQA policies. The Commission also presented its publication *Accreditation in HE* and copies were circulated to all presents.

3.2.2. Main conclusions from the Round Table in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Recent improvement

All actors involved in the field of quality assurance in HE during the past 3 years have improved their quality assurance system and regulation. Also in Bosnia and Herzegovina with **standards and guidelines for Quality Assurance, criteria for accreditation** of HEIs, as well as **guidelines for interpreting the criteria in place**, most part of the preparatory work has been accomplished and the HEIs were in the phase of preparing for self-evaluation. The ESG and the criteria for accreditation of HEIs are a good approach to both supporting quality enhancement in the HEIs and demonstrating accountability towards the public. In order to foster a common understanding of the purpose, principles and procedures of QA, further cooperation between HEI,

Students' participation is relevant

QA Agency and Ministries of Education would need to be fostered. Their participation in CUBRIK is a good practice example.

HEA opinion taken into account by Ministry for accreditation

The standards and criteria for Quality Assurance are basically in line with the ESGs. Notably, the participation of **students and labour market representatives in the expert group is relevant**.

Experts nomination not in line with ESG

For the sake of transparency in the HE system in B&H it is important that **Ministries take the accreditation decision as consistent as possible by following the recommendation of the quality assurance agency** for the correct development of strategies and activities.

HEA independency

The **nomination of the experts by the Ministry** however is **not in line with the ESGs** and further discussion on this issue is necessary in order to guarantee the **independence of the quality assurance agency** and thus help the agency receiving full recognition in Europe.

Independency of the QAA

3.2.3 Main conclusions from the Round Table in the Republic of Macedonia

From the discussion of the Round Table we can see that the **autonomy of the QAA is essential and also its separate accountability**.

Accountability autonomy of the QAA

Also according to a survey carried out by the World Bank, there is a **growing demand for high-qualified workforce** in Macedonia and this stresses the importance of having an effective quality assurance system implemented for HE.

Continuous PDCA cycle

European partners also stressed the importance of having a **continuous PDCA cycle** for a **continuous improvement** as well as the recognition of Bachelors and Masters at EU level.

*Problems with
students' mobility*

*Lack of financial
resources for visiting
HEIs*

Need for:

- *Action plan*
- *Quality Culture*
- *Serious
commitment*

The need for an **independent QA Agency** was also underlined by the EU partners. Other challenges the HE system in Macedonia is facing are: the lack of use of PDCA cycle, problems with the implementation of **students' mobility**. In addition they have problems with the QAA since it is established but the reality is that it is not functioning because they do not have the **resources necessary to evaluate the HEIs study programmes and go and visit the universities**.

According to the HE Ministry, in this country they **have no concrete structures in HE** and thus no **action plan with concrete tasks established**. They employ the top down approach to national bodies. But there is the urgent need to build up a **quality culture** and a **serious commitment** from HEIs. In addition there is an urgent need for a better and more active students' involvement in the quality assurance process.

To conclude the main challenging point is that the Macedonian **QA Agency is not working properly** and also during 2011 it was closed and re-established, thus for a certain period. Many **students are not aware** of the all process and thus for them it is really very difficult to participate since they do not know on QA processes. Here again as well as in the other PC of the CUBRIK project, there is a **strong need for trained people** to be involved in QA processes. Last but not least, **cooperation among HEIs** within the **country**, but also at a **regional** as well as **international** level is essential to establish a clear and effective QA system for HE.

4. DRAFTING OF COMMON AND FLEXIBLE RULES AND LEGISLATION FOR THE ASSESSMENT OF HEIS IN LINE WITH NATIONAL REFORM PRIORITIES AND ONGOING EUROPEAN DEVELOPMENTS

After having carried out the 3 National Round Tables, the project continued with its activities and different kinds of activities have been carried out both for universities and Quality Assurance agencies. Thus the section below is devoted to present such processes in order to understand the sources of information we took into consideration for formulating our recommendations.

4.1. Other project activities from which we draw our recommendations

4.1.1. Conducting assessments and accreditation of Partner Countries Universities (ACT 5.1+5.2)

HEIs choose their SER method and wrote their SER

Universities after having received intensive training programme in Act. 4.3 **choose their self-assessment method** (EFQM or TRIS). Thus, the structure of the self-assessment has been based around the 9 criteria of the EFQM Excel-

lence Model. The self-assessment lasted 2 days including the activity on identifying improvement actions and documenting an improvement plan.

Improvement prioritisation

Prioritising the improvements identified during the assessment allowed the SEE HEIs to **concentrate on the important activities** that will have the highest impact on performance or achievement of university goals once deployed.

Action plan development

The next step was to develop an **Action Plan** both to help monitor the actions as well as to provide the necessary documentation for validating deployment during the Site Visit. An **assessment committee was nominated** to carry out the assessment process and it was composed by: 1 vice-rector for QA or similar, 2 experts from the QA Unit, 2 teachers, 2 administrative and 1 representative of the student association.

SEE HEIs produced a **high level Self-Assessment Report against the 9 criteria** of the EFQM Excellence Model. As a result, they developed an understanding of its strengths, areas for improvement and as a consequence, produced a prioritised improvement plan.

Pilot assessment process site visit

UA, UCC and UB supervised the process and **gave advice** and then **made the site visit**. SEE HEIs demonstrated during site visit that they have deployed their Action Plan. This was validated using the RADAR framework against a specified and defined profile.

Improvement plan site visit

During the next stage (UA requested the project extension for this purpose) the SEE HEIs demonstrated that **improvement actions have been deployed**. With a second round of site visits by EU experts, SEE HEIs demonstrated that they **successfully deployed an improvement plan** taking into account the feed-

back from self-assessment against the EFQM/TRIS Excellence Model. EUs partners thus made a **second site visit** to the SEE HEIs and checked the **improvement actions undertaken** through **meetings, discussions** and **review of appropriate documentation**.

The **external assessment teams** were composed by EU experts, National QAA and international expert. Each SEE HEI received 2 site visits and had the external assessment performed during the site visit and by the external assessment report.

