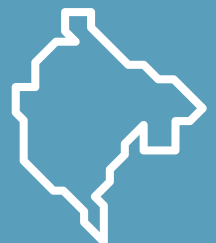**Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation**

STRATEGY

for the higher education development in Montenegro

2024 - 2027

Ministry of
Education, Science
and Innovation

STRATEGY FOR THE HIGHER EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT IN MONTENEGRO 2024-2027

Podgorica, July 2024

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1 INTRODUCTION

The strategic planning of higher education represents an appropriate approach to the timely and thorough consideration of the most important issues of functioning and development of this important part of modern society. The government passed the previous Strategy in 2016[1], and the adoption of the Final Report on its Implementation[2] in January 2020 created the prerequisites for planning the next development cycle by 2027.

Strategic planning of the development of higher education, in line with national and international policies and priorities, sets out the guidelines and defines the goals for a sustainable and long-term developmental path in this field. The policy creators in the area of higher education and administration of higher education institutions adopt educational policies in accordance with global shifts, such as Accelerated development of digital teaching, learning and evaluation, the unstoppable advancement of new technology, pandemics, mass migrations and global changes on the labour market.

Based on the results and recommendation of the prior strategic document, clear guidelines for the creation of the new strategy were formed, focussing on the following:

- Enhancing the practical teaching model in higher education which will enable adequate practical teaching for all students.

- Defining clear criteria and enrolment requirements in higher education institutions.

- Ensuring the implementation of the learning objectives in a meticulous manner, as well as their evaluation;

- Continuing the activities for the improvement of the quality of higher education;

- Ensuring the compliance of the Agency for Control and Quality Assurance of Higher Education with ESG and its membership in the EQAR through the adequate control process;

- Developing the lifelong learning offer while tracking the implementation quality of these programmes and ensuring the recognition of the non-formal and informal education;

- Further enhancement of the student standard;

- Internationalization and harmonisation with the EU recommendation and guidelines of the documents passed during the implementation process of the Bologna Declaration principles and other declarations which Montenegro is a signatory to.

Even though the 2016-2020 strategic document has brought significant advances in Montenegro's higher education, there is a need for deeper analytic support and efficient implementation of the strategic measures. To improve the quality and relevance of the educational programmes in Montenegro, the new strategic document should focus on deeper analyses of the labour market, evaluation of the current and new programmes, providing greater support to interdisciplinary studies and more efficient introduction of the feedback of all the relevant actors. These measures shall allow for an educational system that is flexible, efficient and in line with the necessities of modern society and the economy.

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1 https://www.gov.me/dokumenta/44403458-39bb-4f0a-8a23-d9b14967c3cd

2 https://wapi.gov.me/download-preview/52c892dc-f0f5-4705-8dc0-6f4529004233?version=1.0

The Strategy results from a realistic analysis of the situation in the higher education field and other areas it is connected to through its activity and achieved results. The developmental tasks have been established in line with the objectives, activities and responsibilities for their implementations, aiming to reach the state expected from higher education's active participation in the societal developmental needs by the end of the planning stage.

The Strategy also took into account all the documents adopted in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and The European Research Area (ERA) with a view to achieving the expected results in the development of Montenegrin society by transferring good practice, achieving visible harmonisation with all the resolutions inherent for these regions, and making necessary contributions to Montenegro's growth on its way to the EU.

It should be noted that the Working Group[3] for the creation of this strategic document included renowned university professors and representatives of higher education institutions who had been hired as consultants or secretaries, an Agency for Control and Quality Assurance of Higher Education representative, the economic sector representative, a students' representative, and ministry representatives. During the forming stage of the Working group, special attention was paid to the necessary expertise from different relevant areas and gender balance.

1.1 Developmental Directions

Montenegro's Strategic goal is to develop a system of higher education, research, and art creativity that will improve and advance the country's social, cultural, and economic growth based on knowledge and equal opportunity for all, in line with the principles of freedom and democracy.

Academic freedom is vital to achieving this goal, as it is viewed as a sine qua non for the adequate functioning of modern universities and advancement of freedom, democracy, and the rule of law in society. It is of crucial significance for current and future research and university teaching because it enables universities to be of service to the general interest through the increase and widening of the knowledge and advancement of critical and independent thinking and its expression when it comes to the university staff and students. Individual academic freedoms of expression, research, publishing, studying, teaching, and informing, as well as the collective institutional autonomy of the higher education institutions with the right and duty to safeguard and promote the principles of academic freedom and independence in decision-making in organising, funding, and management, with the state's duty to respect and protect academic freedom and take measures and action to ensure effective enjoyment of these rights and their promotion, represent intrinsic values of higher education, which are of crucial importance when it comes to democracy and the rule of law (see: *Recommendation of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe No. 1762, from 30th June 2006; Recommendation CM/Rec (2012) 7 of the Committee of Minister of the Council of Europe to the Member States on the Responsibility of the Public Authorities for Academic Freedom and Institutional Autonomy, from 20 July 2012),*

Academic freedom involves the freedom of action and autonomy related to the external carriers of social, political, and economic power based on the rule of law as well as the internal, individual freedom of the academic community's members from the academic institution administrations intervening in it, as the ultimately significant basic principles of the universities, because the social and historical context ultimately defines the limitations of rights and liberties as fundamental principles upon which science rests.

Meeting the said objective primarily demands commonly accepted and integrated principles of the culture of quality in the organisation and management of the higher education institutions and systems to actualise the desired dynamic concept, which refers to specific standards of the said system. In such conditions, achieving numerous initiatives and goals stems from the mission for effective education that aligns with developmental needs and achieved indicators of activity quality.

The functioning of the higher education system requires sustainable and stable funding and continuous training of competitive and competent staff, which is a prerequisite for the development of education, science, research, and art creation. It is equally important that the competent ministry[4], councils[5], and Agency[6] are trained to

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3 The Solution, No 01-011/23-1759/2 from 06th June 2023 formed a Working group to draft the Strategy, as follows: Maša Stević, the President, and members: Goran Radević, Nada Vuksanović, Marko Vukašinović, prof. dr Sanja Peković, mr Dragica Anđelić, mr Stefan Đurić, prof. dr Anđela Jakšić Stojanović, Andrej Vukčević, Milica Kavedžić and Ksenija Đukanović.

4 Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation

5 Council for Higher Education; Council for Scientific Research Activity.

6 Agency for Control and Quality Assurance in Higher Education

professionally fulfill the tasks that are in service of meeting the strategic objectives of higher education.

Higher education institutions recognise their role also through continuous work and results contributing to the development of Montenegrin society, preservation of tradition, identity, and other values, and modern strategic orientation of Montenegro as a civil state.

The mission, vision, initiatives and action plans of Montenegro's higher education should comply with the global EU strategy and EHEA and ERA documents and strategies.

1.2 Specificities

The Strategy of Higher Education should represent an efficient instrument with clearly specified initiatives, objectives, activities and measures to clearly identify and improve the present situation in the planned 4-year time frame.

Having this in mind, the following should be highlighted:

- Conditionality by the EHEA and ERA documents due to the status of education and research in Montenegro relating to the obligations taken over by the temporarily closed chapters on education and research (Chapter 25 – Education and Culture) on its path to the EU membership.
- Continuous efforts to harmonise with the principles of Bologna's Declaration so that the Strategy adequately affirms the recommendations and guidelines from the said Document, which have been adopted in Bologna's process development so far.
- The importance of the ACQAHE's completed external inspection results created the preconditions for implementing thematic research based on the data collected through the re-accreditation process.

Bearing in mind the above-mentioned and the analysis of the higher education system of Montenegro, the 2024-2027 Strategy of the Higher Education of Montenegro defines the following strategic objectives:

1. Enhancing the study programs based on the labour market needs, adequate recognition of the higher education qualifications and improvement of the infrastructure;
2. Improving the higher education system in line with the standards for quality assurance of the EHEA and ERA areas;
3. Strengthening the role of higher education institutions at the international level.

To achieve this, the Strategy has defined 11 operative objectives and 43 activities for the time frame included in the Action Plan.

An overview of making the strategic document gender sensitive

When it comes to making the higher education policy gender-sensitive, special attention during the preparation of this document was paid to the following: the gender-sensitive language is present throughout the entire strategic document. In contrast, the data in the Situation Analysis has been presented in a gender-sensitive manner, according to the official statistics. Additionally, regarding the staff structure, Montenegro does not have a case of gender inequality in this field.

2 COMPLIANCE WITH THE UMBRELLA AND SECTORAL STRATEGIC DOCUMENTS, INTERNATIONAL COMMITMENTS AND THE ASSESSMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development [7]:

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a universal strategy, and it requires signatories to mobilise all resources to achieve these goals by 2030. The Agenda, with all its 17 goals, includes three dimensions of sustainable development: economic growth, social inclusion and environmental protection. Following the UN Agenda for Sustainable Development, the 2030 National Strategy for Sustainable Development's strategic objectives, adopted in 2016, are being implemented. Ensuring inclusive and high-quality education and promoting opportunities for lifelong learning for all has been set up as one of the objectives, with which the objectives of the 2024-2027 Strategy for Higher Education Development are also completely compliant.

2024-2027 Medium-term GovernmentWork Programme [8]:

Within the Medium-term Government Work Programme, Priority 3 refers to Healthy and educated individuals as a foundation for a prosperous and solidary society. Within it, objectives have been established that are relevant to improving the higher education system, such as ". Objective 14: "Excellent education for excellent Montenegro" and Objective 15: "Science and innovation for smart, competitive Montenegro. Key objective activities refer to the very adoption of the strategic and legal framework for higher education. Adoption of this strategy improves the higher education system. It promotes the integration of higher education institutions into the European higher education area, which directly enhances the indicator in the Medium-term Government Work Programme .

2024 Government of Montenegro Work Programme[9]:

Within the 2024 higher education system reform, the 2024-2027 Strategy for Higher Education Development and improvement of the legal framework for the functioning of the higher education system are given a special focus. Additionally, the Strategy is in line with the tasks concerning the Plan for implementation of the "Youth Guarantee" Programme"; "2019-2025 Action Plan for Implementation of the Strategy for Inclusive Education for years 2024 and 2025"; "Programme for Development of the Lifelong Professional Orientation (2025-2027) and "Strategy for Education Reform (2025-2035)".

2024-2027 Montenegro's Programme of Accession to the European Union (PMA)[10]:

2024-2027 Programme of Montenegro's Accession to the European Union, specifically in the part that refers to Chapter 25 – Education and Culture, envisages the adoption of the 2024-2027 Strategy of Higher Education

7 The united Nations on the Summit which was held in September 2015 adopted the resolution A/RES/70/1 – *Transforming ourworld: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda

8 https://www.gov.me/dokumenta/ee885398-748f-48fd-912a-29bbac334bfb

9 https://www.gov.me/dokumenta/ee885398-748f-48fd-912a-29bbac334bfb

10 https://www.gov.me/dokumenta/29349d74-d332-498c-9927-3fac36e454a1

Compliance with the Umbrella and Sectoral Strategic Documents, International Commitments and the Assessment of the Environmental Impact

11

Development, Law on Higher Education, Law on amendments to the Law on Recognition of Foreign Educational Documents and Qualification Equivalence, Law on Amendments to the Law on the Education of Adults, while enhancement of all areas, which shall be legally regulated, are also provided by the action plan of this strategy. This strategy plans to improve higher education policies and harmonise the higher education system with European standards and recommendations in the best possible manner.

2024-2026 Montenegro Economic Reform Programme [11]:

In the 2024-2026 **Montenegro Economic Reform**, "Structural Reform 5: "Improving the Framework for Better Employability of Youth and Higher Quality of Education", which refers to the subareas "Education and Skills" and "Employment and Labour Market", have been established in the 2024-2026 Montenegro Economic Reform Programme. The mentioned structural reform is further elaborated through two reform measures: Reform Measure: Introduction of the Programme of Youth Guarantee in Montenegro", which has been continuing from the previous year and is joined with Measure No. 1: "Strengthening of the operative capacities of the Employment Agency for implementation of services and measures via digitalisation", and partially with Measure No. 4: "Digitalisation of education and development of digital skills" from the Programme of Economic Reforms from 2023 to 2025., and reform measure: "Development of the integrated approach to the increase in quality and inclusive education", which corresponds with the objectives of the 2024-2027 Strategy of Higher education Development.

National Strategy for Sustainable Development of Montenegro by 2030[12]:

Education is one of the essential prerequisites of sustainable development. The vision of sustainable development by 2030, among other things, envisions Montenegro as a country where everyone has equal access to high-quality and inclusive education at all levels and throughout their lives. priority Topic 4.1 , the improvement of the human resource situation and strengthening of social inclusion, recognizes strategic objective 4.1.3 - the insurance of inclusive and high-quality education and the promotion of opportunities for lifelong learning for all. In achieving this objective, implementation of the following measures is of high priority: Improve the conditions for lifelong learning, informal education and adult education, with a special focus on the vulnerable groups – SDG 4 (4.5. The defined objectives of this Strategy thematically contribute to the said objectives of the National Strategy for Sustainable Development.

At the efficacy indicator levels, this strategy's strategic and operative objectives are connected to the NSSD indicators, particularly in improving work standards in higher education institutions, improving employability standards, and harmonising the higher education system with the needs of society and the labour market.

Using the tools for the self-assessment of strategic documents within the strategic analysis of the impact on the environment, it has been determined that the Strategy for Higher Education Development has no positive or negative impact on the results regarding the environment.

2019-2024 Smart Specialisation Strategy (S3)[13]:

The S3 Strategy identifies the basic common objectives of policy combinations, which are determined by research and innovation interests. Human resources are said to be vital for a successful implementation of S3, considering that they are the instigators of economic and social development.

The Strategy for Higher Education Development is by this objective, as stimulating knowledge transfer will enable the acquisition of practical knowledge that will strengthen the innovation capacities in enterprises. In this manner, development and research in the economic sector shall be improved, contributing to the more dynamic growth of a knowledge-based economy. The new Smart Specialisation Strategy of Montenegro, drafted on 24th

February 2024, will include the period until 2030. Additionally, the Strategy of Smart Specialisation emphasises the importance of participation in the EU funds (COST, H2020, COSME, EUREKA, ERASMUS+) and integration of Montenegro in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and European Research Area (ERA)

2022-2025 Strategy for Digital Transformation of Montenegro[14]

This strategy represents a tool whose purpose is to improve public services and customer experiences, strengthen the digital skills of the entire society, reduce the digital gap, and enable digital transformation and efficient management at the level of the whole country. Compliance with this strategy is at the level of operative objective 1.4 Development and enhancement of digital knowledge and skills of Montenegrin society and Indicator: Percentage of graduated students from the IT area departments in comparison to the total number of graduated students at the university level, which is connected to the innovation of study programmes on UVO **2022-2024 Strategy for Lifelong Entrepreneurial Learning.**[15]

The strategy defines three strategic objectives: Improving the development of entrepreneurial competency at all levels of formal education, improving the implementation of entrepreneurial learning within informal education, and increasing the efficiency of the entrepreneurial learning system. The said strategic objectives are relevant for higher education because, to harmonise education with the labour market better, it is necessary to develop study programmes and strengthen entrepreneurial components of higher education and the capacities of the graduates for self-employment and entrepreneurship. Additionally, this strategy recognises the importance of the ERASMUS+ programme. One of the priorities of this program is practical training and the development of students' entrepreneurial skills.

2023-2026 Strategy for Development of Micro, Small, and Medium Entreprises in Montenegro[16]

This Strategy defines the developmental direction of the policies of micro, small and medium enterprises. At the same time, compliance with the Strategy for Higher Education Development is evident at the level of operative objective 3: Development of modern knowledge and skills in MSMEs, that is, the Activity: Strengthening of the cooperation between institutions and economy for harmonisation of educational programmes with the labour market needs.

