**MARDS Bilateral Meeting Tirana**

**23 September 2019**

Minutes, 23 September 2019

Present:

Prof. dr Radovan Stojanović, University of Montenegro

Prof. dr David Kalaj, University of Montenegro

Ms Jela Radović, University of Montenegro

Prof. dr Arjeta Troshani, University of Shkodra “Luigj Gurakuqi”

Prof.as.dr Blerta Dragusha, University of Shkodra “Luigj Gurakuqi”

Prof.as.dr Brilanda Bushati, University of Shkodra “Luigj Gurakuqi”

Dr Alma Afezolli, Polytechnic University of Tirana

Prof.assoc. Elfrida Shehu, Polytechnic University of Tirana

Ms Hyrjana Mocka, Polytechnic University of Tirana

Ms Uriana Thanasi, Polytechnic University of Tirana

Ms Rezarta Sinanaliaj, University of Vlora

Ms Entela Islamaj, University of Vlora

Prof. dr Betim Cico, Metropolitan University of Tirana

Prof. Nikolla Civici, Metropolitan University of Tirana

Prof. dr Ozcan Asilkan, Metropolitan University of Tirana

PhD. Emre Cecen, Metropolitan University of Tirana

Ms Elvis Hazizi, Metropolitan University of Tirana

Ms Ingrit Jushi, Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth of Albania

Ms Klotilda Binjaku, Union of Chambers of Commerce and Industry of Albania

Ms Anni Dasho Sharko, Union of Chambers of Commerce and Industry of Albania

The first bilateral coordination meeting between project partner (University of Montenegro) and partner institutions from Albania was opened by Mr. Arjan Cukaj, president of Metropolitan University of Tirana, who welcomed everyone and by prof. dr Betim Cico, Advisor to the Chairman of the Senior Management for Board and Pedagogy, who expressed his satisfaction for hosting this event.

The meeting started with the overview of the project by prof. dr Radovan Stojanović, MARDS coordinator who pointed out that it is important to have independent meetings to see the project’s progress. It would be good to have more of these meetings, which could be organized every three months.

He reminded all partners of the main aims of the project:

1. **To initiate changes in the policies of doctoral education**

Reports on “state of the art” in doctoral education and on funding doctoral studies are done, and the next step is to submit an official document including our views and recommendations to responsible persons at Universities, as well as to responsible bodies in Montenegro and Albania;

1. **To implement of the trainings of academic and professional staff on EU practices of doctoral education**

Two out of four trainings were successfully implemented – the first one was held at the University of Vienna from 25 – 28 June 2019, focusing on “Professional Management of Doctoral Studies”; the second one was held at the Centre for Advanced Academic Studies in Dubrovnik, which operates under University of Zagreb, from 04 – 06 September 2019, focusing on “Professionalization of Ph.D supervision”. The third training will be organized at Matej Bel University in Banska Bystrica, Slovakia, from 02 – 05 October 2019 on “Collaborative Doctoral Programmes”; the fourth one will be held at the University of Maribor in the first week of November, and its topic will be “Quality assurance”. Our European partners are responsible for implementation of the trainings.

1. **To introduce 2 Pilot Joint doctoral programmes**

This means opening two Joint doctoral schools – one on “Natural Sciences and Technology for Sustainable Development”, located in Podgorica and the other one on “Economy and Tourism for Sustainable Development” in Shkodra. We have to focus on this aim and to form local teams to work on accreditation of the programmes. We have to form Committee and work on Curricula Development. We should know the list of the necessary documents and Ms Ingrit Jushi from the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport of Albania should inform us about the deadline in Albania.

We need to be sincere and to speak honestly if it is possible to open these schools at the University of Montenegro and University of Shkodra, because the process might take too long. We need to have a plan B – to change the place of implementation of the joint programmes.

Prof. Stojanović pointed out the importance of management of the project and said that many projects fail because of wrong administration of the project – persons responsible for evaluation focus more on checking the documents for financial part then on the aims of the project. It is agreed that partners send their documentation for the first year of the project until middle of November 2019.