4.1.2. Conducting assessments and accreditation of Partner Countries Quality Assurance Agencies (ACT 5.3+5.4)

After having received intensive training on Workshop III, Act. 4.3 *Workshop III: External Assessment, Mechanism for Quality Assurance Agencies with ENQA standards and guidelines*, the QAA were ready to set up the **practical framework for the external assessment**. In this context, we had 3 different situations:

Different approaches for the QAAs since they had different needs

- **CAQA was in the process of ENQA membership**, and thus they carried out the process of external evaluation as a real one, not pilot.
- **HEA carried out the pilot process** since they are willing to request ENQA membership in the near future.
- The **Macedonian Board for Accreditation and Evaluation preferred to learn from others' experiences and have a meeting with the Higher Education Ministry** and discuss about some crucial aspects or their national regulation in terms of QA for HEIs.

The first step for the external assessment of the QAA was the **conducting of the self-assessment** and the **drafting of the self-assessment report**. Indeed relevant background information is necessary to understand the context in which the agency is working. The QAAs nominated an **assessment committee** who was in charge of preparing and conducting the self-assessment, typically the assessment committee was composed by 4 persons: secretary general, 2 technical experts, and 1 secretary.

The assessment report included:

- A brief outline of the national higher education system, including:
 - degree structure;
 - institutional structure;
 - procedures and involved parties in establishing new subjects, programmes and institutions;
 - other quality assurance procedures;
 - status of higher education institutions in relation to the government.
- A brief account of the history of the particular agency and of the evaluation of higher education in general
- Mission statement; establishment of the agency (government, higher education institutions, others);
- Description of the legal framework and other formal regulations concerning the agency
- Internal organisation of the agency; placement of the right to initiate evaluations; the financing of the agency
- Other responsibilities of the agency than the evaluation of higher education; international activities of the agency
- Role of the agency in follow-up on evaluations: consequences and sanctions. The project expert, ASIIN, AQA and UA gave advice throughout the process.

The objective of this activity was to end up with a self-assessment report that pursued two main goals: QAA will make an **analysis of their own activities** and second will produce **an assessment report that will be used for the external assessment** of the second assessment phase.

The external assessment consisted in **three phases**:

- Appointment of the external review panel
- **Site visit**
- **Preparation of the report**

The external expert panel should consist of the **following experts**:

- 1 quality assurance expert from ASIIN and one from AQA, plus the project expert as Chair of the external review panel
- 1 representative from two selected partners universities
- 1 student member from national association
- 1 stakeholder member (for instance an employer, national)
- 1 technical from UA for supervising the event

The visit lasted one day. Before the visit the panel **agreed on relevant themes for the visit**. The purpose of the site visit is to validate the self-study. Interview guides were drafted with this perspective in mind.

The visit included **separate meetings** with members from the agency board, management, staff, experts, owners/key stakeholders and representatives from evaluated institutions at management level as well as members from the internal self-evaluation committees.

Apart from fulfilling the general terms of reference the **external expert panel report** focused in a precise manner on **compliance with the European standards** for external quality assurance agencies as specified in the self-study protocol, as well as with **possibilities for and recommendations on future improvements**. After the visit the external review panel assisted by the secretary drafted a report. The final version was **sent to the agency under review** for comments on factual errors.

György Bazsa was the senior external assessor of the external assessment.

4.2. Survey

In order to make a more precise analysis of current challenges and strengths in the topic of Quality Assurance for Higher Education in the CUBRIK partner countries, we also **designed a survey** in order to have an in-depth insight into some aspects crucial for an effective establishment of robust quality assurance practice across the HE Is of the Region.

The following section will explain the surveys sections and the next one the main results obtained.

4.2.1. Survey for HEIs description

1. In which activity fields and in which forms is your institution active and effective in the quality assurance topic? (Both at managerial, as well as staff levels)

.....

2. Do you notice interest in the quality assurance topic at your university? (Both at managerial, as well as staff levels)

.....

3. Which are the main challenges your university is facing in the quality assurance (mainly of study programmes)?

.....

4. Does your institution collaborate with other HEIs in the region in the topic of quality assurance? For example sharing experts, etc.

.....

5. For which kind of aspects of quality assurance did the CUBRIK project helped your institution?

.....

6. How your university perceives the role of your National Quality Assurance Agency?

.....

7. Do you feel the national legislation on Quality Assurance takes into account your context and the European requirement?

.....

8. Could you mention several examples (aspects) in which CUBRIK project had positive effects on quality assurance at national level (national agency)?

.....

4.2.2. Survey for Quality Assurance Agencies description

For which kind of aspects of Quality Assurance did the CUBRIK project helped your institution?

.....

Which are the main challenges your Agency is facing for the correct implementation of Quality Assurance at national level?

.....

How your university perceives the role of the Ministry of higher Education and the connection with it?

.....

Do you notice interest in the quality assurance topic at your national universities? (Both at managerial, as well as staff levels)

.....

Do you feel the national legislation on Quality Assurance takes into account your context and the European requirement?

.....

Any other comment

.....

4.2.3. Overview of answers from HEIs

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA								
Tuzla	POS	POS	NEG	NEG	POS	POS	POS	POS
Banja Luka	POS	POS	NEG	POS	POS	POS	POS	POS
Zenica	POS	POS	NEG	POS	POS	POS	POS	POS
Mostar	POS	POS	NEG	POS	POS	POS	POS	POS
MACEDONIA								
St. Kliment Ohridski'	POS	NEG	NEG	NEG	POS	NEG	NEG	POS
Tetovo	NEG	NEG	NEG	POS	POS	POS	POS	POS

SERBIA								
Kragujevac	POS	NEG	NEG	NEG	POS	POS	---	NEG
Nišs	POS	POS	POS	POS	POS	POS	POS	POS
Novi Sad	POS	POS	NEG	POS	POS	POS	POS	POS

4.2.4. Analysis for each HEI

4.2.4.1. University of Tuzla

The University of Tuzla is active and effective in the field of quality assurance of education and thus in monitoring processes above all at department level. The achievement of academic standards, design and approval of study programs, the development of the University's strategy for education and research are considered to be important milestones and this is why the HEI allocates resources and provides incentives to encourage faculty and students to maintain and improve educational quality: Students are involved in assessing different aspects such as teaching, adequacy and volume of the content of the subjects, assigned teaching, engagement of teaching staff per subject, curricula review, etc.