2021 – 2025 Strategy for Social Inclusion of Roma and Egyptians [17]

This strategic document recognises the creation of conditions for providing high-quality education for all citizens of Montenegro. It represents one of the foundational developmental parameters of Montenegrin society, where a special emphasis has to be placed on enhancing the education of minorities in vulenarble position, as is the case with the citizens of Roma and Egyptian communities. At the Operative Objective 5 level: *improvement of the accessibility, effectiveness and quality of education of the members of Roma and Egyptian communities,* the performance indicator *Increase in the number of members of Roma and Egyptian communities who enroll at the higher education institutions at the yearly level* shall be singled out. Inclusion in higher education consists of insurance of financial support for students from less privileged socioeconomic groups to enable them access to higher education, as well as affirmative action during enrollment at the institutions of higher education in Montenegro.

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11 https://www.gov.me/dokumenta/4a9dd1c8-6ec6-4838-95bc-5b05e80f6836
12 https://www.gov.me/en/documents/67dc487e-097d-41d2-8fd5-7827a19a1f5a
13 https://s3.me/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Strategija-pametne-specijalizacije-Crne-Gore-2019-2024-.pdf

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14 https://wapi.gov.me/download-preview/0c802520-e016-41ee-a6e4-7af6eb66e19d?version=1.0
15 https://www.gov.me/dokumenta/59a998e8-af01-4e54-a205-fc81584163f8
16 https://www.gov.me/dokumenta/3e145aba-089d-40bf-8bbb-6e7a91b3e873
17 https://www.gov.me/dokumenta/9c1f248f-c43d-4ce0-bf18-e5b778327e90

12 | Compliance with the Umbrella and Sectoral Strategic Documents, International Commitments and the Assessment of the Environmental Impact

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2022-2027 Strategy for the protection of People with Disabilities from Discrimination and promotion of Equality[18]

Each state must ensure that people with disabilities exercise their rights through an inclusive educational system at all levels, including higher education. This strategy recognises the fact that access to higher education is usually insufficient, which is the main problem. Thus, through Operative Objective 10: Accomplishment of equality, accessibility and fairness of inclusive and quality higher education for disabled students through training for inclusive staff competencies and accessibility of didactic and communication means.

2021-2025 National Strategy for Employment[19]

Harmonisation between the two strategies is defined in the area of support to practical education, which has been identified in Measure 2.2: *Improving the quality of professional and higher education through advancement of practical teaching to increase the employability* of the National Strategy for Employment and Operative Objective 5: *Application of practical teaching* of the Strategy for Higher Education Development.

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18 https://www.gov.me/dokumenta/e9659c4e-e7f6-41f2-ab98-0fd115b80601
19 https://www.zzzcg.me/wp-content/uploads-2022/02/predlog-nacionalne-staregije-zaposlavanja-2021-2025-s-predlogom-akcionog-plana-zaposlavanja-za-2021-godinu.pdf

3 COMPLIANCE WITH THE EU POLICIES

The Bologna Process began with the adoption of the Bologna Declaration (1999). The Bologna process is a comprehensive and complex reform of higher education that is planned to create a common higher education area, which should follow the integration within the European Union. In its first decade, the implementation of the Declaration resulted in the formation of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA, 2010) to create comparable, compatible and coherent systems of higher education in Europe. By adopting the Bologna Declaration in 2003, Montenegro started harmonising with the EU policies and processes in higher education. Laws and by-laws in the higher education area have been continuously harmonised with all the valid EHEA and ERA documents.

Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region was drafted on 11th April 1997 in Lisabon, and the qualification recognition process in the Montenegrin higher education system complies with this convention.

Strategic Objective 1 of this document fully corresponds with the priority areas for improvement through the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance IPA II. The Sectoral Operative Programme for Employment, Education and Social Policy (SOPEES) was carried out through IPA II from 2015 to 2017. The activities that were successfully implemented as a part of the SOPEES were intended to improve the quality of education, develop educational programs in accordance with the national framework of qualifications, and include marginalised groups in the educational system.

The programming of the IPA III project activities is in the preparation stage at the moment. Still, it shall mostly correspond with the actions that refer to the implementation plan: Youth Guarantee, within which measures and activities for higher education are planned, emphasising the interconnection between higher education and the labour market. When it comes to IPA III, activities related to education shall be in the programme years 2025 and 2026, while the support for the implementation of the comprehensive education development strategy has also been planned, continuation on the improvement of the professional education and adult education and advancement of digitalisation in the educational system.

The EU played a key role in shaping the United Nations' Sustainable Development Agenda by adopting the 2030 Sustainable Europe Strategy. It is extremely dedicated to managing its implementation within the EU and other countries, especially those with the highest needs. The Strategy for Higher Education Development complies with the UN sustainable development goal: Quality Education through Strategic Objective 2 of this document. "improvement of the higher education system in compliance with the EHEA and ERA standards". All the activities planned for meeting this objective shall have quality education as the final result.

In the European Commission's report on Montenegro for 2030, in the aspect that refers to the Negotiation Chapter 25. Education and Culture Aside from stating a good level of preparedness, certain progress has been made regarding the 2022 recommendations. Even though the educational system faces numerous challenges, as outlined by the results of international tests, the efforts towards effective, coherent, and inclusive digital transformation of the education and training system must be present in the policy agendas. The Report recognised that Montenegro continues to show progress in the international facet of the ERASMUS+ programme. One of the recommendations referred to the necessity of adopting the Strategy of Higher Education and Law on Higher Education. The adoption of both documents was recognised in the most significant strategic documents of Montenegro's Government - 2024 Government's Agenda and 2024-2027 Programme of Accession of Montenegro to the European Union.

It has been provided that the successful implementation of the planned activities within Strategic Objective 1 will contribute to Montenegro's social and economic progress and reduce the gap between the educational supply and labour market demands. The planned activities consist of three priority areas:

1. Strengthen connections between education and the economy to improve the quality of vocational training and the relevancy of its outcomes through the development and revision of curriculums based on learning outcomes and professional standards, enhancement of teachers' competencies, and improvement of the monitoring methodology and quality insurance evaluations.

2. Lifelong learning and adult education to create more flexible and numerous opportunities for reskilling and upskilling of youth and adults, based on the partnership and strict principles of quality insurance in the light of lifelong learning.

3. Modernisation of higher education for economic growth, enhancement of quality and relevance of practical education and training in higher education to increase employability and reduce the gap regarding the compatibility of acquired skills and labour market demands.   One of the greatest challenges is harmonising the labour market with the model of studying so that educational levels of the new model align with the systematisation of the establishment plan.

4 SITUATION ANALYSIS

4.1 Analysis of the Current Situation: EU Context

4.4.1 Europe 2020 Strategy and Sustainable Europe 2030 Strategy

The strategic planning of the development of the European Union (EU) started with the adoption of the Lisbon Strategy to make the EU the most competitive and dynamic economy of the world in the next decade, which is based on the knowledge capable of achieving economic growth with a greater number of and more quality work posts and stronger social cohesion. One of the key objectives of the Strategy – the development and improvement of knowledge – involved greater investment in education, professional training, scientific and technological research and innovation.

The limited results of the Lisbon strategy soon caused the redefinition of the broadly set objectives. Following the economic crisis, a new strategic framework of development was prepared. In mid-2010, "Europe 2020 – Strategy for a Smart Sustainable and Inclusive Growth" was passed as a comprehensive overview of the most important elements of the new development programme. The three said priority areas of development are connected with five headline targets, seven leading initiatives and ten integrated guidelines. The economic management system has been updated, and a stable instrument for tracking the accomplishment of strategic objectives has been adopted. Competencies are clearly divided. The Strategy is relevant for the countries that want to become members of the EU.

In light of Strategy Europe 2020, Table 1 directly refers to higher education: an increase in the GDP percentage allocated for research and development (R&D) from 1.9 to 3% and an increase in the percentage of the population aged 30-34 with a higher education degree from 31% to 40%. Table1.

Table 1 Established Objectives of the EU 2020

EU targets of the member states	Employment rate %	Research and Development (R&D), %GDP	Reduction of CO_2 emission, % compared to 1999.	Renewable energy,%	Energy efficiency - Reduction of energy consumption, %	Reduction of the number of early school leavers %	Population with the tertiary education degree	Reduction of the population in risk of poverty (or social exclusion)
Basic objective at the EU level	75	3	20	20	20 Energy efficiency increase (368 Mtoe)	10	40	20000000 (expressed in the number of people)
Estimate at the EU level	73.7 – 74	2.65 – 2.72	20	20	206,9 Mtoe	10.30 -10.50	31	-

In the Europe 2020 Strategy, the importance of the programme for candidate states and neighbouring countries is explicitly emphasised. "Europe 2020 Strategy is not only relevant inside the European Union, but it also offers significant benefits to candidate states and our neighbours and assists them in accelerating their reforms. Expanding the space where the EU rules are applied will create new opportunities for the EU and its neighbours."[20]

Aside from those mentioned above, the EU played a key role in shaping the United Nations' 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. The most important aspects of sustainable development are present in all ten priorities of the Junker's commission: jobs, growth and investment (1); Digital Single Market (2); safer, more accessible and sustainable energy (3); better connected and more just internal market (4); better connected and more just economic and monetary union (5); open and fair trade (6); justice and fundamental rights (7); migration (8); strengthening of the EU role at the global level (9); the union of democratic changes (10);. From the beginning of his term (November 2014), Junker's Commission included sustainable development in key interdepartmental programmes, sectoral policies, initiatives, and instruments for better regulation. All the Commission's impact assessments, which precede legal proposals, include the analysis of social, economic, and ecological impacts to adequately consider and take into account all the issues of sustainable development.

Through its strategic and legal acts, Montenegro has recognised the objectives of Strategy Europe 2020 and Strategy Sustainable Europe 2030, especially those that refer to better employability, early school-leaving and wider coverage of higher education. The highlighted future challenges confirm orientation towards continuing the higher education enhancement to meet the needs of the improvement of knowledge, increase of employment and sustainable development.

4.1.2 Bologna Declaration and European Higher Education Area (EHEA)

EHEA stems from the Bologna process, which began with the adoption of the Bologna Declaration (1999). Bologna Declaration defined the goals that were supposed to be met:

1. Adoption of the easily readable and comparable qualification systems;
2. Adoption of the system based on two main cycles of studies - undergraduate and graduate;
3. Adoption of the credit transfer system (ECTS – European Credit Transfer System);
4. Promotion of mobility of students, teachers, researchers and administrative staff;
5. Promotion of European cooperation in quality assurance and
6. Promotion of necessary European dimensions in higher education, particularly about curricular development, interinstitutional cooperation, mobility schemes and integrated programmes of study, training and research.

Implementation of the Declaration in the first decade resulted in the formation of EHEA in 2010. EHEA is a very broad initiative that was created for all European countries. It aims to create comparable, compatible, and coherent European higher education systems.

Summary/Recommendations:
› Implementation of the comprehensive reform with principles of the Bologna Declaration for continuous enhancement of the position and quality of higher education;
› Achieving intensive international cooperation between higher education institutions to strengthen the international competitiveness of universities.
› Strengthening the ACQAHE's cooperation with the agencies for higher education quality assurance within the EHEA.

20 J. Kronja, Vodič kroz strategiju Evropa 2020, internet: http://ec.europa.eu/eu2020/pdf/. .. 29.

4.1.3 Quality Assurance of Higher Education

The quality of higher education and cooperation in quality assurance represents a particularly significant reform area, in line with the Bologna Declaration. Adopted documents adequately and uniformly regulate the operation activities and reporting in this area. The organisations, bodies, and registries formed are competent in planning, implementing, checking, and evaluating the activities of the quality assurance of institutions and systems of higher education. The achieved work results and grades are publicly available, which enables transparency for analysis of all the quality aspects of higher education.

The Agency for Control and Quality Assurance of Higher Education (ACQAEH) performs the quality assurance work in line with the Law on Higher Education and following the EHEA's Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance [21] (*Standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area*, abbreviated: *ESG*), which were first adopted in 2005, and then revised in 2015 at the Ministerial Conference in Yerevan in 2015. Since their adoption, considerable progress has been made in the quality assurance and other lines of action of the Bologna Process, such as the development of the qualification framework, recognition of qualifications and initiation of the application of learning outcomes, which contributed to the student-centred education (a student in the heart of the education process). Montenegro ratified the Lisbon Convention in 2004, representing a starting point for all ENIC/NARIC[22] network member states, which our country is a part of. One of the basic principles of the Lisbon Convention is that qualification recognition for continuation of education does not include a detailed comparison of the programmes but the fulfillment of the general conditions for higher education access in the said countries, except in the cases when it has been determined that there is a substantive difference between general terms and conditions of access in the country where the qualification was acquired and the country where its recognition is requested. This principle should be equally accepted in all higher education institutions in Montenegro. In Poznań, in July 2019, the Declaration on Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications was signed to facilitate qualification recognition and greater mobility among the economies of the Western Balkans. Additionally, at the summit within the Berlin Process in November 2022, leaders of the Western Balkan[23] countries signed agreements on mutual recognition of qualifications within the higher education area, which refer to public institutions only. The expansion of the Agreement on private higher education institutions was seen as a possible future activity, so all licensed higher education institutions were covered by it.

Renews European standards and guidelines (ESG) were adopted at the Ministerial Conference in Yerevan, Armenia) in 2015. The standards and guidelines were renewed to improve their applicability and for their more precise description.

The ESG's key objective is to unify the quality assurance system in all countries to develop quality assurance system in higher education. Higher education institutions and quality assurance agencies use the ESG as an instruction for developing internal and external quality assurance systems. EQAR[24] is also in compliance with the ESG and is in charge of managing the Quality Assurance Register.

All the quality assurance activities are established on accountability and improvement, which together build trust in the work of higher education institutions. Each successfully organised quality assurance system provides information so that an institution and the public know the quality of work (accountability) and uses advice and recommendations on what can be done in order to improve work (improvement). In that way, quality assurance and quality improvement are interconnected. They support the *quality culture* that should be accepted by all participants in the higher education system (students, scientific and teaching staff, institution management, and administration).

Broadening access to higher education allows institutions to exploit the various experiences of people who enroll in those institutions. Access variety and increasing expectations regarding higher education demand a fundamental shift in the teaching organisation: orienting teaching and learning towards the students, accepting flexible learning approaches, and recognising competencies acquired via informal education.

21 Croatian translation of the revised ESG-ja adopted at the ministerial Conference in Yerevanu on 14 and 15 May 2015, https://enqa.eu :> esg› ESG in Croatian_by ASHE.
22 https://www.enic-naric.net/
23 North Macedonia, Serbia, Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Albania:
24 European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education

4.1.4. Lisbon Strategy and European Research Area (ERA)

The Lisbon Strategy has already been mentioned as the beginning of EU strategic planning. The Strategy particularly made official the importance of knowledge, research, and innovation for promoting growth, employment, and social cohesion in the context of higher education. The basic premise was to integrate and coordinate huge but too fragmented EU research and scientific potential to fully use its capacity and results. The European Research Area (ERA) was created as a result of these aspirations.

One of the main dimensions of the ERA is the promotion of gender equality and inclusion improvement, especially in line with the Ljubljana Declaration on Gender Equality in Research and Innovation[25]. Specific recommendations were also provided for the increase in the number of researchers, i.e., the increase in the share of researchers in the total labour force. The incentive was necessary due evident decrease in the number of researchers in the total labour force, especially in the industry and a drastic slump in the interest in basic research (Mathematics and Physics), which holds the risk of over-reduction of human resources in these areas (retirements of generations of researchers without chances for their substitution). Therefore, strengthening the STEM[26] fields is necessary in accordance with the areas defined in the 2018-2024 Smart Specialisation Strategy.

Additionally, the Open Science principle has become a standard for conducting research within the ERA. Due to the numerous advantages provided by this principle and in line with the practice of research funding within the ERA, the key action directions in Montenegro should be oriented towards supporting the application of open science principles. The competent ministry should ensure access to scientific databases at the national level for researchers from all higher education institutions in Montenegro.

4.1.5. Doctoral Programme - Doctoral Schools

The EU presented the importance of research, its application, and its organisation in the higher education systems in the Salzburg II Recommendations. These recommendations include the basic principles that should contribute to the crucial role of doctoral programmes and research in the Bologna process. Recommendations are guidelines for various practices and standards for doctoral schools.

