



REFORMING DOCTORAL STUDIES IN MONTENEGRO AND ALBANIA – GOOD PRACTICE PARADIGM
Grant: 598465-EPP-1-2018-1-ME-EPPKA2-CBHE-SP

Letter sent on: Tue 10/09/2019 11:39 to project coordinator

Dear Radovan,

As part of our on-going monitoring of Capacity Building in Higher Education activities in the Partner Countries, a Preventive Field Monitoring Visit for the CBHE project “Reforming doctoral studies in Montenegro and Albania – good practice paradigm (MARDS)” took place on 8 July, 2019 at the University of Montenegro.

Ms Vanja Drljevic, Coordinator of the National Erasmus+ Office in Montenegro (NEO) and Ms Rina Muhaj, NEO trainee met with representatives from your institution and discussed the project implementation.

We would like to thank all participants for the time they devoted to the discussions and for having provided updated information on the project implementation.

The monitoring team has reported that MARDS project is running smoothly. Generally speaking, the activities are following the work plan. There are some minor delays, but it is still on time to reach the set deadlines with respect to the project objectives. Therefore, nothing that could jeopardize the project progress has been noted.

The communication and collaboration between project partners within consortium is very good. Transfer of the first instalment of funds has been made.

The main project management bodies and strategic documents for project implementation have been created at the kick off meeting held in Podgorica. On the occasion, the partnership agreements have been signed. The Steering Committee, the Quality Assurance Team and the Dissemination Team have all been established. Also, the project Management Plan, the Quality Assurance Plan and the Dissemination Plan have been drafted. The only pending strategic document is the Sustainability Plan. Its finalization is underway.



The preparatory activities are being implemented in compliance with the scheduled time as foreseen by the work plan. The only delay is the adoption of the report on the state of the art on doctoral education in Montenegro and Albania, but it's expected to be soon finalized.

The training activities are underway. One training has already been organized in Vienna, while for the next one planned to be organized in Dubrovnik, the call has already been launched. It will be held from 4-6 September, 2019.

The preparation of the draft on the funding model for doctoral studies is at its final phase.

The project is well institutionalized. The Rectorate of the University of Montenegro offers the maximum support during the project implementation activities. Presence of Rectorate representatives at the monitoring visit – vice rector, head of IRO, and financial officer confirm their strong commitment and willingness to support the project implementation in each and every aspect. Despite coordinator's talk on the roles and responsibilities of each local partner, their presence and direct communication at the monitoring visit would be much better. None of non-academic institutions representatives were present during the monitoring visit, which also stands for the other university involved. Therefore, NEO proposed holding a follow up meeting in the future period with all the local partners involved, to keep track of the project developments.

It is positive that the project deliverables will not encounter any legislative barriers, since the Law on Higher Education does foresee the creation of the joint programs, to be created during the project lifetime.

Dissemination of the project is ongoing. The website has been created <http://mards.ucg.ac.me> and contains all information related to the project. Project promotion through media tools and other events have also taken place, but further dissemination efforts are needed, especially the activities targeting the various stakeholders of the project.

To ensure that MARDS will be sustained beyond its lifetime, the detailed Sustainability Plan is needed. So far, the sustainability of the project can be judged only based on the project plan.

Based on the monitoring visit findings, the NEO would like to make the following recommendations:

- The support from the Rectorate of the University of Montenegro is highly appreciated and it should continue to be maintained as such;
- As regards local non-academic partners, their more active engagement is needed, especially as the project is a structural one.
- The role of the Ministry of Education is considered crucial for the successful achievement of the project objectives. Therefore, more active engagement and dedication of the Ministry is much needed. The same stands for the active involvement of the Ministry of Science too;
- The Chamber of Commerce of Montenegro should be also be more involved, especially in the phase of creation of the university-stakeholder network;
- Even though not planned in the project plan up to now, the project partners should consider the preparation of accreditation materials for joint programmes immediately, in order to avoid the potential delays;
- Drafting of the Sustainability Plan shouldn't be more postponed. Partners should take into account all the potential risks, if existent, so planning of the financial sustainability of the project deliverables should start as soon as possible;
- The project should be further promoted; designing of the project promotional materials and its distribution should start as soon as possible;
- As a result of this project, the University of Montenegro should consider the possibility of creation of joint programs also with EU partner universities involved in the project.
- Local coordinator should have invited all the other institutions involved in the project, as their joint efforts are necessary to reach the project objectives.
- Since none of the non-academic representatives took part in the monitoring visit, the follow up meeting should be organized with all the local partners representatives, to get full insight into each partner role, tasks and responsibilities, and keep track of developments; the role of non-academic partners must not be marginalized.

Please ensure the dissemination of this feedback to your project partners , and do not hesitate to contact us or the NEO in Montenegro (in copy of this email) should you need any further clarifications.



Best regards,

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Project Adviser



European Commission

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