Concerning the interest in the quality assurance topic, there is interest above all at managerial level, but this process of establishing a quality assurance system within the university is a long one and staff needs more time to be totally aware of its importance.

As far as quality assurance is concerned, the main challenge University of Tuzla is facing how to improve the quality of their study programmes to be more international. In addition, there is no law about quality assurance (except some articles), thus an improvement of the legislation would be needed. Last but not least, they also need external review of reviewers from HEA and licence for study programmes.

The University of Tuzla collaborates with HEIs in B&H. However there is still room for improvement for regional cooperation that now is in place only on a personal basis.

The benefits of the CUBRIK project have been different. This project showed other methods for internal and external evaluations, which are different in some aspect from methods in B&H. It was of a special interest for the TRIS model which we got chance to learn with experts from EU. More concretely the benefit of the University of Tuzla from the CUBRIK projects was: a) be aware of new methods for evaluation of study programs; b) have examples on how to apply QA processes for internal assessment and know good practices from EUs; c) have the national as well as regional and EU perspective in this topic, d) Help to finding some common indicators for QA at national levels in region.

University of Tuzla sees the HEA as a main actor in quality assurance. HEA should give licence for new and modified study programmes. For the moment HEA only gives recommendations to the HE Ministry. In this sense HEA should be given more power in the process of QA.

In general the national legislation in quality assurance only partially takes into account ESG.

4.2.4.2. University of Banja Luka (UBL)

QA culture at the University of Banja Luka is a new topic and thus it is too early to talk about its effects. However, this and similar projects are helping us to learn, introduce and improve QA strategies, rules and practice throughout the integrated university.

Concerning the interest among HEI staff and management for quality assurance, this is now understood as obligatory, due to international and internal regulation. However, QA is something that is not just use-

ful in terms of accreditation but also in terms achieving and improving quality of work and services that we offer. That makes us more competitive and successful in the higher education world of competition. The interest is especially present at managerial level since it has the overall responsibility for the quality of work in general. However, the idea is to make this interest a common feature of the daily behaviour of all staff at all organizational units of the UBL.

The main challenges the University of Banja Luka is facing towards establishing an effective QA system are lack of expertise and skills. Projects like this and other projects helped a lot to provide necessary training and transfer of experience by universities/partners who have longer tradition and culture of QA.

Regarding collaboration with other institutions, the University of Banja Luka has a lot of partners on the basis of bilateral agreements on cooperation. One of the topics of discussion and collaboration is also QA. It can take various forms: sharing experts, sharing materials, participation in conferences devoted to the subject of QA, etc.

CUBRIK presented the UBL staff various institutional models of introducing and measuring quality assurance. Very useful contribution that this project made was creating a network of experts and contact for introducing and/or enhancing cooperation in the region, including the regulatory bodies. We should also notice that the big consortium was one of the difficulties in managing the project but is very valuable feature for us to have the possibility to meet such partners. UBL benefited from training and sharing experience with other, especially European partners.

In B&H, in line with the constitutional division of competences, there is not only one QA agency. The National Agency has certain competence, described by the Framework Law on Higher Education, but the entity Law on Higher Education of the Republic of Srpska gave significant

competence to the entity QA Agency. We believe that the coordinated work of both agencies, in line with their legal competences can only improve the QA culture, regulation and procedures throughout Bosnia and Herzegovina.

UBL considers that their legislation in terms of HE quality assurance is completely in line with the European requirements.

UBL believes that training and exchange of expertise with European partners in the project, especially agencies from other countries (especially those from the complex structure countries as Bosnia and Herzegovina) helped a lot in future planning and developing strategies in this respect. University of Banja Luka had honour of being part of this useful and interesting project and are very grateful to the Project coordinator University of Alicante for inviting us to the project and for creating friendly atmosphere of cooperation throughout the whole project.

4.2.4.3. University of Zenica

University of Zenica (UNZE) has effective activities in quality assurance topic on different levels of organization. Both managerial and staff levels are included in this process. This is ensured through the structure of QA department at UNZE. This structure can be found on http://unze.ba/ba/sk_projekat_ZE.html

Like the one of the first Universities in B&H that implemented QA system there is always a lot of interest at both levels at managerial and staff and even student level for new improvement of QA system.

UNZE is fully integrated University and QA process like this is conducted in that way. Main challenges are always various but there is always a sort of challenge when some new achievements or method is going to

be implemented. But this is not just challenge at UNZE but also at other universities worldwide.

UNZE has great collaboration with other HEIs in the region with all universities. This is through various projects, collaboration etc...

Results of CUBRIK project will be seen in close future, education and training of staff for usage of new methods like EFQM/TRIS methods was very useful for our institution. Working with foreign experts that help us in improving our own QA system was very useful. Trainings and workshops for usage of EFQM/TRIS methods and BEM methods were very useful. Having two external audits has been done with great impact on our QA system.

UNZE was the first University in BH who applied for national accreditation, they had a great support from HEA B&H but unfortunately because of the political situation this accreditation is still on hold. In any case they believe their legislation in terms of QA is fully in line with European requirements.

The beneficial effects achieved within the CUBRIK project for the University of Zenica are: a) Preparation for accreditation process by using different methods of preparation of SER; b) Writing reports by using different method like BEM; TRIS or EFQM, UNZE has made report by using BEM method and it was very useful; c) Working with foreign experts and transfer of their knowledge into our practice and everyday work especially in providing us with literature and support in this process; and d) purchasing of equipment that is in use for QA process

More results of CUBRIK Tempus Project will be seen in the future, because cooperation between partners in Project will ensure long lasting cooperation in field of QA in HE.

4.2.4.4. University of Mostar

At the University of Mostar a Quality management system has been established and it is composed by a Quality management board (on University level) and office (on level each faculties). Their activities are:

- Review of quality system conditions at the University of Mostar (Vision, strategy, processes, importance of QA, QA systems),
- Analysis of quality systems at all faculties (Personnel, documentation system, teaching staff, curricula, infrastructure, teaching process).