The starting premise is that knowledge society requires creative and flexible researchers for a large number of different functions and careers, and a doctoral degree is becoming more and more recognised as the key part of that process. Thus, the reform of doctoral education is of particular importance to the European Research Area and the European Higher Education Area[27]. Doctoral education is established on research principles, which is why it greatly differs from the previous higher education cycles. Doctoral education is individual and, by definition, original, and therefore, independence and flexibility for research and specialisation should be ensured to the PhD students. A person's path of progress is unique in research and professional development. Finally, doctoral education should develop autonomous and possible institutions, which need flexible regulation to create specific structures and instruments.

Recommendations explain, or more precisely advise, how to organise important segments (critical mass and critical diversity, recruitment of candidates. Enrolment, status, mentoring, outcomes...) and remove the obstacles (funding, autonomy, legal framework, interdepartmental cooperation).

25 https://www.genderportal.eu/resources/ljubljana-declaration-gender-equality-research-and-innovation
26 Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics
27 Salzburške preporuke, Publisher: prof. dr. sc. Melita Kovačević, University in Zagreb, 2011. www.ttf.unizg.hr › doktorski › Salzburg_II_preporuke.

Programmes that refer to professional, that is, industrial doctoral studies, need to be developed to strengthen economic growth, interconnectivity, and cooperation between higher education institutions and the economy.

Summary/Recommendation:

› Creating the prerequisites for continuous research development as an integral part of education, research approach in youth, training of the researchers and supporting growth and employment based on the research and innovation. Aside from research development being an integral part of education, it is necessary to continuously develop the course curricula in accordance with the latest research.

› The defined framework, the importance of doctoral studies in institutional and national strategies, and the development of doctoral studies are preconditions for answering new research challenges, which should meet high standards and encourage the development of society, the labour market, institutions, and young researchers' careers.

4.1.6. Academic Mobility

Mobility in the EHEA (mobility for better learning) was previously defined in the Mobility Strategy 2020 for the European Higher Education Area, which was adopted in Bucharest (2012)[28], and it includes mobility aims and targets, starting from the promotion of higher education, mobility of students, researchers, teaching and administrative staff. Education goals should be primarily oriented towards strengthening knowledge, skills, and competencies for a high quality of mobility. With the enhancement of mobility, the higher education systems and institutions additionally improve their work through mutual comparison and individual development of people on the move. At the same time, the cultural identity of Europe is additionally empowered. Mobility is significant in ensuring higher education quality and an important pillar for exchange and cooperation. To promote the mobility aims, the Strategy and "Communication pointed out a series of measures that should be taken at the institutional, national and European levels. They start from the need to prepare mobility strategies with special tracking measures to ensure openness and balance of the higher education system with removed mobility obstacles, develop a quality assurance system and improve information and communication. On January 18, 2022, the European Commission published the Communication to the European Parliament, Council, European Economic and Social Committee and Committee of Regions on a European Strategy for Universities and Council Recommendation on building bridges for effective European higher education cooperation.

The European Strategy for Universities aims to support and enable universities to adapt to the present challenges to contribute to Europe's resilience and recovery. Transnational cooperation based on common values is necessary for stronger affirmation of the role of universities in society. The Document identifies the following challenges: the lack of funding, the need to adapt to fast changes regarding knowledge and skills, the necessity for increased inclusiveness, diversity and gender equality in higher education, threats to fundamental and academic values and competition at the global scene of education and research. The mentioned challenges should be overcome so that universities can achieve the role of the catalyst of European social and economic progress. Transnational alliances of the higher education institutions are based on the Erasmus+ initiative of the European universities, with the legal statuary and publishing of common European diplomas and generalisation of the European student card initiative being the leading initiatives promoted by this Strategy.

The European dimension of higher education is a part of the initial aims of the Bologna process. Following up the experiences and achievements in the last twenty years, the Council's Recommendation on building bridges for effective European higher education cooperation is a first step in overcoming the difficulties regarding the provision of common transnational educational activities and programmes or the lack of the legal status of the alliances of the European higher education institutions, so that " all students, staff and researchers can enjoy the benefits of simplified transnational cooperation". Shared European values and transnational cooperation are "the foundation for the development of quality learning, teaching and research" and contribute to the "strengthening of the democratic societies".

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28 Mobility for Better Learning, Mobility Strategy 2020 for the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) Bucharest, 2012, vfs. unsa.ba › web › images › dokumenti › BOL Strateg..

Opportunities offered by mobility programmes should also be ensured to disabled students through directed support and motivation, which would contribute to their independence. The issue of ensuring adequate conditions should also be considered (such as providing a personal assistant throughout mobility) so that they can take this step without hesitation.

Challenges/Recommendations:

› Mobility adapted to all participants of the higher education process 8students, researchers in the early phase, teachers and administrative staff).

› Improves support system for the mobility programmes for disabled people.

› Secured formal recognition of acquired credits and competencies obtained by studying or professional training abroad, incentivising greater participation in internationalisation and mobility and ensuring good job posts for mobile staff.

› Developed "virtual mobility" to acquire international experience "at home".

› Improved mechanisms of transnational cooperation among the higher education institutions.

Aside from the above mentioned, mobility in the ERA (mobility for researchers) is based on the establishment and development of the environment which would significantly promote the researchers' mobility, and it refers to the enhancement of legislation for the reception of researchers, access to employment information, social security and taxation, financial support, and practical aid through the networks of mobility centres (National contact points, CP).

Special attention is directed towards inter-sectoral mobility (academia-industry). The importance of this mobility segment has been pointed out along with a series of recommendations (development of joint education programmes, preparation of researchers in the early phase of the career development in both sectors, supervision, employment, partnership, obstacle removal, network development, guaranteed funding and active support to the application of current and future EU initiatives, schemes and instruments).

› Summary/Recommendation:

›

› Developed inter-sectoral mobility and cooperation between the institutions and labour market enables a rational interconnection of education, research and societal development needs. The developed operation provides conditions for significant progress followed by a series of positive results for both institutions (academies) and labour markets 8industry), especially for appropriate and timely adaptation to dynamic changes in all labour market areas.

4.2 Analysis of the Current Situation: Montenegrin Context

By adopting the Bologna Declaration, Montenegro began compliance with EU policies and processes in higher education. Laws and by-laws are continually harmonised with all existing EHEA and ERA documents. The continuity also refers to reporting (on adopted documents, achieved results, assessment of the current situation, and challenges) so that competent EU bodies can consider all aspects and confirm compliance with the EU documents and plans, taking into account that the documents in the areas of education are recognised as soft law and that a state must pay attention to the specificities of its system. European Commission reports contain the assessment of the true situation.

Furthermore, the programming of the IPA III project activities shall mostly correspond with the Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan, within which higher education measures and activities are planned, with a focus on connecting higher education and the labour market.

In the Digital Assembly in Sofia (2018), the European Commission initiated the Digital Agenda and Digital European Research Area for the Western Balkans countries.[29] This Agenda aims to support the region's transition into the digital economy and achieve digital transformation as a condition for quicker economic growth, greater employment and better services. Important segments that are emphasised in the agenda include financing broadband connections, increasing cyber security, increasing industry trust and digitalisation, strengthening the digital economy and society, and promoting research and innovation. The Digital Agenda should build national research capacities, develop the latest e-infrastructure in the Western Balkans, and integrate them into the ERA. In this way, the new generation of researchers and engineers shall receive excellent training and interdisciplinary cooperation across Europe.

The European Institute for Innovation and Technology (EIT) is an important institution in Europe that strongly and continuously supports innovation and transforms the European motivational background, connecting crucial innovation actors (start-ups, research centres, universities, small and medium enterprises, incubators and accelerators). Montenegro is the country associated with EIT and RIS. Through the EU programme (2020-2027 Horizon), this Institute shall have an increased budget, and one of its focuses shall be broadening the regional impact, including the Western Balkans' states.

ERA Chair is the affirmation of excellence in research institutions. The project provides an opportunity for connection between the creators with proven research excellence and managerial skills at the universities and other research institutions in countries developing the potential for excellence in research. The project aims to attract and keep high-quality human resources under the management of excellent researchers ("ERA Chair holders) while implementing structural reforms necessary for achieving sustainable excellence.[30]

EU4TECH PoC WB is a programme of specialised support for 40 technology-based projects, with the best chances for success, which are developed in scientific research institutions or micro, small and medium enterprises in the Western Balkan countries that are at the stage of concept check (Technology Readiness level 3) [31] The project offers opportunities for working with the EU or regional experts which possess a high level of expertise to help, check and protect their own technology, develop a strong business model and offer the project to the market. Teams from universities, institutes, small and medium enterprises, and start-ups from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Kosovo, Northern Macedonia, and Serbia are qualified for this project.

Specific targets and achieved results are represented in the Summary Achieved Results in the previous period, which track goals and recommendations (standards, guidelines) highlighted in Chapter 4.1.1. Challenges that should be overcome refer to all phases of higher education (from career planning and enrolment to employment and meeting expectations), competent organs and bodies, and other actors participating in higher education. Because of this, the next chapter shall show the current situation analysis in Montenegro, which could be a basis for defining objectives and activities and, especially, tracking and assessing their implementation.

4.2.1. Normative Framework

The legal framework for implementation of higher education in Montenegro is defined by the first version of the Law on Higher Education[32] ("The Official Gazette of Montenegro", No 44/2014, 52/2014, 47/2015, 40/2016, 42/2017, 71/2017, 55/2018, 3/2019, 17/2019 - second law, 47/2019, 72/2019, 74/2020, 104/2021, 86/2022, 86/2022-I i 125/2023.) which regulates the basic provisions of higher education, conditions for performing the activities, types of study programmes, organisation principles of the institutions performing this activity, rights and obligations of academic staff and students, quality assurance, higher education financing, and other issues relevant for performing the higher education activities.

The Law has undergone multiple amendments with the aim of its harmonization with the developmental needs of higher education. Its importance reflects the efforts to bridge the gap with the European higher education systems. That is, special attention should be dedicated to the European dimension of education, founded on the

Bologna Declaration principles, not forgetting the national tradition that is not in opposition to these principles[33]. Aside from the mentioned interventions, the Ministry has recognised the need for considerable legal amendments.

Additionally, the following laws are of particular significance for the higher education area:

- Law on National Qualifications Framework:
- Law on National Vocational Qualifications;
- Law on Adult Education;
- Law on Recognition of Foreign Qualifications for Practising the Regulated Professions;
- Law on the Recognition of Foreign Educational Credentials and Qualification Equivalence
- Law on Professional Training of Persons with Acquired Higher Education
- Law on Academic Integrity
- Law on Scientific Research Activity

Aside from the mentioned Laws, by-laws that regulate the functioning of higher education are of extreme importance (*strategies, provisions, and rulebooks*)[34]. It should be highlighted that the Agency for Control and Quality Assurance of Higher Education prepared the by-laws that regulate the accreditation procedures of the study programmes, including the lifelong learning programmes, as well as the reaccreditation process.

Legal basis regulating the quality assurance field is the Law on Higher Education In line with this law, the by-law "Rulebook on the accreditation procedure of study programs, the content and form of the accreditation certificate" is recognised and adopted. Bearing in mind that the re-accreditation procedure has not been developed in a detailed manner by the provisions of the Law on Higher Education, the ACQAHE has adopted the Rules on re-accreditation procedure for the higher education institutions; Standards and guidelines for accreditation of the lifelong learning programmes; Standards and guidelines for accreditation of the Agency for Control and Quality Assurance of Higher Education; Rules on the content of the questionnaire for students and basic provisions; Rulebook on the work of Commission for accreditation of the study programme, as well as a series of the accompanying forms and requests for carrying out the accreditation and re-accreditation procedures Rules on content and manner of keeping the records of accredited and re-accredited higher education institutions Internal proceedings on performing the higher education institution re-accreditation process and Internal proceedings for performing the study programme accreditation procedure.[35]

4.2.2. Institutional Framework

The higher education institutional framework consists of the following:

- The Parliament of Montenegro is the legislative body responsible for adopting laws concerning higher education.
- The Government of Montenegro, as an executive body responsible for managing internal and external policies, proposes laws on higher education to the Parliament. Additionally, it adopts the Strategy for Higher Education Development and other strategic documents important for the functioning of the higher education system and the promotion of its development.
- The Ministry of Education, Science, and Innovation is a Government department competent for higher education. The Ministry prepares draft laws, other provisions, and general acts related to higher education. Additionally, it drafts, tracks, and organizes the evaluation of strategic documents relevant to the development and advancement of the higher education system.
- The Council for Higher Education is an advisory body of Montenegro's Government for the higher education area. It works on improving and developing higher education. It consists of seven members, appointed and removed by the parliament of Montenegro at the Government's proposal.
- The Agency for Control and Quality Assurance of Higher Education performs quality assurance activities in higher education in accordance with European standards and guidelines. The Agency is founded by the Government, it is a legal entity, and performs activities of public interest.

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29 https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_18_4242.
30 https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/horizon2020/en/h2020-section/era-chairs.
31 http://www.gov.me/en/search/224008/EU4TECH-Proof-of-Concept-call-for-project-proposals-launched.html.
32 https://www.gov.me/dokumenta/f42d2128-2514-423f-8338-b596f2a85b7a

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33 Virgilio Meira Soares, Opinion on the Draft of the Law On Higher Education of the Republic of Montenegro, Lisbon, 28 July 2003.
34 https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/legislation-45_me
35 https://akokvo.me/pravilnici/

- Higher education is carried out by licensed institutions, in line with the Law on Higher Education. Institutions are universities, faculties, art academies, and colleges, and they can be established as public or private institutions.

Higher education is primarily carried out at the universities and independent faculties. Currently, there are four universities and three independent faculties. The names of institutions, their status and their year of establishment are presented in Table 2:

Table 2 Licensed higher education institutions in Montenegro[36]

Universities				
	Name of Institution	Seat	Status of the Institution	Year of Establishment
1.	University of Montenegro	Podgorica	Public university	1974.
2.	University of Mediterranean	Podgorica	Private university	2006.
3.	University of Donja Gorica	Podgorica	Private university	2010.
4.	Adriatic University	Bar	Private university	2017.
Independent faculties				
1.	Faculty of Business Management	Bar	Independent private faculty	2005.
2.	Faculty of Administrative and European Studies	Podgorica	Independent private faculty	2006.
3.	Faculty of Montenegrin Language and Literature	Cetinje	Independent public faculty	2014.

The University of Montenegro is the only public university and the oldest institution of higher education in Montenegro. It was formed by uniting then educational and scientific research organisations in Montenegro (1974). In the period up to 2003 (adoption of the law that implemented the principles of the Bologna Declaration), it was the only higher education institution. Presently, in Montenegro's higher education system, there are four active universities - one public and three private universities. Aside from the universities, three independent faculties have also been re-accredited - two private higher education institutions and one public.

The latest data on the leading positions at the University of Montenegro are encouraging regarding the gender-sensitive structure. They indicate that the ratio of male and female leaders is 13:9. However, promoting women to managerial positions is still one of the priorities.

> Summary/Recommendations:
>
> › Higher education in Montenegro is being organised in four universities and three independent faculties (seven institutions in total).
> › Joining the independent faculties to the universities possesses a series of affirmative effects on the independent institutions regarding management, implementation of the process of education and research, and transferral of good practice, especially because doctoral studies and appointment to academic titles can be solely organised within the universities.
> › Although no higher education institutions have been established in the last seven years, the ACQAHE has accredited new study programmes.

36 Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation: https://www.gov.me/mps

4.2.3. Fields of Study and the Number of Students

This part provides a table overview of data on institutions' organizational structures and the total number of students.