After this, professor gave an overview of activities than must be done very soon:

* Sustainability strategy is in delay and it must be finished by October 2019,
* Proceedings from the Conference in Kotor (everyone is invited to write some paper with its own views and recommendations). Prof. Betim Cico suggests that each partner/team should prepare 5-8 pages on how they see PhD studies,
* Reports must be put into a template,
* Documents should be translated into Albanian language, we can engage someone who is not from the University,
* Report on MARDS equipment should be prepared,
* Union of Chambers of Commerce and Industry of Albania should organize 1-2 meetings in Albania on PhD studies, through these meetings we should find out if Albanian market requires PhD students,
* To increase dissemination of the project – through journals, media, etc. Prof. Arjeta Troshani suggests to organize a press conference together with National Erasmus + Office of Albania in collaboration with the Ministry of Education. An idea is to promote the project in Public TV.

The meeting continued with introductions on progress from Albanian universities. For every University everything is going according to the plan, only financial issues represent problems for some of the partners: University of Shkodra hasn’t still received money from UoM because of wrong account information, finally it should be done by the end of September; University of Vlora has received the payment from UoM but still has problems with their bank and money is not yet on their account. Prof. Stojanović should inform National Erasmus + Office in Albania of these problems.

At Metropolitan University of Tirana there were changes in administrative staff and new person is now in charge for project management.

Prof. Cico mentioned the training in Dubrovnik and pointed out that groups of people form Universities attended it and took knowledge for themselves. Good idea would be to make teams of 2-3 professors together with supervisors from PUT, who could present new model of supervising in Europe to wider number of supervisors in PhD education. Prof. Cico took this opportunity to express his satisfaction with this meeting which he considers the first real cooperative meeting between all of us.

Ms Ingrit Jushi from the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport of Albania pointed out few important issues:

The Law does not accept opening of doctoral schools. There is a possibility to have joint degrees, but not schools. Now the system works in a way that doctoral studies should be part of the project. Prof. Cico explains that we have to propose to the Ministry our project which is supported by the EU, and to see if they can make some amendments, that can be used for other projects as well. Ms Jushi responds that it is not clear yet what the new Law includes and that there are no standards for the third cycle of studies, no bylaws, so the question is based on what will responsible persons and experts from the Ministry accredit this project. Prof. Troshani says that we should have voice from the Ministry of Education. Ms Jushi explains that Ministry will welcome the working group but they will only explain how the law works. She also points out that a group of people who worked on the law had their own thought of PhD studies and model to be followed. Ms Dasho Sharko from the UCCIAL explains that it is difficult to have support from the state for public universities and that it is much easier for private ones.

Prof. Stojanović and prof. Cico gave some suggestions for solution:

* Ministry is our partner and if the only way to organize PhD in Albania is through the project, we will write a letter to the Ministry to obtain PhD studies trough MARDS project. It would be good to organize a meeting between the Rectors and Ministry and if they do not approve it, we can write a letter to EACEA asking for place of new PhD programme to be moved to North Macedonia. Ms Jushi points out that bureaucracy procedures are big obstacle.
* Prof. Stojanović points out one more time that Ministry is partner in this project, who signed the mandate. Ms Jushi should appoint a meeting at the Ministry with Rectors, prof. Stojanović as project coordinator and EU experts: Dr Zinner and prof. dr Melita Kovačević.

Every partner agrees on following steps:

1. Ms Jushi tries to schedule a meeting (if they do not accept, partners will write directly to the Ministry),
2. Ms Jushi prepares letter with outcomes of the meeting with Rectors, prof. Stojanović and EU experts,
3. Prof. Troshani prepares Curricula to be sent to the Ministry for proposal.

**Accreditation conclusions:**

Ms Jushi will schedule a Meeting in the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport of Albania where Rectors of the Universities, prof. Stojanović as project coordinator and EU expers will speak to the Minister. Coordinators of the Universities can be present but speak only if they are asked for some explanations or more information. After the meeting, partners will ask to have a document in written form in case the Ministry does not accept the accreditation idea.

In case this happens, project coordinator will write directly to EACEA to inform about changes in the programme.

**Equipment conclusions:**

University of Shkodra and University of Vlora haven’t received the first instalment yet, therefore process of equipment ordering will be delayed for 6 months. Project coordinator will inform NEO in Albania of this problem.

**Curricula development:**

Curricula should be written according to the plan regardless of issues that may arise; it should be ready until the end of October 2019.