Work group for quality management at University of Mostar define the framework for student's evaluation of teachers and courses. Involvement of students in the quality assurance processes – student evaluation questionnaires at all faculties.

The development of a quality assurance system at the University is developing an interest in participating in the process. More and more teachers are involved in this process, and students are becoming more aware that this system helps the quality of the study.

The biggest challenge for the establishment of any part of the quality assurance system is the lack of integration of the University. Still, every college has a separate legal entity, which makes very hard functioning of the system.

The accreditation of higher education institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina have started in the past year. In this process our experts for quality assurance have participated, registered with the Agency for higher education. The university has also signed cooperation with many universities, among other things this cooperation also applies to the quality assurance system. For example, at the University of Podgorica, our experts have helped with their experience in establishing their QA systems.

The system that we used in the project CUBRIK largely pointed to the difficulties in our quality assurance system and has helped us to understand in which areas should be more commitment.

We believe that the agency is essential to make the education system in general to be good quality, and that they tended to better study programs and operating conditions and that the B&H requirement in HE QA are in line with the European requirements.

CUBRK had positive effects on quality assurance at national level since it connected HEIs with agencies from the region and sharing of experiences.

4.2.4.5. University of "St. Kliment Ohridski"

The University of St. Kliment Ohridski is active and effective in quality assurance. More concretely in the preparation of national legal acts and guidelines for quality assurance. They have regional and international institutionalized processes of cooperation (joint research projects and visiting lecturers). They also created the idea of "result-oriented study programme" that are based on the needs and requirements of various stakeholders in higher education. Within the framework also of the CUBRIK project they also developed a University career centre and they are also active in the field of mobility and exchange of staff and students.

From the beginning of implementation the Bologna reforms, about thirteen years ago, the interest of management team and University staff for the field of QA is growing steadily. This is obvious from the activities that have already been implemented, and those which are planned for realization. (Some of them are mentioned in this questionnaire, and some facts and figures are presented on University Website - www.uklo.edu.mk)

The main challenges University of St Kliment Ohridski is facing in the quality assurance (mainly of study programmes) are: a) establishment of QA body; b) clear identification of the role, activities and responsibilities of persons who are in charge with QA in the frame of the institution; c) adoption of the procedures for QA; d) creation of joint and double degree study programmes; e) high quality human resources,(academic and non-academic staff), involved in realization of various University services; and f) enough economic and electronic resources.

Regarding University of St. Kliment Ohridski national and international cooperation, intensive activity is realized with “St. Cyril and Methodius” University in Skopje, Republic of Macedonia. The cooperation are mainly focused on working on the application for projects in the field of quality assurance (QA), carrying out various activities, as partner countries, in EU projects for QA in higher education, preparing legal acts and guidelines for QA, based on the EU standards and indicators of quality and participating in commissions for external evaluation of HEIs.

The realized activities and outcomes of CUBRIK project are important for improvement in these aspects of QA:

- raising of awareness about the need for continuous quality assessment;
- getting familiar with EU standards in the field of QA;
- necessity for improving of QA procedures according to EU standards;
- facilitating of regional university cooperation, through the process of practical realization of expected outcomes, such as:
 - common rules and legislation for QA;
 - Regional Observatory for QA;
- introduction with the coherent assessment methodology (EFQM/TRIS model);

- various tools for realization, different ways of performing and human, material and electronic resources for the University institutional assessment;

All project activities which are related to the acquired knowledge about the institutional assessment were useful for University St. Kliment Ohridski, especially:

- basic principles of self-assessment process;
- QA practices;
- assessment methodologies;
- contents of self-evaluation report (SER);
- forms and contents of questionnaires;
- creation of the improvement action plan (using the results of the self-assessment, prioritization of the quality improvement areas to be completed within the plan),

The following activities are crucial for improvement of QA not only at national but even more at regional level:

- Signing of the Memorandum for Understanding;
- Creation of the Western Balkans Quality Assurance Observatory.

The role of the National QA Agency is legally regulated according to chapter 7 of the National Law of Higher Education, (March, 2008). This body is responsible for QA of educational, scientific-research and social service activities of HEIs.

In opinion of University of St. Kliment Ohridski, if we talk about national legislation in terms of QA there is a need for detailed description of:

- functions to be performed;
- QA procedures to be applied;
- modern methodologies and related guidelines;

- managing the processes;
- dissemination of the obtained results.

4.2.4.6. University of Tetovo

The State University of Tetovo (SUT) is an integrated university, meaning that every faculty functions under the direct managerial staff of the University's Rectorate. Quality assurance activities are undertaken by the recently established Office for Quality Assurance at the University which at the same time develops and conducts educational activities.

Moreover, the fields where this office strives to be effective and active are the educational and scientific which concerns both the physical conditions and the human factor: study programmes and their syllabuses, curriculum, administrative exam sheets, organizing conferences, self-evaluation, ECTS, offering better physical conditions and facilities etc... Another important field is the administrative aspect of the university: administration, documentation, staff, information, technology and its maintenance. The quality assurance is delivered through different activities and tasks delivered and required by this Office which is in direct connection with the Deans and Vice-deans of the respective faculties.

There is good cooperation and support by the managerial staff at University level. Unfortunately, we have to mention that there is a certain gap between the theory and its implementation in practice. But the university with all its aspects and departments shows high interest in the quality assurance topic and shows readiness for improvement.

The accreditation of our study programmes is highly dependable on the Board for accreditation and evaluation and the Ministry of Science and Education of the Republic of Macedonia and the laws and regulation concerning the same. Universities are given a certain freedom of inter-

vention in the curriculum but the percentage of subjects distribution is predetermined (60 per cent are given to the mandatory subjects, 30 to the elective and 10 for the optional subjects).

Mainly the challenges our University is facing are concerned with the physical conditions and the state budget allocated to the university. Finances are directly related to the quality assurance activities. We lack proper administrative electronic systems and this makes quality assurance difficult to establish.