Table 3 Fields of education for which the study programmes have been organised, the total number of organisational units and the number of students at the institutions in Montenegro

Universities				
	Name of the Institution	Fields of Education (Number and Name) According to ISCED classification from 2011	Number of Organisational Units	Number of Students
1.	UNIVERSITY OF MONTENEGRO	1 Education 2 Arts and Humanities 3 Social sciences, journalism and information 4 Business, administration and law 5 Natural sciences, mathematics and statistics 6 Information and Communication Technologies 7 Engineering, manufacturing and construction 8 Agriculture, forestry, fisheries and veterinary 9 Health and welfare 10 Services	19 faculties 1 academy 3 institutes	18000
2.	UNIVERSITY OF MEDITERRANEAN	2 Arts and Humanities 3 Social sciences, journalism and information 4 Business, administration and law 6 Information and Communication Technologies 10 Services	6 faculties	1000
3	UNIVERSITY OF DONJA GORICA	2 Arts and Humanities 3 Social sciences, journalism and information 4 Business, administration and law 5 Natural sciences, mathematics and statistics 6 Information and Communication Technologies 7 Engineering, manufacturing and construction 8 Agriculture 10 Services	12 faculties 2 centres	3000
4.	ADRIATIC UNIVERSITY	3 Social sciences, journalism and information 4 Business, administration and law 7 Engineering, manufacturing and construction 10 Services	7 faculties	1535

Independent faculties				
1	Faculty of Business Management	**3** Social sciences, business and law	1 faculty	450
2	Faculty of Administrative and European Studies	**3** Social sciences, business and law	1 faculty	180
3	Faculty of Montenegrin Language and Literature	**2** Arts and humanities	1 faculty	142
Total number of students: 24307				

Results showed in Table 3 indicate that:

- The University of Montenegro represents the largest institution with studies organised in all areas (systematised in ISCED classification), faculties, and an academy as organisational wholes, which perform teaching and research, and three institutes for specific research. 18000 students study at the University, which represents 75% of the total number of students in Montenegro.
- 3,000 students study at the University of Donja Gorica, which has programmes in eight education fields (ISCED classification) and consists of 12 faculties.
- 1000 students study at the University of Mediterranean, which consists of six faculties and offers programmes in five education fields (ISCED classification).
- 1500 students study at Adriatic University, which consists of eight faculties and offers programmes in four education fields (ISCED classification).
- There are around 3% of the total number of students at the independent faculties on the programmes from the fields of social sciences, business, law and humanities.

Gender-disaggregated data according to the number of enrolled students in the past three years are shown in the following table:

Table 4 Enrolled and graduated students, presented according to gender (2021,2022,2023).[37]

2021	**Enrolled**	16883		**Graduated**	2759	
	M	7119	42.17%	M	1125	40.78%
	F	9764	57.83%	F	1634	59.22%
2022	**Enrolled**	17679		**Graduated**	2430	
	M	7776	43.98%	M	955	39.30%
	F	9903	56.02%	F	1475	60.70%
2023	**Enrolled**	18403		**Graduated**	3084	
	M	8233	44.74%	M	1178	38.20%
	F	10170	55.26	F	1906	61.80%

From the table overview, it can be concluded that in 2021 and 2023, the number of enrolled and graduated women was higher than the number of enrolled and graduated men. Therefore, the inference is that the data is gender disaggregated.

37 Statistical Office, MONSTAT

> › Summary/Recommendations
> › Around fifty faculties perform teaching and research as organisational units of a university or as an independent institution. The organisation of the University of Montenegro is a result of development from the period when faculties had a different status, and the organisation of other universities followed this concept.
> › The total number of students in institutions in Montenegro is 24307. Compared to the total population of Montenegro (around 6220000), the number of students is above 4%, of which 3% are at the University of Montenegro. Considering that a certain number of students go to study abroad (neighbouring countries and the EU), the total number of students may amount to 4,5%.
> › Bearing in mind the trends of the number of students and population indicators, it is unrealistic to expect a change in this ratio in the period that this Strategy covers.

4.2.4. Study Programmes and Study Cycles

The following part shows a table overview of programmes according to the fields of education and study cycles for which teaching is being organised in higher education institutions. Data shows that study programmes have been accredited for all education fields (according to ISCED classification). When it comes to education branches - there is no veterinary medicine. The second cycle (master studies) is organised for all the fields where undergraduate studies are organised. The third study cycle (doctoral studies) at the University of Montenegro is organised for all scientific disciplines. At other universities, the third study cycle is organised for social sciences, business administration and law.

Table 5 Overview of study programme affiliation to fields and cycles

Fields of education (number and name) according to ISCED classification (2013)	Specific fields	Study programmes		
		According to study cycles		
		I	II	III
UNIVERSITY OF MONTENEGRO				
1 Education 2 Arts and Humanities 3 Social sciences, journalism and information 4 Business, administration and law 5 Natural sciences, mathematics and statistics 6 Information and Communication Technologies 7 Engineering, manufacturing and construction 8 Agriculture 9 Health and welfare 10 Services	Teacher education	+	+	
	Arts	+	+	
	Humanities	+	+	+
	Social and behavioural sciences	+	+	+
	Journalism and information	+	+	+
	Business administration	+	+	+
	Law	+	+	+
	Biology	+	+	+
	Physical sciences	+	+	+
	Mathematics and statistics	+	+	+
	Computer science	+	+	+
	Engineering	+	+	+
	Manufacture and processing	+	+	+
	Agriculture	+	+	+
	Veterinary medicine			
	Healthcare	+	+	+
	Social services	+	+	+
	Personal services	+	+	+
	Transportation services	+	+	
	Environmental protection	+	+	+
	Personal protection	+	+	+

UNIVERSITY OF MEDITERRANEAN				
2 Arts and Humanities	Arts	+	+	
	Humanities	+	+	
3 Social sciences, journalism and information	Social and behavioural sciences	+	+	+
4 Business, administration and law	Business administration	+	+	+
6 ICT	Law	+	+	+
10 Services	Computer sciences	+	+	
	Personal services	+	+	+
UNIVERSITY OF DONJA GORICA				
2 Arts and Humanities	Arts	+	+	+
	Humanities	+	+	+
3 Social sciences, journalism and information	Social and behavioural sciences	+	+	+
4 Business, administration and law	Business administration	+	+	+
5 Natural sciences, mathematics and statistics	Law	+	+	+
6 Information and Communication Technologies	Mathematics	+		
	Computer sciences	+		+
7 Engineering, manufacturing and construction	Engineering	+		
	Manufacture and processing	+		
8 Agriculture	Agriculture	+	+	
10 Services	Personal services	+	+	
ADRIATIC UNIVERSITY				
3 Social sciences, journalism and information	Social and behavioural sciences	+	+	
4 Business, administration and law	Business administration	+	+	+
7 Engineering, manufacturing and construction	Personal services	+	+	
10 Services				
Faculty of Business Management				
4 Business, administration and law	Business administration	+	+	
Faculty of Administrative and European Studies				
4 Business, administration and law	Law	+	+	
Faculty of Montenegrin Language and Literature				
2 Arts and humanities	Humanities	+	+	

4.2.5. Current Study Model

The Law on Higher Education (2017) introduced the study model 3+2+3, except for the studies of regulated professions, which can last more than three years. The studies are carried out as undergraduate, master's, and doctoral. In 2017, the University of Montenegro accredited its programmes according to the new model of studies, while the other higher education institutions, in compliance with the Law, were obliged to apply this study model by the study year 2021/2022, at the latest.

Academic studies train students to acquire and apply knowledge from scientific, artistic, and vocational fields. Applied studies enable students to become involved in the work process quickly.

In the (3+2+3) model of academic studies, cycles refer to:

- Undergraduate studies, lasting three years, comprise 180 ECTS credits and with its completion, one acquires the academic title of *bachelor* (with an indication of scientific/art field)
- Master studies, which last 2 years, comprise 120 ECTS credits, and with its completion, one acquires the title of a *master* (with an indication of scientific/art field).
- Integrated studies, lasting 5 or 6 years, comprise 300 or 360 ECTS credits. Upon completion, one acquires the title of a master (with an indication of a scientific/art field).
- Doctoral studies, which last 3 years, comprise 180 ECTS credits, and with its completion, one acquires the title of a *doctor* (with an indication of scientific/art field).

The adopted model for applied studies is (3+2), which refers to undergraduate, master's, and integrated studies. The duration and ECTS range are the same as in academic studies, but the degree name emphasises that it refers to applied studies.

The Law on Higher Education also envisages acquisition of double or joint degrees by completing the study programme at two higher education institutions. According to the Law, joint degrees are issued by at least two or more higher education institutions that perform the study programme to acquire the joint degree.

It has to be taken into account that this Strategy was not preceded by a detailed analysis of the present study model 3+2+3, which, to a large degree, is yet to be recognised by the labour market. Additionally, a question that is posed and rightfully so, is whether, for certain jobs, knowledge and skills acquired upon the completion of bachelor or master studies are necessary. Comparative practice shows that each state can, independently and in line with the Bologna Declaration, define the study models in undergraduate, master and doctoral studies. This strategy does not aim to limit the introduction of different models of studies in the future, such as models 4+1+3 or 3+1+1+3, which are organised as undergraduate, master, and doctoral studies. A study model must stem from the demands of a job post and the needed competencies, skills and practical knowledge a student must possess upon completing studies.

Summary/Recommendations:

› A detailed analysis of the current model of studies and labour market needs should be conducted, stemming from the established Montenegrin qualification framework being comparable with the European Qualifications Framework.

4.2.6. Study Programmes

The previous Strategy of Higher Education Development pointed out two objectives regarding the study programmes.

- Improvement of the quality of higher education and creating a competitive staff.
- Harmonisation of education with the labour market needs.

In implementing the first objective, a study model (3+2+3) was adopted, which complies with the EHEA model and represents a rational cycle scheme for obtaining the competencies of highly educated staff. In line with the Strategy objectives and the chosen study model, the Law proposes modules, electives, languages, and IT disciplines as important content for optimising the study programme. Additionally, prerequisites have been made for an efficient check of the results and their amendment based on surveys among graduate students, associations of employers, commercial entities and entrepreneurs concerning the applicability of the obtained knowledge, skills and competencies required in the labour market.[38]

Institutions must create study programmes (adapt their structure) that best answer individual tendencies and labour market demands. In the previous strategy, emphasis was placed on additional guidelines for defining the

38 The Law on Higher Education of Montenegro, Article 44.

study programme structure (staff structure, spatial capacities and equipment, the ratio of the number of students and teaching staff, and teaching staff competency for practising teaching and mentoring...).

Finally, it is necessary to better define the learning outcomes as a foundation of the quality recognition of teaching disciplines and study programmes. Well-defined learning outcomes should ensure competencies for highly educated individuals that meet modern labour market demands and employers' expectations. Learning outcomes should be constantly re-evaluated, optimised, and improved based on modern educational and labour market trends. It is necessary to implement and continually harmonise the learning outcomes. Through comparison with relevant universities, it is possible to achieve better recognition and increase competitiveness.

4.2.6.1. Study programmes of undergraduate studies

The current organisation of undergraduate studies does not have clear performance indicators, which should ensure an appropriate status for the graduates. Since the beginning of the implementation of three-year studies, a distrust was created that the first higher education cycle (three-year studies) can ensure appropriate competencies for the labour market demands. The previous four-year education and its equivalence with four-year studies in the previous model (specialists) have pushed undergraduate studies to the background. One year of specialist studies was acceptable for supply and demand, and budgetary financing provided students with seamless completion.

In the 2017 Law adoption period, the importance of learning outcomes was not normatively recognised, and thus, they were not an integral part of the curriculum of study programmes. The new Law emphasises that learning outcomes are mandatory programme content (evaluation, examination, grading[39]). The initial phase of their implementation, especially for a study programme, was done in an unsystematic manner, so the procedure for their defining by levels[40], following the taxonomy,[41] was simplified, both essence and importance-wise.

This was highlighted in the Report on Evaluation (2018), which states that learning outcomes in certain institutions are being implemented. Still, it was not always clear to the IEP Commission how well and to what extent this had been done. Additionally, the offer of most study programmes is still largely prescriptive, providing students with few opportunities to choose between different modules. However, it should be mentioned that higher education institutions have accomplished considerable progress in the approach based on learning outcomes through supply consolidation of study programmes from 270 to 160.

Establishment of the Montenegrin Qualification Framework significantly improved compliance between the Montenegrin system and the rest of the EHEA. According to the 2018 Report on Implementation of the Bologna Process, Montenegro is among the countries that have fully developed its national qualifications framework, including public self-certification (Step 11). This is a major step in line with the 2014 recommendations.

4.2.6.2. Study programmes of master studies

The current model of higher education for master studies, with a duration of two years, requires programme elements of this cycle to be created in such a manner that it essentially represents a central part of higher education for the preparation of a creative, innovative and research-wise competent, highly educated staff in line with the needs of social development. To meet such expectations, master studies should be implemented in an environment and according to a curriculum for advanced knowledge, with a clear orientation towards research in the area to which the programme belongs, and the number of study programmes should be such to follow all important developmental trends of Montenegrin society.

Orientation towards creative and innovative work should form a basis (human resources) for development and research in the activity areas that a study programme is a part of. Thus, the relationship with the labour market

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39 Law on Higher Education, Articles 81, 86 and 89

40 Learning outcome levels (e.g. International levels for recognition of degrees and qualifications, national level for the establishment of qualifications framework and quality assurance system, institutional for study programme planning (curricula) in the institution for subjects and teaching units sot that students and teacher know how to plan teaching, assessments and grading).

41 Taxonomy (e.g. Bloom's Taxonomy) as a classification enabling to express qualities for different types of knowledge, skills and attitudes of students in a visible and measurable manner.

should be improved to solve their developmental and research tasks. Additionally, regarding the current situation in education and development of the master studies, there is a strong connection with the EHEA and ERA institutions, which have similar study programmes and are interested in joint studies and research in the field that the study programme belongs to is necessary.

The selection and enrolment of candidates for the studies are done via an entry exam. It is desirable to use the professor's recommendations from the previous cycles of education with this principle of selection while emphasising special competencies of a candidate that were noticed while working with a student during undergraduate studies. Advanced and talented students should be singled out separately based on the principles applied to selecting and developing talents. The prerequisite for successful studying, advancing and achieving of good results is the role of a mentor, which should be implemented and promoted from the beginning of studies for all candidates. The necessary time for such engagement of the teaching staff should be adequately valued in the total teaching and research workload. The expected benefits in the work and development of the area important for Montenegrin society could be fully achieved by connecting these studies with the labour market, based on the already mentioned academia-industry principles.

> **Summary/Recommendations:**
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> › In the entire period of implementation of the Bologna Declaration, undergraduate studies have been viewed as a phase that primarily provides possibilities for continuing education and completing postgraduate specialist studies. Starting from the importance of undergraduate study programmes, their structure must be designed in line with the significance and necessary competencies of future higher education students.
>
> › On the basis of adequately defined learning outcomes of study programmes, the established National Qualification Framework shall provide the opportunity for additional consolidation of the evident diversification of the supply of study programmes. At the same time, it is necessary to solve the issues of employment and bachelor status, as one of the current problems singled out in the initiative regarding the unemployment analysis, which could contribute to further consolidation of the number of study programmes. As with undergraduate studies, it is necessary to solve the issues of employment and the status of master studies, as one of the current problems emphasised in the unemployment analysis, alongside the redesigning of study programmes.

4.2.7 Research and Doctoral Studies

4.2.7.1. Excerpts from the IEP Reports

IEP's evaluation reports highlight a low level of research in Montenegro, mostly due to the lack of institutional capacities for defining priorities, identifying excellence segments and insufficient total national funding.

 At the institutional level, the University of Montenegro is still the only institution with significant research activity in the country. The other three universities, the University of Donja Gorica, the University of Mediterranean, and Adriatic University, have significantly improved their research capacities and are working on developing doctoral education.

Research in Montenegro could be strengthened by merging different institutions to use the present infrastructure and capacities jointly. Inter-institutional cooperation could also ensure multiple opportunities for doctoral students through joint programmes. The competent state bodies could promote such cooperation through, for example, specific financing schemes.

Doctoral education is crucial in discussions on building research capacities at all universities. Capacity building is necessary so that there is a research environment where PhD students can study. At the same time, their number should be increased. These two mutually interconnected aspects should be viewed through an institutional strategy. Another challenge for PhD students is dedicating enough time to research due to a great teaching workload.

Generally speaking, the research development in Montenegro is positive, but initial progress has still been made, which can incentivise better strategic planning and implementation of capacity building in Montenegro. Scholarships for doctoral studies gave particular contribution, to which the competent Ministry for Science granted for a three-year period (2018, 2019, 2020), and which included a monthly fee to research which amounted to 700 euros, free scholarships for doctoral studies and universities in Montenegro, but also significant finances for research, whose important aspect is international or inter-sectoral mobility amounting to 10000 per year. We shall also point out that a similar open call will be announced in 2024.