SUT has signed cooperation agreements with different universities in the region: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania, Kosovo, Turkey, etc. including universities in Germany, Austria, etc. We've had several mutual activities with these universities including different conferences, study visits, student and staff mobility programs.

CUBRIK had a great impact on our self-evaluation process in both educational and administrative field. The project offered valuable equipment which is dedicated to designing and implementing quality assurance activities not just for the purposes of the study programme chosen for the project but the entire university as well. It offered beneficial tools such as: EQFM model (training) and the improvement plan which we had difficulties to implement at the beginning but definitely experienced the positive effect in the later phase of the project and they will for sure be used in the planning processes of our future activities.

Recently, the State University of Tetovo has established a good cooperation with the Board of Accreditation and Evaluation of the Republic of Macedonia but there is still space for improvement concerning both sides. Macedonia has no specific National Quality Assurance Agency; we only have the Board for Accreditation and Evaluation which functions on national level.

SUT believes the national QA legislation is in line with the European requirements.

CUBRIK had a positive effect on establishing a better cooperation between the Board of Accreditation and Evaluation of Macedonia and the State University of Tetovo.

As concrete examples we can mention the mutual meetings, visits and training which were not the cases before.

SUT is very thankful for all the positive effects CUBRIK had on our University including the equipment, training, workshops, meetings and visits.

One of the main challenges they faced concerning the project is the staff change and due to this some of the tasks were not delivered accurately or on time. But in any case they thank UA for having a positive attitude towards this issue.

4.2.4.7. University of Kragujevac

The UoK is active in terms of self-evaluation of study programmes, assessing quality of work of academic staff members and assessing quality of teaching process. In general the interest in the quality assurance topic is very low at this institution. The main challenges they are encountering are lack of technical and administrative support of quality assurance committees, but also absence of cooperation with other institutions both at national as well as international level. The CUBRIK project helped this institution on a theoretical aspect. Despite the lack of cooperation, UoK sees the CAQA role as beneficial for them and believe the national rules for QA are in line with the European requirements.

4.2.4.8. University of Niš

The University of Niš is active in the continuous improvement of their QA standards, in the definition and implementation of their QA system at the University and faculty level and last but not least in the Quality Management System – from University towards their faculties (vertical top-down management) and between faculties (horizontal management).

Very high interest really exists in the Quality Assurance topic. University of Niš incessantly works on system quality improvement and system quality enhancement in all relevant areas, aspiring to continually improve the culture of quality, and to adapt its standards to European higher education area. *Center for Quality Enhancement* and *Board for Quality Assurance* stimulates and organizes quality improvement in the academic public, defines standards and criteria of quality functioning of the University of Niš, develops processes of evaluation, self-evaluation and education quality analysis, gathers information on quality from all system users, examines the causes of long and inefficient studying, develops mechanisms for quality assurance, supports international cooperation and scientific competitiveness and stimulates the professional development of teaching and nonteaching staff.

The main challenges they are facing is the quality of students, academic staff, research and development (which realizes at faculties only due to lack of appropriate equipment, of study programmes. They have all study levels: the basic professional, the basic academic, the integrated studies, master academic studies, specialist professional studies, specialist academic studies and doctoral academic studies. In addition to this the *Center for Multidisciplinary Studies* is a scientific unit at University of Niš. Its tasks are: to organize and to realize specialist, masters and doctoral studies and studies of specific forms of innovation knowledge

from multiple scientific fields, as well as to organize the preparation and defence of doctoral theses.

The University of Niš is very active in terms of collaboration with other HEIs. There are different types of collaboration: a) partnerships within international and national projects; b) sharing QA experts to transfer knowledge and best practices through workshops and seminars; and c) inviting leading scientists and university professors.

The CUBRIK project was beneficial for the University of Niš since it provided opportunities to meet with the EFQM Excellence Model, giving the fundamental concepts of excellence, giving a framework to help University to convert the fundamental concepts as well as RADAR and TRIS thinking into practice and explaining RADAR logic (in some details) as a simple but powerful tool for driving systematic improvement in all areas of University.

The *National Council of Higher Education* and the *Commission for Accreditation and Quality Assurance* are the most important institutions dealing with QA in higher education area in Serbia: with accreditation, quality assurance of higher education institutions and evaluation of study programmes, where the standards and procedures for accreditation of HEIs, accreditation of study programmes, self-assessment and quality evaluation of HEIs were determined by the National council of higher education.

It should be noted that the National Council of Higher Education approved:

- Rules and regulations on self-assessment and quality review of HEIs, the integral parts of which are the self-assessment standards and quality evaluation of HEIs.

- Rules and regulations of external quality control of HEIs and procedure for external quality control in HEIs, the integral part of which are the standards for external quality control in HEIs.

The inter-relation between two institutions is that the Accreditation and Quality Assurance Commission has been set up, as a task force, by the National Council of Higher Education.

The Serbian regulation on HE QA mainly follows European requirements. However, there are some understatements due to the fact that some things are still not resolve in the best manners.

The most effective result of the CUBRIK project is the Western Balkans Observatory for Quality Assurance which is still not fully operative, but it will provide information useful for harmonization of QA at Western Balkan Countries and their HEIs.

Finally, the standards and procedures for accreditation of HEIs in Serbia (accreditation of study programmes, self-assessment and quality evaluation of HEIs) were determined by the National Council of Higher Education. However, in our opinion combination of mentioned standards and procedures (obligatory) and the EFQM Excellence Model (arbitrary) can improve our reports giving better insight into institutional assessment of our university.

4.2.4.9. University of Novi Sad

Faculty of Philosophy, University of Novi Sad got accredited for the first time five years ago, within the first cycle of accreditation of HEIs in Serbia by getting accredited all 42 programmes at three levels of study. Prior to entering the reaccreditation process that is taking place now, the Faculty conducted a comprehensive self-evaluation process (SEP) of the

whole Faculty during the second half of 2012, which was an obligation stipulated by the law.

The results of the SEP have been collected in a Self-Evaluation Report (SER) and sent to the National Commission for Accreditation and Quality Assurance (CAQA). Until this day the Faculty did not receive the feedback from the CAQA due to the fact that many HEIs in Serbia are getting reaccredited at the same time and the CAQA has a huge workload as the result. Nevertheless, the Faculty entered the process of reaccreditation even without the feedback from CAQA.

As for the quality assurance, apart from the Faculty's QA Committee, several other working groups have been set up and are in charge for specific processes - Committee for the Accreditation E-FORM is one of them, and then separate working groups for each level of study which provided reports for each programme based on the national standards. The Faculty's QA Committee meets regularly in plenary meetings, and the individual groups meet when there is a need.

It is important to add that in the overall functioning of the programmes at Faculty of Philosophy, the Faculty appointed the coordinators for each year of study for each programme, which means that one BA programme has at least four coordinators, MA programmes and doctoral programmes have one with the exception of the Doctoral study programme in Language and Literature that has two.

Faculty of Philosophy has paid much attention to the results of the students surveys that are conducted twice per academic year with a purpose to get the feedback from students on all aspects of the Faculty functioning – programmes, teachers, services, facilities etc. The results of the last survey have been analysed with much respects and as a consequence, two different kinds of software have been introduced – one is a special programme for student affairs office for tracking students

records and the second is the programme for web-based student support which allows the students to apply for the exams online, to get the transcript of records online, fill in the survey online etc.

There is a high interest in the QA assurance at the UNS. The UNS has the QA Board <http://www.uns.ac.rs/sr/kvalitet/> which has been operating since 2007 and which itself took part in two Tempus projects dealing with QA, including CUBRIK. The participation of Faculty of Philosophy (FF) board members is particularly agile. The Board is significant because it enables the interaction among the faculties of the UNS and exchange of good practice in QA issues. It is important to mention that all the staff (academic and non-academic) of the UNS has the opportunity to use EM Action 2 exchange programmes (JoinEuSEE, Basileus, Sigma) for a one-month visit to some of the EU universities. The QA Board members also use the opportunity and explore good practice EU examples on QA management.

Furthermore, vice-deans for education of all UNS faculties meet regularly to discuss Q of the study programmes.

Finally, Expert Councils of the UNS monitor QA process closely and adopt all the changes to the study programmes in the process of reaccreditation.

The main challenges UNS is facing in the quality assurance implementation are:

- adapting the programmes constantly so as to suit the needs of the labour market.
- putting emphasis on learning outcomes
- satisfying complex needs of the HE reform
- involving external stakeholders, make closer connections to National Employment Service

- 'internationalisation at home' – offer more courses in English, offer courses for teachers to improve their soft skills, all having a target in attracting more foreign degree and exchange students.
- all of these become even more challenging having in mind that despite all the changes of the programmes we have to take care they retain the character of Humanities and Social Science (HSS) disciplines.

Concerning cooperation with other universities,

- Q of teaching staff: our teachers are members of the Promotion Committees in the HSS field, and vice versa.
- Q of students: our teachers are members of the committees for evaluation and defence of Doctoral Dissertations at other HEIs in Serbia and in the region (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro), and vice versa.
- Q of research: Our staff takes part in research project led by other HEIs in the country and abroad, and vice versa.

Faculty of Philosophy, University of Novi Sad is committed to the QA. The following plan was drafted as benefit of the participation in the CUBRIK project, though some of the activities have also been taking place prior to joining the project:

- maintain the high commitment to quality assurance and review;
- provide more information covered within the self-evaluation reports;
- self-evaluation reports should include well-thought out recommendations for improvement and evidence of implementation specifically targeted to the weaknesses identified and with a view to the feasibility of the implementation plan to be developed subsequently;
- students and alumni should be more engaged and involved in the process of institutional self-evaluation;
- self-evaluation reports should be evidence-based and more focussed not only on data and filling in boxes, but on the forward-looking

plans and recommendations for improvement together with a draft action plan;

- A SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis should be carried out as a useful and helpful means for evaluation;
- benchmarking should be carried out;
- self-assessment should include consideration of the situation at the national and international levels.
- enhancing the existing system for internal quality reviews focussed on quality assurance and quality as an integrated part of institutional activities would provide a very useful tool for quality assurance at the institution.

UNS perceives the role of the National Quality Assurance Agency as important for the tasks below:

- Defining common guidelines and methodologies for QA at national level that foster the creation of integral strategies supported by data evidence and based on the constitution of common values.
- Close cooperation with HEIs including guidance, counselling and partnership.

UNS thinks the national regulations in QA for HE are in line with European requirements.

CUBRIK has had certainly various effects on the national level, one of them being CAQA getting full ENQA member. All in all, it has led to close cooperation among HEIs in Serbia and CAQA on different issues concerning the QA.

5. GLOBAL ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Basic Principles of European Standards and guidelines

*As indicated in *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area - 3rd edition (2009)**

The standards and guidelines are based on a number of basic principles about quality assurance, both internal in and external to higher education in the EHEA. They include:

- Providers of higher education have the primary responsibility for the quality of their provision and its assurance;
- The interests of society in the quality and standards of higher education need to be safeguarded;
- The quality of academic programmes need to be developed and improved for students and other beneficiaries of higher education across the EHEA;
- There need to be efficient and effective organisational structures within which those academic programmes can be provided and supported;
- Transparency and the use of external expertise in quality assurance processes are important;
- There should be encouragement of a culture of quality within higher education institutions;
- Processes should be developed through which higher education institutions can demonstrate their accountability, including accountability for the investment of public and private money;

- Quality assurance for accountability purposes is fully compatible with quality assurance for enhancement purposes;
- Institutions should be able to demonstrate their quality at home and internationally;
- Processes used should not stifle diversity and innovation.

5.2. Purposes of the European Standards and Guidelines

The purposes of the standards and guidelines are:

- To improve the education available to students in higher education institutions in the EHEA
- To assist higher education institutions in managing and enhancing their quality and, thereby, to help to justify their institutional autonomy;
- To form a background for quality assurance agencies in their work;
- To make external quality assurance more transparent and simpler to understand

5.3. Objectives of the European Standards and Guidelines

The objectives of the standards and guidelines are:

- To encourage the development of higher education institutions which foster vibrant intellectual and educational achievement;
- To provide a source of assistance and guidance to higher education institutions and other relevant agencies in developing their own culture of quality assurance;
- To inform and raise the expectations of higher education institutions, students, employers and other stakeholders about the processes and outcomes of higher education;
- To contribute to a common frame of reference for the provision of higher education and the assurance of quality within the EHEA.