> Summary/Recommendations:
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> › To ensure stable public financing, with a significant contribution from international projects.
> › To continue with initiatives for enabling access to databases through, among other things, the open access strategy.
> › Creating of incentives for cooperation and exchange of infrastructure and expertise within and among institutions.
> › Consider the possibility of foreign students applying for PhD scholarships.
> › Recommendations for higher education institutions
> › Opt for forming clear research strategies and their implementation through SMART measures.
> › Continue developing doctoral education for people by establishing doctoral schools.

4.2.7.2. Doctoral Studies[42]

Doctoral studies merge education and research; thus, presenting a framework that adequately unites these two segments is important.

European and international standards, principles and guidelines (including Strasbourg Guidelines) conceptualise an innovative framework of doctoral education, which requires:

- Consistent excellence in the quality of research for postgraduate and doctoral studies;
- Necessary support to the higher education institutions for cooperation for exchanging good practice and results;
- Creation of conditions for the employment of PhD students in a wide range of activities, thus securing them the employed status with a full work time; and
- Support international cooperation on doctoral studies to apply good practices, such as necessary comparability and verification of the achieved results.

The Framework for Doctoral Studies should inspire and bind key actors in education and research on standards in providing doctoral education and research by accepting the following principles:

1. Doctoral education is systemic problem management in the border area of present knowledge, moving that border with systematic research. In this way, the students' range and depth of knowledge are increased, and their expertise in research methodology, which applies to wider research issues, is developed.
2. Successful research completion comprises work of recognisable and verifiable quality. Every PhD is unique, and doctoral education supports students within specific disciplines, interdisciplinary fields, or multidisciplinary fields.
3. The research environment for doctoral education has a high degree of academic quality and infrastructure and an international research methodology that enables the students to interact with colleagues at a national and international level.
4. Following the application and enrolment in doctoral studies, the candidate's preparedness,

....
42 National Framework for Doctoral Education, Ireland, **w**as used for the preparation. This material can be found at .https://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2017/04/national_framework_for_doctoral_education_0.pdf.

competent and accessible supervision, and the resources necessary for conducting the research are all considered.
5. Complete doctoral education should be controlled and supported by a structure consisting of a competent supervisor, using transparent criteria for examining, assessing, and acquiring defined outcomes.
6. An established and firmly equipped quality assurance system should be implemented in all phases of doctoral education.

> Summary:
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> › Viewing the importance of doctoral education, it is necessary that:
> › Competent bodies, institutions and academic community ensure conditions for the organisation of doctoral education, for results to reach the expected excellence and give full contribution to established national developmental objectives;
> › Priority areas of doctoral education to be connected with the priority areas of research to achieve synergistic effects of education, research and staff strengthening for developmental tasks and
> › Doctoral education should incentivise research teams to develop collaboration between the institutions in the state and abroad. Conditions of cooperation and internationalisation should be defined as priorities because they are an integral part of this education.

4.2.8. Enrolment in Studies

The Law on Higher Education stipulates general conditions of access to higher education, which include finishing high school (IV-1 sub-level), passing graduation, or taking a vocational exam, with mandatory valuing of all criteria by the higher education institutions. Notwithstanding this rule, candidates who did not complete secondary school can be enrolled in professional-artistic study programmes if they pass the entry exam. Therefore, enrolment criteria refer to the results throughout secondary education and on the external exam. For some study programmes, results on the entry exam test special skills (primarily for arts). In this manner, the most important conditions for competitive access to higher education are met. The principle of affirmative action is implemented when it comes to disabled people.

The enrolment of students of four-year grammar and vocational schools is performed by adequate rulebooks on enrolment which higher education institutions adopt. These rulebooks define the vertical clearance of students towards a specific study programme. Among other criteria for enrolment are also results on final or external vocational exams. The results of the final and vocational exams are viewed collectively. When scoring, the actual content of the final and vocational exam is not taken into account, nor is it visible the importance of specific subjects for continued education visible. Since 2017, the final and external vocational exams consist of three parts. All students take the exam in the subject of Montenegrin-Serbian, Bosnian, Croatian Language and literature, and Albanian Language and literature. The student's choice of mathematics or a foreign language can be taken at an elementary or advanced level. As the third subject, students take an elective, which is important for continued education. Students of vocational schools take vocational theory, which includes key knowledge from the vocational area of the programme in which students are being educated.

It should be considered whether the quota of 1% for the application of affirmative action for persons with disabilities (PWD) should be increased to 1.5% or 2%, given that there have been instances where more PWDs have enrolled in the same study program due to limited choices in study options, conditioned by their previous type of education (educational profile – most often from vocational high schools) or the inaccessibility of the desired faculty. Due to complex personal and social circumstances at this level of education, they may achieve results that are not competitive for university admission.

The legal framework has ensured broad access to higher education, considering that foreign students enroll under the same conditions as Montenegro's students.

Enrolment in master's studies is competitive, based on the results achieved during the undergraduate academic or applied studies and entrance exam.

Enrolment in doctoral studies is competitive and based on the results achieved during the previous university education.

In the chapter on employment, it has been highlighted that the analysis of the actual effects of the high percentage of enrolment in study programmes following the completion of secondary vocational schools can provide relevant data on the programmes of secondary vocational schools, labour market situation, and the terms of accessing the high education. Specifically, a long-term practice has proven that the student's results in the first year of studies are particularly problematic. Considering that the start of studies is a vulnerable period in habits and attitudes of youth towards obligations, their success in the first year is often below expectations. As admission to studies based on the current criteria provides broad enrolment opportunities, most students have issues achieving the expected results. Therefore, students either remain in the first year or transfer their first-year exams to other years of studies. This creates pressure on institutions due to the number of students and exams, impacting the teaching staff's exam-taking criteria.

Summary/Recommendations:

›   The analysis of the mentioned issues indicates the necessity for adequately creating an enrollment policy at all levels.
›   By solving the "first study year" issue, better study conditions would be created, and better teaching organisation and exam takin would be achieved according to highly set criteria and advancement during the studies, which are a norm in the EHEA.

4.2.9. Quality Assurance (QA)

Higher education quality assurance, in line with the European standards and guidelines for quality assurance (ESG), is divided into three parts:

- Internal quality assurance;
- External quality assurance
- Quality assurance by the Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (internal quality assurance).

Agencies that apply for membership in EQAR undergo an external evaluation according to the ESG's criteria. Additionally, the ENQA relies on compliance with the ESG during the decision-making process regarding introducing quality assurance agencies into full membership. Thus, it is ensured that quality assurance agencies within the EHEA follow the same set of principles. Processes and procedures are shaped following the purpose and demands defined by the context.

However, those three parts are essentially mutually interrelated and create the basis of the European Quality Assurance Framework.

Montenegro implemented the recommendations on accepting the European Standards and Guidelines by signing the Yerevan Declaration at the 2015 Ministerial Conference. The commitment is also transferred to the Law on Higher Education (2017), which provides that higher education quality assurance in Montenegro is performed in compliance with the ESG and establishes the Agency for Control and Quality Assurance in Higher Education.

4.2.9.1. Agency for Control and Quality Assurance in Higher Education

The Agency for Control and Quality Assurance in Higher Education (abbreviated ACQAHE) was established in 2017. The Agency's mission confirms the orientation for consistently applying the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG). Full application of the European Standards and Guidelines by defining clear procedures for implementing the accreditation process of study programmes, re-accrediting the institutions, and making independent and impartial decisions is a prerequisite for membership in European structures in the quality assurance area.

Since 2018, the ACQAHE has directed its work towards the Preparation of by-laws (rulebooks, standards.

Guidelines, and rules of procedure) and contributing to drafting the new Law on Higher Education. The list of adopted by-laws is given below:

- Rulebook on the procedure of accreditation of study programs, content and form of the accreditation certificate;
- Rules on re-accreditation of higher education institutions;
- Standards and Guidelines for the Accreditation of Study Programmes;
- Standards and Guidelines for Reaccreditation of Higher Education Institutions;
- Rules on the accreditation procedure of a lifelong learning programme;
- Standards and guidelines for the accreditation of the Agency for Control and Quality Assurance in Higher Education;
- Rules on the content of the survey for students and basic provisions;
- Rules of procedure for the work of the commission for accreditation of the study programme;
- Rules on the content and manner of keeping the Register of Accredited Study Programs and reaccredited higher education institutions;
- Internal procedure for the implementation of the reaccreditation procedure of the institution of higher education; and
- Internal procedure for the implementation of the study program accreditation procedure.

ACQAHE will continuously work to intensify cooperation with leading quality assurance institutions in higher education within the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), particularly with ENQA and EQAR, as this represents the most effective way to enhance capacities and acquire new knowledge and experiences.

Participation in international events and training is also one of ACQAHE's priority activities. The goal is internationalisation, representation internationally, and the gathering of best practices.

Since 2023, ACQAHE has had a representative in the Bologna Follow-up Group (BFUG). The Bologna Secretariat established BFUG, consisting of European Higher Education Area countries. The group supports the Bologna Process, focusing on the period between ministerial conferences. BFUG forms special groups that address specific topics. In 2023, Montenegro became a member of

- Thematic Group A for the Qualifications Framework;
- Thematic Group B on the Lisbon Recognition Convention;
- Thematic Group C for Quality Assurance;
- Working Group for Enhancing Knowledge Exchange in the European Higher Education Area;
- Coordination Group for Global Policy Dialogue;
- Working Group on the Social Dimension;
- Working Group on Fundamental Values; and
- Working Group on Learning and Teaching.

BFUG prepared the text of the new Communication, which emphasises that quality higher education continues to hold a central place in higher education systems across the EHEA. It was adopted in Tirana in 2024 at the Ministerial Conference in Tirana (Albania).

Summary/Recommendations:

›   For further reform of higher education, the quality assurance system should be fully aligned with the ESG (European Standards and Guidelines) through:
›   Aligning national legislation with the principles of ESG to enable AKOKVO to become a full member of the international association ENQA and meet the conditions for registration in EQAR;
›   Strengthening the quality culture through the application of ESG, Part 1 – Establishing better institutional mechanisms for monitoring and control (personalising responsibilities for quality assurance, organising processes, staff, and students for monitoring and reporting) so that quality assurance and a culture of quality are embedded in institutional planning and improvement;
›   Improving student feedback collection through an updated questionnaire III (General Aspects of the Study Process) by assessing the learning environment (e.g., library, functions of student and other support services, etc.) and applying alternative models for gathering feedback (e.g., student focus groups,

> establishing mechanisms for informing on the use of collected results and tracking graduates);
> › Engaging in dialogue with all key partners in the higher education system to obtain feedback, improve procedures, and conduct research;
> › Achieving recognisable alignment of quality assurance with ESG – Parts 2 and 3 to meet the conditions for applying for membership in ENQA and registration in EQAR.

4.2.9.2. Organization, Management, and Quality Culture[43]

The management model in the higher education system has been defined as the most important area of reform, both in terms of culture and in a formal sense. It has been determined that the decentralised management model in Montenegrin higher education institutions lacks strategic capacity and does not create the conditions for fulfilling the institutions' mission. Implementing the principle of "autonomy with responsibility" is important so that institutions take responsibility for their strategic planning.

It is recommended that institutions professionalise and institutionalise their management structure through

- Building strategic capacities to implement established goals, deadlines, and responsibilities professionally and
- Creating an organisational culture connected to the institution's mission.

The 2018 Report emphasised that the Higher Education Strategy did not address management, which is considered part of institutional autonomy.

Summary/Recommendations:

> › A management model based on a balance between centralised leadership to efficiently achieve goals on the one hand and the independence of organisational units on the other is of strategic importance for an efficient higher education system. Quality management is linked to the strategic management of the institution. Every institution should have public quality assurance policies that are part of strategic management, which entails building certain structures and processes for implementing these policies involving external actors. On the other hand, fostering a quality culture within the regular functioning of institutions will contribute to the continuity of effective practices during periodic evaluations and daily activities.

4.2.10. Teaching and Learning

External evaluations of higher education institutions by the IEP Commission (2014 and 2018) highlighted teaching and learning as significant indicators of the modern concept of study organisation and the quality of higher education. It was stated that the dynamics of innovative changes in the field of teaching and learning mainly arise from the implementation of systemic reforms initiated by the Government (redesigning curricula and the requirement to identify learning outcomes for each study program and course, harmonised with assessment strategies).

Summary/Recommendations:

> › Given the importance of teaching and learning:

43 It has been advised that state bodies provide support to improving the managerial structure of higher education institutions.

> › Students and the wider public need to understand the approach focused on learning outcomes. Understanding could be promoted by involving students in curriculum committees, requiring that outcomes be highlighted for each plan, and having each professor explain these outcomes to students.
> › Institutions should promote examples of good and innovative practices in student-centred learning44 (e.g., interactive learning, case studies, problem-based learning, etc.).
> › Institutions should allow individualised student guidance by increasing the number of elective courses to 30 ECTS.
> › Institutions should improve the digitalisation of teaching and blended learning while respecting the principles of academic integrity.

4.2.11. Practical Teaching

The Higher Education Law stipulates that study programs must include at least 25% practical teaching conducted outside the higher education institution. The previous Strategy and Action Plan also emphasised this.

The priority of practical teaching is noticeable in many institutions, as highlighted in the IEP report. However, there are significant differences between disciplines, with some programs facing difficulties finding internships for all students. The materials submitted to the IEP seemingly do not define "practical teaching," although it implicitly refers to experiences gained in non-university contexts. Practical teaching should not be limited to internships but should be considered a broader concept. It could be considered to include practical work related to institutions' social and civic mission, which should be clearly defined during program accreditation.

The planned allocation and status of practical teaching require that the study program be connected to the relevant activity to fulfil the intended condition by solving appropriate practical tasks. Additional guidelines are necessary to ensure that every study program can meet this requirement. A clearly defined and easy-to-implement approach includes a review of tasks (exercises completed in laboratories, workshops, model farms, offices, business premises, etc.) or time (number of working days) to be spent with an employer participating in solving practical tasks. If the study program quantifies practical teaching as a percentage, then instructions should follow definitions related to the competencies to be achieved through practical work.[45]

Starting from these definitions, practical teaching could include teaching content that contributes to education through practical work and includes an evaluation process, which could relate to:

- Practical solving of prepared tasks (exercises) in laboratories, workshops, model farms, business premises, etc., with the submission and defence of prepared reports (practical teaching corresponds to the number of hours planned by the curriculum).
- Visits to companies/organisations with a teacher to monitor the work process and solve prepared tasks, the submission and defence of prepared task reports (practical teaching corresponds to the number of hours spent in the company/organisation).
- Independent stays of students in companies/organisations represent practical teaching if the student works on specific tasks prepared by the teacher mentors in the field of the study program, with the help and supervision of mentors, submission, and defence of task reports (the number of hours of such practical teaching corresponds to the number of hours spent on task execution)
- Lectures by practitioners.

The planning of practical teaching by study years (coordinated activities and consistent methodology implemented by higher education institutions for the application of practical teaching) can follow the following

44 European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2018. The European Higher Education Area in 2018: Bologna Process Implementation Report. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

45 Measurable learning outcomes for factual knowledge are defined as a set of acquired discrete pieces of information.

Practical competencies involve manual skills and the application of procedures, as well as higher levels of practical abilities and knowledge, such as applying experience or knowledge to development or experimentation.

Professional competencies for a specific occupation and skills acquired through education and training. Professional competence, often synonymous with factual competence, refers to the ability to handle typical tasks and relationships related to a profession, which, according to certain requirements, need to be addressed independently and responsibly.

recommendations:

- Practical teaching at the higher education institution is planned as an integral part of the curriculum based on the academic calendar for the academic year.
- Student visits to companies/organisations accompanied by a teacher can also be planned and adopted as part of the academic year's curriculum. Student stays in companies/organisations are planned based on prepared tasks from the approved curriculum and agreements with companies/organisations about the plan's details (time, number of students in the team and overall, mentors, etc.).
- Practical teaching involving task-solving not strictly related to the company/organisation's business premises can be conducted at the higher education institution (if there is a problem with the number of students the company/organisation can accommodate). In this case, mentors would work with students at the higher education institution on tasks identical to those being solved in the company/organisation. Teachers and associates would ensure that all conditions at the institution correspond to the working conditions in the company/organisation (this practice is already included in institutional programs).
- Lectures by practitioners.

The institution should conclude sponsorship agreements with all companies/organisations involved in implementing practical teaching. The sponsoring companies should be displayed on the institution's website and in all reports prepared and published by the institution. Practical teaching agreements can be part of existing broader cooperation agreements. This aligns significantly with the outcomes of the Erasmus+ project "Strengthening capacities for the implementation of dual education in Montenegro higher education (DUALMON)."[46]

It is essential to emphasise the importance of adapting the concept of practical teaching for persons with disabilities.

> Summary/Recommendations:
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> › In addition to the recommendations above, for the planning of practical teaching, it can be considered that:
> › For a course with 30 hours during a semester, 8 hours of practical teaching or one working day is required.
> › For a course with 60 hours during a semester, 16 hours of practical teaching or two working days are required.
> › For all courses in one semester with a total weekly schedule of 30 hours, 8 hours of practical teaching per week or one working day is necessary.
> › In total, 15 working days of practical teaching are required for the semester. The number of practical tasks should correspond to the available time for their completion. Practical teaching outside the institution is best organised at the end of the planned teaching schedule (e.g., the 13th, 14th, and 15th weeks of the academic calendar). However, institutions can organise it during the most convenient period for the organisation.

4.2.12. Innovation in Learning Approaches

European higher education is characterised by innovations driven by new technologies and learning approaches. Higher education institutions emphasise innovative teaching methods, digital instruction, blended learning, and project-based learning.[47] The 2018 Paris Communiqué from the Ministerial Conference on the Bologna Process[48] highlighted the importance of innovative teaching methods, dedicating an entire chapter to "Innovation in Learning and Teaching." The communiqué committed to exploring and exchanging best practices, with a special focus on interdisciplinary learning, research-based learning, work-based learning, and the critical role of digitalisation.

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46 https://www.erasmusplus.ac.me/strengthening-capacities-for-the-implementation-of-dual-education-in-montenegro-higher-education-dualmon/

47 Trends 2018, forthcoming, see also: https://eua.eu/issues/20:learning-teaching.html.

48 http://www.ehea.info/media.ehea.info/file/2018_Paris/77/1/EHEAParis2018_Communique_final_952771.pdf

Several institutional evaluation reports have recognised the importance of innovation in Montenegro. All higher education institutions in Montenegro should modernise their curricula and increase the efficiency of the educational process. To encourage institutions to transform their educational approach, particularly by making it more student-centred, the Ministry of Education, Science, and Innovation, along with the Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, should create conditions that complement traditional teaching methods with interactive, collaborative, and experiential approaches to educational content. The first step towards this goal would be infrastructural support for teaching and learning in all higher education institutions to foster and support pedagogical innovations that facilitate active and interactive learning methods (problem-based learning, simulations, etc.). To achieve these goals, academic staff must be encouraged to work on improving innovative teaching skills and strengthening pedagogical competencies. This would allow academic staff to conduct better, higher-quality teaching and transfer knowledge and skills to students more effectively.

Strengthening the ties between higher education institutions and key economic stakeholders in the labour market is also crucial. Universities can employ various mechanisms, such as student internships, engaging students and faculty in company activities, and inviting industry professionals as guest lecturers. Integrating training into regular curricula can help students get closer to the production sector. Finally, institutions could consider establishing learning programs that combine university study periods with regular company internships.

The Ministry of Education, Science, and Innovation can establish a system for monitoring the labour market and collecting and analysing employment outcomes for all graduates. This would provide potential students, university leadership, and employers with relevant information about the labour market and supply and demand trends. By establishing such a monitoring and analysis system, Montenegro would follow the example of many OECD member countries that have national-level employment observatories (e.g., the EU Employment Observatory, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Italy's AlmaLaurea Observatory) or local observatories (e.g., the Learning and Skills Observatory in Wales, OREF in France, Florida's Education and Employment Information System, etc.).

Innovative practices have emerged in creating and implementing university education in recent years. One such innovative practice is the competency-based educational model, as opposed to the traditional content-based model. Another trend, driven by the increasing reliance on competency-based assessment, is the shift from summative evaluations to a formative assessment model.

The rapid development of e-learning requires targeted policies and technical interventions to enable Montenegrin higher education institutions to use new digital opportunities to modernise study programs. Additionally, consideration should be given to establishing a platform to identify best practices for recognising digital certificates obtained from prestigious foreign higher education institutions through online courses and integrating them into the diplomas offered by Montenegrin universities.

Introducing innovative teaching and learning practices that promote interactive and collaborative learning also requires improving universities' physical infrastructure and environment. This ranges from classrooms where professors lead lectures and facilitate self-learning to open-space studios and classrooms designed to support teamwork with new learning resources.

Modernised curricula and teaching methods should be adapted to PWD to ensure individualised work with them. The use of assistive technology is particularly important in this regard.

> Summary/Recommendations:
>
> › Preparing a plan to introduce innovative teaching and learning methods that incorporate ideas from the best European practices is necessary.
> › E-learning exists in some institutions, but the use of digital platforms in the teaching and learning process is inconsistent or nonexistent. Relevant authorities should support institutions through coordination and investment in appropriate e-learning infrastructure and innovative teaching and learning methods.
> › Relevant authorities should support institutions through coordination and financial investments in infrastructure for e-learning and innovative teaching and learning methods.

4.2.13. Inclusivity and Equal Access to Higher Education

Inclusion in higher education refers to creating an environment and practices that ensure access and equal opportunities for success for all students, regardless of their characteristics, abilities, or socioeconomic status. Inclusive higher education ensures all students have an equal opportunity to reach their full potential and succeed academically. Key areas for improvement include:

- Accessibility: Ensuring that the premises of higher education institutions are accessible for people with disabilities and other special needs. This includes architectural solutions, equipping spaces, providing support, and offering technical aids to enable students' full participation.
- Financial Support: Providing financial support for students from less privileged socio-economic groups to enable them to access higher education. This may include scholarships, subsidies for accommodation and food, and student employment programs.
- Diversity and Inclusivity of Teaching Staff: Improving the diversity and inclusivity of teaching staff at higher education institutions by encouraging recruiting faculty members from different social, cultural, and ethnic groups.
- Tailored Learning Approaches: Adapting teaching methods and curricula to meet students' diverse needs.
- Mentoring and Support: Providing mentoring programs and support to students during their studies. This can include senior students or professors mentoring, counselling, workshops on academic skills, and career development support.
- Technological Support: Ensuring access to technological resources, such as accessible computer systems, internet connectivity, and software that facilitates participation in teaching and research.
- Language and Culture: Promoting linguistic and cultural diversity in higher education, including support for students whose native language differs from the official language used in the teaching process. This can include translation services, language courses, and cultural exchanges.
- Access to Information: Ensuring transparency and accessibility of information about study programs, rules, policies, and resources at higher education institutions. This includes clear communication through websites, availability of materials in different languages, and adaptation for students with special needs.
- Research and Evaluation: Monitoring progress in achieving inclusivity and equitable access to higher education through systematic research, data collection, and evaluation of the effectiveness of policies and measures.

These efforts aim to create an inclusive educational environment that supports all students and ensures that no one is disadvantaged based on their personal circumstances.

Summary/Recommendations:

› Inclusivity and equal access to higher education are essential for achieving social justice and economic sustainability. This approach allows everyone to contribute to society in the best possible way by reducing inequalities, promoting social cohesion, and creating a fairer and more sustainable world for all.

In pursuing the mission of higher education, it is emphasised that it must be open and accessible to all, based on stable funding and established professional services. For individuals with disabilities, the principle of affirmative action is applied through the Individual Transition Plan 3 (ITP-3), which addresses the transition of students with developmental disabilities from secondary school to university. A Guide for Adapting Learning and Participation for students has been prepared and printed. Institutions must ensure access and accommodation for individuals with disabilities for licensing purposes[49]. Since 2014, young people with disabilities have had free education at all higher education institutions in Montenegro. As part of the SINCHE[50] (Tempus) project, realised by UCG, UDG, and the Mediterranean University, significant equipment has been provided to facilitate adaptation

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49 Regulation on Detailed Conditions for the Establishment, Operation, Licensing Procedure, and Method of Maintaining the Register of Higher Education Institution
50 Detailed information about the project: Support and Inclusion of Students with Disabilities in Higher Education Institutions in Montenegro — SINC@HE can be found at the link http://sinche.uom.gr/.

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to the needs of persons with disabilities, and all staff has completed training (administration, teachers, assistants). Due to the Tempus project "FOSFIM 2012-2016," a master's program in "Inclusive Education" has been launched at the Faculty of Philosophy, UCG. The Erasmus+ project "Trans2Work Transition for Higher Education Students with Disabilities in Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro" was also implemented, aiming to improve higher education services to support students with disabilities in their transition from higher education to employment, following the EU policy of linking higher education with a supportive work environment for people with disabilities.

Furthermore, the ongoing Erasmus+ project "Inclusive Tertiary Education in Western Balkans—IDEA[51]" is also focused on improving the situation of students with disabilities.

Due to their specific preferences and abilities, it is necessary to consider the possibility for persons with disabilities to enroll in or attend courses from multiple related study programs—a combined study program. Inclusive education implies applying a multidisciplinary approach at the higher education level.

Summary/Recommendations:

› To ensure that higher education is fair, inclusive, high-quality, and accessible to students with disabilities at all levels, it is necessary to establish the prerequisites (conditions, assistive devices, accessibility, and staff competencies) so that young people with disabilities can achieve their potential on equal terms, in accordance with the (UNCRPD), in the implementation of planned future goals for the development of higher education.52

4.2.14. Teaching Staff

Teachers' roles are crucial in creating a high-quality student experience and helping students acquire knowledge, competencies, and skills. In accordance with the ESG (European Standards and Guidelines), institutions must ensure the competence of their teaching staff and apply fair and transparent processes for their hiring and professional development.

Institutions are primarily responsible for the quality of their teaching staff and for creating an environment conducive to their effective work. This requires:

◻ Established clear, transparent, and fair hiring processes and working conditions that recognise the importance of teaching work.

◻ Incentives for the professional development of teaching staff.

◻ Support for research and the integration of education and science.

◻ Encouragement for innovations in teaching methods and the use of new technologies.

◻ Training of teaching staff on working with students with disabilities, including appropriate approaches, communication, and working methods.

It should be noted that institutions have been intensively developing in recent periods, increasing the number of study programs across all cycles. Along with the legal requirements for study programs (number of modules, elective subjects, etc.), the number of subjects taught by teachers has also continuously increased. Considering the demanding organisation of teaching, consultations, monitoring student progress during classes, and the mandatory administration for reporting results and student progress, in many cases, teaching staff are occupied with teaching duties during working hours. This results in difficulties in fulfilling expected tasks related to personal development, research, or socially responsible engagement.

As part of the project "Better Academic Qualifications through Quality Assurance," which ran from June

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51 Additional information about the Erasmus+ project "Inclusive Tertiary Education in the Western Balkans - IDEA" is available at http://www.erasmusplus.ac.me/?projekat=inclusive-tertiary-education--in-the-western-balkans-idea
52 UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

2020 to November 2022, ACQAHE developed an Analysis of the Competencies of Teachers at higher education institutions in Montenegro. As a result of this analysis, a new professional qualification aimed at improving teachers' competencies at higher education institutions was initiated

The criteria for academic promotions must be uniform and apply to both public and private universities. However, it is necessary to differentiate the criteria for academic promotions between technical and natural sciences and social-humanistic sciences. This is especially relevant for the Sci-list as a mandatory list for academic promotions, as even the most distinguished professors in social-humanistic sciences cannot publish works on these lists. This is particularly true for academic staff teaching national subjects or subjects in the field of legal sciences due to the specific socio-political system of Montenegro. This also prevents the best professors from being mentors for master's and doctoral studies, significantly affecting the quality of higher education. Therefore, it is necessary to revise the conditions and criteria for academic promotions to differentiate between scientific fields and align them with the needs of higher education in Montenegro.

> Summary/Recommendations:
>
> › To address the obligations of institutions to provide an appropriate environment while also recognising the significant burden on teaching staff, the following measures should be taken:
> › Adhere to Prescribed Teaching Load Norms: Institutions must ensure that teaching staff adhere to established norms for teaching workloads. This will allow faculty and assistants to fulfil additional responsibilities like research, innovative work, mentorship, and personal development. Proper management of teaching loads is essential to maintaining a balanced and effective academic environment.
> › Accredit a Lifelong Learning Program for Enhancing Teaching Competencies: Develop and officially accredit a program focused on lifelong learning to improve teaching competencies. This program should provide continuous professional development opportunities for educators to stay updated with the latest pedagogical methods and technological advancements.
> › Mandate Participation in Lifelong Learning Programs: Implement a requirement for all teaching staff to participate in these accredited lifelong learning programs. This will ensure that the teaching personnel consistently improve their skills and competencies, thereby contributing to a higher quality of education and better student outcomes.

4.2.15. Academic Integrity and Rules of Conduct[53]

Higher education, particularly leadership and management within institutions, is at risk of potential integrity breaches, necessitating careful attention to daily operations and long-term planning. Academic integrity is grounded in honesty, objectivity, openness, freedom in teaching and research, and accountability to the academic community and society[54]. These principles require a plan of conduct to ensure that entrusted tasks are performed transparently and in accordance with regulations and ethical standards.

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53 In the Law on Academic Integrity, academic integrity is defined as academic behaviour that ensures the preservation of academic honesty, professional dignity, quality of work and work products, a spirit of equal cooperation with all participants in the academic process, a commitment to truth as a fundamental value, and respect for legal regulations as the basis of responsibility for members of the academic community, i.e., any behaviour in line with the principles of academic integrity.

54 The Law on Academic Integrity defines the Principle of Honesty as based on independence in scientific, educational, and professional work and respect for others' work and creations.

Principle of Objectivity: Members of the academic community must not allow biases or partiality of any kind to affect their objectivity in academic, research, administrative, business, and managerial activities.

Principle of Openness: The results of research conducted by academic community members should be accessible to the public and scientific and academic networks.

Principle of Freedom in Teaching and Research: Higher education institutions should protect all academic community members from any attempt to limit or deny freedom in educational and research work.

Principle of Responsibility: Institutional responsibility is reflected in adherence to quality standards, ethical norms, and the promotion of excellence, as well as openness to society's critical evaluation of their overall activities.

The Integrity Plan involves identifying risky areas, processes, and positions, reviewing existing measures, and proposing new measures to reduce or eliminate those risks. Through detailed analysis and annual reports on the implementation of integrity plans, conditions are created to identify and mitigate risks promptly, preventing damage to the institution's reputation and operations. An Integrity Manager is responsible for continuously monitoring and periodically checking risks, updating measures, and overseeing activities related to implementing the ethical code, preventing corruption, conflicts of interest, and other forms of biased conduct.

All employees must be familiar with the integrity manager's plan and responsibilities regarding incidents or actions that they reasonably believe could lead to corruption, conflicts of interest, or other unlawful or unethical behaviour. Upon request, employees must provide the Integrity Manager with all necessary data and information relevant to implementing the Integrity Plan. Monitoring of risky job categories and processes, as well as the implementation of specific measures, is characteristic of each risk area, which is categorised by methodology into general areas[55] (e.g., Leadership and Management, Human Resources Policy, Ethical and Professional Conduct of Employees; Financial Planning and Management; Data and Document Security) and special areas (e.g., student cheating and plagiarism in authorised works).

As members of the academic community, students are not yet effectively prevented from engaging in various forms of academic dishonesty in teaching, individual work, and assessment. Plagiarism is a risk in all higher education systems and institutions. To improve academic integrity, a Feasibility Study was prepared to introduce an adequate system to prevent plagiarism in Montenegro. The study outlined activities for implementing the proposed model, and a special law on academic integrity was adopted. Given the increasing use of artificial intelligence, finding appropriate solutions to this modern challenge is crucial.