5.3.1. Policy and procedures for quality assurance ESG 1.1

STANDARD

Institutions should have a policy and associated procedures for the assurance of the quality and standards of their programmes and awards. They should also commit themselves explicitly to the development of a culture, which recognises the importance of quality, and quality assurance, in their work. To achieve this, institutions should develop and implement a strategy for the continuous enhancement of quality. The strategy, policy and procedures should have a formal status and be publicly available. They should also include a role for students and other stakeholders.

GUIDELINE

Formal policies and procedures provide a framework within which higher education institutions can develop and monitor the effectiveness of their quality assurance systems. They also help to provide public confidence in institutional autonomy. Policies contain the statements of intentions and the principal means by which these will be achieved. Procedural guidance can give more detailed information about the ways in which the policy is implemented and provides a useful reference point for those who need to know about the practical aspects of carrying out the procedures.

The policy statement is expected to include:

- The relationship between teaching and research in the institution;
- The institution's strategy for quality and standards;
- The organisation of the quality assurance system;
- The responsibilities of departments, schools, faculties and other organisational units and individuals for the assurance of quality;

- The involvement of students in quality assurance;
- The ways in which the policy is implemented, monitored and revised.

The realisation of the EHEA depends crucially on a commitment at all levels of an institution to ensuring that its programmes have clear and explicit intended outcomes; that its staff are ready, willing and able to provide teaching and learner support that will help its students achieve those outcomes; and that there is full, timely and tangible recognition of the contribution to its work by those of its staff who demonstrate particular excellence, expertise and dedication. All higher education institutions should aspire to improve and enhance the education they offer their students.

From the CUBRIK activities carried out, the surveys abovementioned and in general 3,5 years spent together with all HEIs, one important factor to underline and that should be taken into account from all HEIs is the **commitment of HEIs managers and QA staff** on the importance of having a **robust, updated and tailor made quality assurance system at each institution**. **Commitment of managers** is essential in order to underline the importance of quality assurance and to mobilise resources (staff and material ones). After that, the commitment should be also a *sine qua non* attitude of all staff, both academic as well as administrative. They should understand that a **quality culture** in their daily work is essential to grow up on a **personal**, as well as **institutional** level and thus for training better students more prepared for their life, but also **strengthen relationships with other institutions** at **national, regional** and **international** level. All these should be an important and integrated part of the carefully prepared and widely discussed institutional mission statement. **Increasing cooperation with other institutions by means of diverse initiatives** would also be of a great help to learn from **others' experiences** and **good practice** and to **compare** the indicators of one institution with others and determine areas for improve-

ment. The co-operation of universities and agencies in the CUBRIK project serves as effective background in this respect.

The **university policy in QA should be periodically revised and improved** based on surveys and indicators monitoring using appropriate IT systems and tools. The revision should be based on regular (yearly) self-evaluation report presented and discussed at the highest organ (senate) of the university. The yearly self-evaluation reports serve as components of the periodic institutional evaluation (accreditation) carried out by the national QA agency.

Last but not least, **students’ involvement** and **stakeholders’** beyond the academic community is crucial in this processes and their involvement must be fostered. Student unions could contribute to the effective student representation. A well-defined strategy for stakeholders’ involvement should be defined, implemented and updated to include them in QA processes at HEIs.

5.3.2. Approval, monitoring and periodic review of programmes and awards ESG 1.2

STANDARD
Institutions should have formal mechanisms for the approval, periodic review and monitoring of their programmes and awards
GUIDELINE
The confidence of students and other stakeholders in higher education is more likely to be established and maintained through effective quality assurance activities which ensure that programmes are well-designed, regularly monitored and periodically reviewed, thereby securing their continuing relevance and currency.

The quality assurance of programmes and awards are expected to include:

- Development and publication of explicit intended learning outcomes;
- Careful attention to curriculum and programme design and content;
- Specific needs of different modes of delivery (e.g. full time, part-time, distance learning, e-learning) and types of higher education (e.g. academic, vocational, professional);
- Availability of appropriate learning resources;
- Formal programme approval procedures by a body other than that teaching the programme;
- Monitoring of the progress and achievements of students;
- Regular periodic reviews of programmes (including external panel members);
- Regular feedback from employers, labour market representatives and other relevant organisations;
- Participation of students in quality assurance activities.

Also with the help, support and regulations from the national Quality Assurance Agency, HEIs should **set study programmes in line with market demand**. In order to reach such properties of the programmes **systematic consultations with stakeholder's representatives** both at institutional and agency level is strongly recommended.

After the pilot process of SER of universities' study programmes, in general was clear that a **better definition of learning outcomes** is essential for a better set out of the study programme. This should be in line with an **adequate content** (material, subjects, etc.) but also to have available **different typologies**, (full or part-time students). In addition the **students' follow up and surveys** for their satisfaction are essential to monitor the study programme implementation and improvement if necessary.

More **strict cooperation and feedback** has to be collected from labour market and other organisation relevant for such study programme. It's a good practice if institutional and agency boards have **active members from the external community**. With all this data retrieved, indicators should be set out and monitored.

Last but not least, **human resource development** (both academic and administrative) at each HEI should be fostered by means of initiatives such as trainings on their scientific area and QA, but also by means of surveys, etc.

5.3.3. Assessment of students ESG 1.3

STANDARD
Students should be assessed using published criteria, regulations and procedures which are applied consistently.