The Law on Academic Integrity, the Ethics Committee, and operational software collectively form the infrastructure to preserve, enhance, and promote academic integrity and prevent and protect against its violation. A pilot project evaluating the additional standard 11—Mechanisms of Academic Integrity and Strengthening Integrity Culture—was conducted from February to September 2023. This project was carried out by the Agency for Control and Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ACQAHE), the Ethics Committee, and the Council of Europe's Program Office in Podgorica, with participation from all four universities, the Faculty of State and European Studies, the Faculty of Montenegrin Language and Literature, and the Faculty of Business Management in Bar.

Experts from the Council of Europe's Office in Podgorica evaluated the pilot project. They compiled a report publicly presented to all institutions at a joint meeting. The report contains individual recommendations for institutions to improve academic integrity. In 2023, ACQAHE organised an "Academic Integrity - A Necessity roundtable." The quality of higher education cannot exist without the honest, objective, open, and responsible behaviour of the academic community, including respect for freedom in teaching and research. This applies to academic staff and students, as well as external accreditation of study programs and reaccreditation of higher education institutions. Initiatives like this can positively strengthen academic integrity and raise awareness of this issue's importance for society.

> Summary/Recommendations:
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> › The full implementation of necessary measures to protect against violations of academic integrity should remain a constant focus for the academic community. Now that the infrastructure for maintaining academic integrity has been established, it is important to continue with the following:
> › Mandatory inclusion of the integrity plan in all selection procedures for positions at institutions, requiring candidates to sign a declaration of their knowledge and commitment to uphold these standards.
> › Creating an environment where the prevention of student fraud is continuously emphasised, ensuring that students are aware of the importance of honesty and transparency in their academic work.
> › Enforcing transparent measures by requiring all authorised works be thoroughly checked for plagiarism, with any violations publicly disclosed and appropriately sanctioned.

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55 Primjer plana integriteta –Agencija za sprječavanje korupcije, www.antikorupcija.me › documents › Primjer_plan.

4.2.16. Internationalisation

Internationalisation of higher education is a key principle of the Bologna Process and a strategic priority of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). Processes such as student and academic staff mobility, agreements between higher education institutions, joint studies and degrees, international projects, and other forms of cooperation contribute to improving quality and expanding opportunities for young people in the global labour market.

As part of the Erasmus+ project "IESP[56]" (2019-2022), coordinated by the University of Montenegro, the University of Montenegro's Internationalization Strategy was developed. Internationalisation has been recognised as a priority for all higher education institutions over an extended period. However, the success indicators for all the aforementioned internationalisation processes are still limited. It has been assessed that additional institutional efforts, support from relevant departments, and better promotion of collaboration opportunities are necessary. The immediate objectives identified in the strategy include:

- Increasing inbound and outbound student and academic staff mobility.
- Promoting Montenegrin institutions within the European Higher Education Area.
- Strengthening the National Office for Mobility Promotion and International Cooperation of Higher Education Institutions.

The Final Report on the Implementation of the Strategy reviews activities and achieved results in the areas of internationalisation and mobility, with a summary of progress outlined in Chapter 3.2.

An essential step in collaborative work and international cooperation is the development of joint or dual PhD dissertations (Joint PhD), defined through agreements between two universities. The student signs these agreements, along with mentors from both institutions, doctoral school leaders or doctoral study committees, and the university rectors. The agreements specify educational requirements, such as courses the student must complete. Each joint PhD represents a form of international scientific project, and its successful implementation confirms effective international cooperation.

Efforts should focus on forming these agreements with universities ranked highly in the relevant research field. For example, the Ministry could encourage this by providing scholarships to doctoral candidates who pursue joint PhDs with universities ranked within the top 100 on the Shanghai List in their area of research. This would further elevate the academic and research standards of Montenegro's higher education system through strong global partnerships.

> **Summary/Recommendations:**
>
> › The importance of internationalisation and its positive effects require that, in the coming period, internationalisation be further promoted through the active engagement of all participants in higher education (students, teaching staff, administration, management of higher education institutions, relevant ministries, etc.). By utilising the undeniable opportunities available in this field and the numerous positive effects of all forms of international cooperation, conditions must be created to make internationalisation an important selection criterion in evaluating the performance of higher education institutions. One of the key challenges and goals for the future is the establishment of a National Agency for EU Programs, as outlined in the Law on Higher Education. This agency would help facilitate greater access to EU initiatives, programs, and funding, thus strengthening Montenegrin higher education's international standing and competitiveness.

4.2.17. Higher Education Financing

Budget financing for higher education in Montenegro, alongside funding for other educational cycles, is presented as a percentage of GDP. Since 2018, a contract-based budget financing model has been implemented for all undergraduate programs at the University of Montenegro, and since 2021, it has also been applied to master's

56 https://www.iesp.ucg.ac.me/uploaded/files/Strategija%20internacionalizacije%20UCG%202021%20-%202026.%282%29.pdf

programs. This approach has resulted in a doubling of the budget for the University of Montenegro from 2017 to 2024, with the following allocations: €17.3 million in 2017, €19.3 million in 2018, €20.6 million in 2020 and 2021, €29.1 million in 2022, €34.3 million in 2023, and €34.8 million in 2024.

Table 5 outlines the total funding for higher education, including the Directorate for Higher Education under the Ministry of Education, Science, and Innovation, and the financing of the University of Montenegro and the Faculty for Montenegrin Language and Literature. In addition to the allocations listed in Table, it is important to note that significant financial resources are also allocated to the Professional Training Program for individuals with higher education degrees, amounting to €12.1 million annually.

Table 5.Higher Education Financing in Montenegro

	2019/EUR	2020/EUR	2021/EUR	2022/EUR	2023/EUR	2024/EUR
Programme of Higher Education policies	493.395,05	559.197,00	270.001,00	224.029,51	227.901,00	226.151,00
University of Montenegro	19.357.229,00	20.648.727,00	20.648.727,00	29.103.382,00	34.305.769,24	35.800.000,00
Faculty of Montenegrin Language and Literature	591.834,40	629.944,40	561.646,10	575.321,13	688.044,15	700.771,92
Professional Training Programme	7.5 mil	7.5 mil	7.5 mil	7.5 mil	12.17 mil	12,13 mil
Student standard: credits, scholarships and dorms	cca 5 mil	cca 5 mil	cca 5 mil	5.81 mil	8.5 mil	8,64 mil

Comparative data on higher education financing across the European Union show that the average budget allocation is 1.1% of GDP, with variations ranging from 0.53% in Luxembourg to 1.74% in Austria. However, the percentage of GDP alone does not fully capture the extent of funding. For example, Luxembourg's per-student allocation is the highest at $48,907, whereas Austria allocates $17,555 per student. Additionally, the source of funding is also a crucial factor, with Luxembourg financing 92.4% of its higher education from public funds, compared to Austria's 37.8%.[57]

Moreover, planning and allocating financial resources for improving educational conditions for persons with disabilities is vital, as mandated by Article 24 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities[58]. This ensures equal access to education for all students, regardless of ability.

Higher education requires adequate funding for teaching and learning activities, sufficient and easily accessible learning resources, and student support. The proper status and compensation for teaching staff, associates, and administrative personnel must be ensured, alongside other conditions necessary to achieve the set goals and expected outcomes.

Public institutions in Montenegro are financed through the state budget and their own revenues (tuition fees, services, donations, gifts, bequests, and project funds). On the other hand, private institutions finance themselves but can receive budgetary support if they offer study programs of public interest that are not available at public institutions in Montenegro.

According to the Law on Higher Education, public institutions in Montenegro receive funding from the state budget based on norms and standards for financing public institutions, taking into account the number of students specified by license, the cost per student for specific study programs, and the quality of the institution's work.

In 2019, a funding contract was signed between the Government of Montenegro and the University of

57 https://data.oecd.org/eduresource/public-spending-on-education.htm#indicator-chart
58 https://www.gov.me/dokumenta/b3db3202-9de1-4b25-8cda-29dea4c97dbb

Montenegro for three years, covering three academic years and four fiscal years (from 2019 to 2022). This contract includes four annexes with performance indicators:

◻   Annex 1: Institutional quality and enrollment policy.

◻   Annex 2: Quality assurance.

◻   Annex 3: Public information about the institution's operations.

◻   Annex 4: Improvement of existing study programs, evaluation of the need to continue or discontinue unsustainable programs.

For 2023 and 2024, the Government of Montenegro approved the budget based on the University of Montenegro's proposal and the Ministry of Finance's assessment. This funding model aims to enhance the quality and positioning of Montenegrin higher education internationally while ensuring better educational opportunities for students.

Summary/Recommendations:

› Financing plays a key role in ensuring the quality and functioning of educational institutions. The goal of the contractual funding model is to improve the position of the University of Montenegro in the international arena and to provide higher-quality education to students. Additionally, with the help of extra funding, the overall position of higher education and the standard of living for Montenegrin students should be enhanced.
› The contractual funding model is based on clear input and output parameters, which include work characteristics, quality-related components, and the cost per student. This model aims to create a more transparent and performance-based approach to allocating resources within higher education.
› Furthermore, consideration should be given to the possibility of financing students at private higher education institutions who are enrolled in programs of public interest that are not offered at the University of Montenegro. Financial resources for study programs should be allocated primarily based on the demand for the qualifications in the labour market and the quality of the study programs themselves.

4.2.18. Lifelong Learning (LLL)

Lifelong Learning is oriented towards raising all citizens' general level of education, continuous training in their changeable work and social surroundings, provision of better employment opportunities, and personal, social, economic and cultural development. It is recognised as a significant factor for an active society because it brings about innovation, productivity, and competitiveness and contributes to workers' motivation and satisfaction. This learning model provides an opportunity for further training and adapted training courses.

Competencies necessary for each individual, which can be offered through LLL programmes, include a wide range of higher education areas, such as communication in mother tongue/foreign languages, mathematic competencies, competencies in the area of natural sciences, engineering and technology, digital competencies, studying and teaching competencies, competencies for one's own and others' time management, for accumulation, analysis and evaluation of information, social and civic competencies, competencies for taking the initiative, entrepreneurship and management, competencies for fostering cultural and national identity and give and artistic expression. The evolution of the workplace in the digital era has huge implications regarding generic competencies that graduates must possess, which has been discovered through XXI-century skill meta-analysis conducted by the World Economic Forum (WEF,2015). Based on foundational literacy, which every 21st-century person has to acquire during their primary and secondary education, such as literacy and numeracy, scientific literacy, IT literacy, financial literacy, and cultural and civic literacy, university students must grasp complex competencies to contribute to the resolution of present challenges efficiently. Four key complex competencies are (I) critical thinking and problem-solving skills, (II) creativity, (III) communication and (IV) cooperation.

Specifically, a less pronounced accent is placed on remembering numerous facts and basic data and more on building methodological knowledge and analytical skills - necessary for thinking and autonomous data analysis.

Nowadays, in many disciplines, factual knowledge acquired in the first year of studies can become obsolete by the end of it. The learning process should be based more and more on a practical application of knowledge in problem-solving. Learning for the sake of learning, learning information transformation into new knowledge, and learning to translate new knowledge into practice becomes more important than remembering information. In this new paradigm, the advantage is given to analytical skills, i.e., the ability to search and find information, consider problems, formulate initial hypotheses, organise and assess evidence, and solve problems.

Additionally, one's capability to become a successful professional and active citizen in an environment that quickly changes is determined by one's character traits, also known as social-emotional skills or soft skills. They include (I) initiative, (II) curiosity, (III) persistence, (IV)adaptability, (V) leadership and (VI) social and cultural awareness.

LLL programmes are the right solution for creating short training programmes to track accelerated social, economic, and technological development. They are mostly self-funded, but this is a rational solution for the labour market and students who need training programmes. LLL programmes allow teaching staff to represent their expertise, connect with the labour market, and grow personally in innovative and developmental tasks.

Considering that access to lifelong learning highlights students' priority, higher education institutions should be organised to adapt to the learning and training needs of diverse categories of students: employed students, senior students, students who learn at home, foreign students, irregular students, etc. There are new demand patterns where candidates simultaneously or subsequently go to several institutions or take several programmes, taking the initiative to define their skill profiles on the labour market.

This activity is extremely important, but it was unjustly neglected at all higher education institutions in Montenegro. Limited results were noted in the Report on implementing the previous Strategy. Considering that the Agency for Control and Quality Assurance in Higher Education adopted the Rulebook and guidelines for accreditation of LLL programmes and ensured conditions for implementation and development of this area in line with the developmental needs of an individual or society. Since its foundation, the ACQAHE has accredited four programmes of lifelong learning. In the future, the number of submitted requests will be greater to follow the EU agenda and affirm the programmes. Additionally, ACQAHE's activities are oriented towards gathering European practice, such as introducing micro-credentials.

Finally, adequate funding from public and private sources must support lifelong learning possibilities. The 2003 World Bank Study on Lifelong Learning proposed that the public and private sectors jointly work on lifelong learning funding. It is recommended that governmental intervention outside of basic skills and knowledge be focused on participants from groups with low incomes, socially excluded, or high learning obstacles.

International experience shows that policymakers have considered a wide array of lifelong learning funding possibilities, including subsidies, mortgage loans, contracts on human capital, taxes, and schemes for payment of contingency income.

Summary/Recommendations:

› For LLL programmes to achieve the desired level of development, it is necessary that:
› Institutions affirm and continuously develop programmes for the needs of individuals, the labour market and society as a rationalised educational system which follows dynamic social and economic changes and modern development of all activities;
› The organisation of such programmes integrate modern IT teaching and learning forms and thus ensures easier access to teaching content (the possibility of learning and content studying at the most convenient time);
› University education, included in the 2030 UN's Millennium Development Goals (https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal4), aside from lifelong learning, involves inclusivity and equal access to quality education. Indicators for these goals are mentioned at https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal4.

4.2.19. Higher Education Activities Related to Social Activities

"The society service area" is focused on the connection between education, the labour market and civil society. It refers to a seamless service provision of long-distance learning and lifelong learning, dialogue between

the interested parties in the field of education and creation of curricula, aid in technology use, active participation in the civil society for the organisation of public events and consideration of current topics, as well as other societal commitments in which higher education can adequately participate. All these activities should be implemented in line with academic ethics and integrity principles.

To improve this situation systematically, IEP's Commission recommended the following measures for competent state bodies during the external evaluation:

- Enable higher education institutions and employers to consider the issue of data collection systemically regarding graduates' employment.
- Recognise social and civic activities as "practical teaching".
- Participate in the systematic dialogue with other interested parties;
- Develop the vision of higher education's role in the field of innovation and
- Develop the lifelong learning supply.

In the period following the IEP's screening, significant progress in the area of cooperation between the higher education institutions and community represents the Science and Technology Park Montenegro (STP) of Montenegro as an integral part of the university campus, which officially started working in 2019. STP supports the development of startup enterprises and innovative companies as well as the development of present high-technological firms. The support for different applied scientific research aims to create new start-up firms based on the said research, especially in cooperation with the researchers from the University of Montenegro and other universities from Montenegro. The intention is to allow individuals to place their creative ideas, knowledge and research on the market.

4.2.20. Career Counselling

The Strategy of Lifelong Career Counselling in Montenegro (2011-2015) contained the first general framework for developing lifelong career counselling and informing. The general goal was to prepare a systemic approach to career counselling in line with the document's recommendations adopted by the competent bodies of the European Union. Systemic designing of career counselling is important since this area is tied to education, employment, and economic and social development policies. The Strategy of Lifelong Career Counselling in Montenegro (2016-2025), which represents a continuation of the measures defined in the previous Strategy (2011-2015), is founded on the already achieved level of career counselling development and the need to further improve the career counselling system through defining priorities, measures and activities for their fulfilment.

In order for higher education institutions to meet the labour market needs, aside from the developed career management and counselling system, it is necessary to include alumni more broadly in the higher education system, modernisation of study programmes and professional training of students through practical teaching and work during studies. Only such a holistic approach enables a more efficient integration of students in the modern labour market, providing them with the tools and resources needed for a successful career.