GUIDELINE
The assessment of students is one of the most important elements of higher education. The outcomes of assessment have a profound effect on students’ future careers. It is therefore important that assessment is carried out professionally at all times and that it takes into account the extensive knowledge which exists about testing and examination processes. Assessment also provides valuable information for institutions about the effectiveness of teaching and learners’ support. Student assessment procedures are expected to: ● be designed to measure the achievement of the intended learning outcomes and other programme objectives; ● be appropriate for their purpose, whether diagnostic, formative or summative;

- have clear and published criteria for marking;
- be undertaken by people who understand the role of assessment in the progression of students towards the achievement of the knowledge and skills associated with their intended qualification;
- where possible, not rely on the judgements of single examiners;
- take account of all the possible consequences of examination regulations;
- have clear regulations covering student absence, illness and other mitigating circumstances;
- ensure that assessments are conducted securely in accordance with the institution's stated procedures; be subject to administrative verification checks to ensure the accuracy of the procedures.

In addition, students should be clearly informed about the assessment strategy being used for their programme, what examinations or other assessment methods they will be subject to, what will be expected of them, and the criteria that will be applied to the assessment of their performance.

From the feedback of some study visits carried out by EU partners, there is a clear need of being **clear and transparent on students' assessment**. This will improve their motivation and performance and also attract other at HEIs. **Internal regulations of students' assessment** should be part of the institutional by laws after consultation with student representatives and the academic community.

5.3.4. Quality assurance of teaching staff ESG 1.4

STANDARD
Institutions should have ways of satisfying themselves that staff involved with the teaching of students is qualified and competent to do so. They should be available to those undertaking external reviews, and commented upon in reports.
GUIDELINE
Teachers are the single most important learning resource available to most students. It is important that those who teach have a full knowledge and understanding of the subject they are teaching, have the necessary skills and experience to transmit their knowledge and understanding effectively to students in a range of teaching contexts, and can access feedback on their own performance. Institutions should ensure that their staff recruitment and appointment procedures include a means of making certain that all new staff have at least the minimum necessary level of competence. Teaching staff should be given opportunities to develop and extend their teaching capacity and should be encouraged to value their skills. Institutions should provide poor teachers with opportunities to improve their skills to an acceptable level and should have the means to remove them from their teaching duties if they continue to be demonstrably ineffective.

Opportunities for **additional pedagogical training** for teachers should be given by the HEIs. **Modern and adequate infrastructure** (library, laboratory, IT etc.) are crucial conditions for research work of the teachers which must be considered as a sound basis of up to date teaching material. Participation in **international conferences** or other kind of courses in their discipline but also in the QA topic is essential to raise their **motivation** and **satisfaction**.

Opportunities of learning and practising **foreign language**, first of all English should be provided for the teachers if necessary.

5.3.5. Learning resources and student support ESG 1.5

STANDARD

Institutions should ensure that the resources available for the support of student learning are adequate and appropriate for each programme offered.

GUIDELINE

In addition to their teachers, students rely on a range of resources to assist their learning. These vary from physical resources such as libraries or computing facilities to human support in the form of tutors, counsellors, and other advisers. Learning resources and other support mechanisms should be readily accessible to students, designed with their needs in mind and responsive to feedback from those who use the services provided. Institutions should routinely monitor, review and improve the effectiveness of the support services available to their students.

In some cases of site visits carried out, we understood the importance of having **adequate facilities** at disposal of the academic and student community. Universities in order to have high quality study programmes and to be high quality and a reference institution must ensure that they meet also with the **material resources adequateness**. Premises, internet access, laboratories, classrooms, equipment, etc. are all factors that influence the study programme implementation and further results. Evaluation of these facilities should be part of the regular assessment carried out by QA agencies. Association of Universities (rector conferences) should require **higher competitive project sources from the governments**.

5.3.6. Information systems ESG 1.6

STANDARD

Institutions should ensure that they collect, analyse and use relevant information for the effective management of their programmes of study and other activities.

GUIDELINE

It is important that institutions have the means of collecting and analysing information about their own activities. Without this they will not know what is working well and what needs attention, or the results of innovatory practices.

The quality-related information systems required by individual institutions will depend to some extent on local circumstances, but it is at least expected to cover:

- Student progression and success rates;
- Employability of graduates;
- Students' satisfaction with their programmes;
- Effectiveness of teachers;
- Profile of the student population;
- Learning resources available and their costs;
- The institution's own key performance indicators.

There is also value in institutions comparing themselves with other similar organisations within the EHEA and beyond. This allows them to extend the range of their self-knowledge and to access possible ways of improving their own performance.

As mentioned above and findings of a relevant number of study visits, there is an urgent need of having an **appropriate information system** that is

able to collect all indicators, monitor them and thus provide the needed results whenever needed for the improvement of a certain aspect (study programme or service) at university level. Having a system like this is also very important to monitor the indicators on a time frame and also compare them with other institutions for a continuous improvement. A **national concept**, a **medium-term strategy** and **action plan** is recommended as basis for developing IT system of the single universities. **Cooperation with IT and other companies** is expedient because they are interested in well trained graduates in computer and information practice.

5.3.7. Public information ESG 1.7

STANDARD
Institutions should regularly publish up to date, impartial and objective information, both quantitative and qualitative, about the programmes and awards they are offering.

GUIDELINE
In fulfilment of their public role, higher education institutions have a responsibility to provide information about the programmes they are offering, the intended learning outcomes of these, the qualifications they award, the teaching, learning and assessment procedures used, and the learning opportunities available to their students. Published information might also include the views and employment destinations of past students and the profile of the current student population. This information should be accurate, impartial, objective and readily accessible and should not be used simply as a marketing opportunity. The institution should verify that it meets its own expectations in respect of impartiality and objectivity.

Transparency is crucial for the development of an institution, especially for universities that have to be chosen by students and their families. From experiences of many of the site visits performed there is a **clear need of improving this aspect**. This recommendation could be also extended to all QAA of PCs involved in the CUBRIK project and especially to the one of the Republic of Macedonia. Having a website with relevant information on both national language and English is crucial. The **Western Balkans Quality Assurance Observatory** will serve as a good example in this respect.

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Ordinance on norms and standards for establishing and performing higher education activities

Ordinance on the national framework for higher education qualifications

Rulebook on the mandatory components of the first-, second- and third-cycle study programmes

Rulebook on the procedures and operations by the Higher Education Accreditation Board