Career counsellors in education shall:

- Advise students on complex decision-making in opting for further education, professional training and vocation in line with their talents, affinities and interests;
- Provide necessary information on the most adequate profiles of professions, the labour market, and further training and employment methods.

Career counselling focuses on connecting educational and professional paths, career promotion, and other issues related to the broader notion of a career. Additionally, career counsellors should be informed about using adequate models of disability access, using terminology, and general communication with people with disabilities.

In the areas of employment and the labour market, the Employment Agency carries out career counselling. In the Agency, they can get information on employment opportunities, labour market situation, information on educational programmes, professions, secondary school and university students' dorms, opportunities for education and scholarship, while in education, career counselling is organised through the work of school career teams in primary and secondary schools and through the work of university career centres. A series of very useful publications has been prepared to improve career counselling.

4.3. Labour Market and Employment upon the completion of studies

The number of unemployed people with higher education between 2016 and 2022 is presented in Tables 6 and 7, while the share in the total number of unemployed people is shown in Table 8. Data in Table 6 represent the unemployed people by the areas of activity and levels of qualifications in education, which are in line with the National Qualifications Framework, while the information in Table 7 refers to unemployment according to levels and municipalities in Montenegro.

The greatest number of unemployed belong to the VII1 sub-level of education, which ranges from 57% to 64% (sub-level VII1 180+60 ECTS, 240 ECTS, 300 ECTS i 360 ECTS credits). This is followed by the unemployed with the VI level of education, which ranges from 32 to 40% (bachelor, 3 years, 180 ECTS credits) and the VII2 sub-level of education, which ranges from 3 to 4% (master).

For municipalities (Table 7), the total unemployment and data on the number of unemployed women with higher education are included in the total number. Municipalities with the largest populations (Podgorica, Nikšić, Bijelo Polje i Berane) also have the largest number of unemployed people.

Table 6 shows the number of unemployed people with higher education in 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, and 2022.[59]

EU Classification of Activities	The level of Education Qualification[60]				Total
2016	**VI**	**VII-1**	**VII-2**	**VIII**	
0. Military Occupations	0	3	0	0	3
1 Managers (directors,)officials and legislators	0	6	2	0	8
2 Experts and artists	3684	7126	497	6	11 313
3 Expert associates and technicians	21	29	0	0	50
4 Clerks for administrative work	0	1	0	0	1
5 Occupations in services and commerce	0	0	0	0	0
6 Occupations in agriculture, forestry and fishery	0	0	0	0	0
7 Crafts and related occupations	0	0	0	0	0

59 Levels and sub-levels in education qualifications.
VI level– 180 ECTS; VII-1 sub-level – 240-360 ECTS (180+60 or 240 or 300 or 360 ECTS);
VII-2 sub-level – master's degree holders VIII level – doctoral studies -
60 Employment Agency of Montenegro

8 Plant and machine operators, installers and drivers	0	0	0	0	0
9 Simple occupations	0	0	0	0	0
Total	**3 705**	**7 165**	**499**	**6**	**11 375**
2017					
0 Military Occupations	0	1	0	0	1
1 Managers (directors,)officials and legislators	0	4	1	0	5
2 Experts and artists	2 927	5 961	384	14	9 286
3 Expert associates and technicians	12	18	0	0	30
4 Clerks for administrative work	0	1	0	0	1
Total	**2 939**	**5 985**	**385**	**14**	**9 323**
2018					
0 Military occupation	0	4	0	0	4
1 Managers (directors,)officials and legislators	0	3	2	0	5
2 Experts and artists	2 907	4 894	326	15	8 142
3 Expert associates and technicians	12	15	1	0	28
Total	**2 919**	**4 916**	**330**	**15**	**8 180**
2019					
0. Military occupation	0	2	0	0	2
1 Managers (directors,)officials and legislators	0	2	0	0	2
2 Experts and technicians	2 891	4 086	235	17	7 229
3 Expert associates and technicians	17	11	1	0	29
Total:	**2 908**	**4 101**	**236**	**17**	**7 262**
2020					
0 Military occupations	0	5	0	0	5
1 Managers (directors,)officials and legislators	0	5	0	0	5
2 Experts and artists	3 238	5 538	432	28	9 236
3 Expert associates and technicians	15	22	1	0	38
4 Clerks for administrative work	0	1	0	0	1
5 Occupations in services and commerce	0	0	0	0	0
6 Occupations in agriculture., forestry and fishery	0	0	0	0	0
7 Crafts and similar occupations	0	0	0	0	0
8 Plant and machine operators, installers and drivers	0	0	0	0	0
9 Simple occupations	0	3	1	0	4
Total	**15**	**26**	**11407**	**8206**	**43**
2021					
0 Military occupations	0	6	0	0	6
1 Managers (directors,)officials and legislators	0	6	0	0	6
2 Experts and artists	3 470	5 623	437	21	9 551
3 Expert associates and technicians	16	23	1	0	40
4 Clerks for administrative work	0	1	0	0	1
5 Occupations in services and commerce	0	0	0	0	0
6 Occupations in agriculture., forestry and fishery	0	0	0	0	0
7 Crafts and similar occupations	0	0	0	0	0
8 Plant and machine operators, installers and drivers	0	0	0	0	0
9 Simple occupations	0	2	1	0	3
Total	**16**	**26**	**25274**	**18454**	**44**
2022					
0 Military occupations	0	4	0	0	4
1 Managers (directors,)officials and legislators	0	6	0	0	6
2 Experts and artists	3 235	4 240	353	18	7 846
3 Expert associates and technicians	24	19	1	0	44
4 Clerks for administrative work	0	1	0	0	1
5 Occupations in services and commerce	0	0	0	0	0
6 Occupations in agriculture., forestry and fishery	0	0	0	0	0
7 Crafts and similar occupations	0	0	0	0	0
8 Plant and machine operators, installers and drivers	0	0	0	0	0
9 Simple occupations	0	1	1	0	2
Total:	**24**	**21**	**52925**	**38948**	**47**

Table 7 Number of unemployed people with higher education from 2016 to 2022[61]

Municipality	2016		2017		2018		2019		2020		2021		2022	
	VI+VII+VIII		VI+VII+VIII		VI+VII+VIII		VI+VII+VIII		VI+VII+VIII		VI+VII+VIII		VI+VII+VIII	
	Total	Women	Total	Women	Total	Women	Total	Women	Total	Women	Total	Women	Total	Women
Total	Women	36	75	37	60	32	50	28	855	464	957	512	853	414
Bar	595	322	521	311	439	237	460	320	4754	2653	5225	2943	4469	2392
Budva	327	209	265	179	243	150	196	135	1047	671	1100	719	900	601
Bijelo Polje	818	417	699	398	624	372	593	365	4012	2397	4934	3059	4114	2337
Berane	728	478	624	423	561	384	426	227	2462	1575	2610	1720	1852	1206
Cetinje	344	230	291	192	234	143	227	141	1381	756	1557	858	1358	716
Danilovgrad	218	139	180	117	145	93	138	88	1160	707	1377	870	950	586
Golubovci	-	-	-	-	87	55	90	55	809	494	1010	643	716	438
Gusinje	-	-	-	-	67	22	56	26	651	354	749	420	686	364
Herceg Novi	513	342	350	226	269	175	215	148	1095	689	927	563	608	386
Kolašin	133	70	99	62	103	62	83	49	911	483	998	536	843	403
Kotor	299	210	238	173	228	165	179	125	510	292	485	296	324	187
Mojkovac	164	99	96	60	85	52	81	38	857	504	1170	675	964	517
Nikšić	1535	994	1429	952	1256	834	1117	720	4571	2851	6352	3869	4948	2888
Podgorica	3592	2190	2754	1776	2120	1353	1950	1268	8988	5468	11112	6997	8306	5191
Plav	216	100	214	99	148	67	141	54	1892	1048	2148	1169	1981	998
Petnjica	-	-	-	-	22	14	21	13	1098	618	1207	694	1034	550
Pljevlja	522	283	408	241	358	212	310	183	2580	1541	3003	1864	2459	1512

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61 Employment Agency of Montenegro

Plužine	43	19	27	17	28	15	25	17	250	122	283	140	244	111
Rožaje	476	246	405	215	380	165	324	147	3911	2120	5513	3222	5203	2888
Šavnik	38	21	28	15	24	14	12	8	81	39	125	58	91	32
Tivat	229	156	198	143	175	126	112	76	720	408	769	452	392	252
Tuzi	-	-	-	-	136	92	92	56	894	506	1266	797	987	582
Ulcinj	446	228	376	217	354	211	331	212	1627	964	1956	1194	1624	969
Žabljak	57	29	43	21	34	17	33	23	147	88	172	103	163	85
MONTENE-GRO	11375	6818	9323	5874	8180	5062	7262	4522	47263	27812	57005	34373	46069	26605

Comparable data for the OECD countries indicate that the share of adults with tertiary education in these countries has almost doubled in the last two decades[62]. The labour market cannot absorb such a growing supply, so the number of unemployed people with tertiary education has increased for many years. It is the largest in Greece and amounted to 13.7% in 2018. High unemployment is in Italy (10%) and Spain (8.4%), which is significantly above the average for the OECD countries, which amounts to 3.9%.

> **Summary/Recommendations:**
>
> › Conducting the Analysis of unemployment following the acquisition of higher education by the relevant institutions. The Analysis demands consideration of study programmes (learning outcomes and obtained competencies) and supply (labour market needs). Additionally, the Analysis should include changes in the higher education model, which will result in the simultaneous presence of Bachelors from the previous and new model, specialists according to the previous model and masters according to the previous and new model. The selection on the labour market is expected to recognise all five types of degrees adequately, that is, all levels of higher education qualifications. The traditional practice that "all of this was covered by a degree with completed four-year studies" should be considered. A high unemployment rate can reflect secondary school students' interest in enrolling in particular studies.

4.3.1. Supply of the Job Vacancies

Table 8 An overview of the number of job vacancies according to the areas of activity and levels of higher education qualifications for 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023

2016	Education Qualification Level				Altogether
Activity	WE	VII-1	VII-2	VIII	
A. Agriculture, forestry and fisheries	0	23	0	0	23
B. Mining	1	14	0	0	15
C. Manufcturing	6	111	0	0	117
D. Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply	0	28	0	0	28
E. Water supply; wastewater management, control of waste disposal processes and similar activities	1	37	0	0	38
F. Civil engineering	11	230	2	0	243
G. Wholesale and retail; repair of motor vehicles and motor-cycles	29	246	5	0	280
H. Traffic & storage	14	87	0	0	101
I. Accommodation and food services	11	88	0	0	99
J. Information and communication	17	130	0	0	147
K. Financial and insurance activities	27	174	3	0	204
L. Real estate business	2	79	2	0	83
M. Professional, scientific, innovation and technical activities	22	302	8	1	333
N. Administrative and support service activities	44	312	7	4	367
O. State administration and defence; compulsory social security	12	957	4	0	973
P. Education	10	1 763	30	92	1 895
Health and social protection	17	381	41	1	440
Q. Arts, entertainment and recreation	8	95	14	0	117
R. Other service activities	19	87	1	0	107
Total	**251**	**5 144**	**117**	**98**	**5 610**

2017	Education Qualification Level				Altogether
Activity	WE	VII-1	VII-2	VIII	
A. Agriculture, forestry and fisheries	1	18	0	0	19
B. Mining	1	25	0	0	26
C. Manufacturing	2	93	1	0	96
D. Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply	0	29	0	0	29
E. Water supply; wastewater management, control of waste disposal processes and similar activities	1	81	0	0	82
F. Civil engineering	7	172	2	0	181
G. Wholesale and retail; repair of motor vehicles and motor-cycles	35	216	2	0	253
H. Traffic & storage	11	90	2	0	103
I. Accommodation and food services	6	79	1	0	86
J. Information and communication	23	138	5	0	166
K. Financial and insurance activities	16	182	4	0	202
L. Real estate business	1	76	3	0	80
M. Professional, scientific, innovation and technical activities	22	253	5	2	282
N. Administrative and support service activities	44	320	15	0	379
O. State administration and defence; compulsory social security	15	1 062	0	1	1 078
P. Education	22	2 112	44	96	2 274
Q. Health and social protection	24	391	38	0	453
R. Arts, entertainment and recreation	5	134	12	0	151
S. Other service activities	9	78	0	0	87

62 https://data.oecd.org/unemp/unemployment-rates-by-education-level.htm#indicator-chart.

	WE	VII-1	VII-2	VIII	
T. Activities of extraterritorial organisations and bodies	0	1	0	0	1
Total	**245**	**5 550**	**134**	**99**	**6 028**

2018	Education Qualification Level				Altogether
Activity	**WE**	**VII-1**	**VII-2**	**VIII**	
A. Agriculture, forestry and fisheries	0	7	0	0	7
B. Mining	0	19	0	0	19
C. Manufacturing	4	60	1	0	65
D. Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply	0	12	0	0	12
E. Water supply; wastewater management, control of waste disposal processes and similar activities	1	28	0	0	29
F. Civil engineering	12	186	4	0	202
G. Wholesale and retail; repair of motor vehicles and motor-cycles	21	181	1	0	203
H. Traffic & storage	4	73	0	0	77
I. Accommodation and food services	23	117	1	0	141
J. Information and communication	37	94	0	0	131
K. Financial and insurance activities	21	207	1	0	229
L. Real estate business	3	78	4	1	86
M. Professional, scientific, innovation and technical activities	12	259	3	1	275
N. Administrative and support service activities	37	188	4	0	229
O. State administration and defence; compulsory social security	8	597	1	0	606
P. Education	24	2 693	27	89	2 833
Q. Health and social protection	35	426	30	0	491
R. Arts, entertainment and recreation	3	67	6	0	76
S. Other service activities	13	109	0	0	122
Altogether	**258**	**5 401**	**83**	**91**	**5 833**

2019	Education Qualification Level				Altogether
Activity	**WE**	**VII-1**	**VII-2**	**VIII**	
A. Agriculture, forestry and fisheries	0	7	0	0	7
B. Mining	0	6	0	0	6
C. Manufacturing	4	27	0	0	31
D. Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply	0	11	0	0	11
E. Water supply; wastewater management, control of waste disposal processes and similar activities	3	38	0	0	41
F. Civil engineering	15	183	4	0	202

	WE	VII-1	VII-2	VIII	
G. Wholesale and retail; repair of motor vehicles and motor-cycles	23	194	0	0	217
H. Traffic & storage	11	65	1	0	77
I. Accommodation and food services	16	75	0	0	91
J. Information and communication	22	94	5	0	121
K. Financial and insurance activities	16	176	1	0	193
L. Real estate business	2	42	1	0	45
M. Professional, scientific, innovation and technical activities	21	251	5	0	277
N. Administrative and support service activities	11	157	0	0	168
O. State administration and defense; compulsory social security	7	880	2	0	889
P. Education	20	2 872	22	75	2 989
Q. Health and social protection	21	329	63	0	413
Q. Arts, entertainment and recreation	4	79	1	0	84
R. Other service activities	19	70	3	0	92
T. Activities of extraterritorial organisations and bodies	0	1	0	0	1
Total	**215**	**5.557**	**108**	**75**	**5.955**

2020	Education Qualification Level				Altogether
Activity	**WE**	**VII-1**	**VII-2**	**VIII**	
A. Agriculture, forestry and fisheries	0	3	0	0	3
B. Mining	0	2	0	0	2
C. Manufacturing	6	24	0	0	30
D. Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply	0	11	0	0	11
E. Water supply; wastewater management, control of waste disposal processes and similar activities	1	76	0	0	77
F. Civil engineering	9	183	4	0	196
G. Wholesale and retail; repair of motor vehicles and motor-cycles	27	124	4	0	155
H. Traffic & storage	10	55	0	0	65
I. Accommodation and food services	3	75	0	0	78
J. Information and communication	32	148	6	1	187
K. Financial and insurance activities	12	134	4	0	150
L. Real estate business	2	38	0	0	40

Activity	WE	VII-1	VII-2	VIII	Altogether
M. Professional, scientific, innovation and technical activities	16	167	4	1	188
N. Administrative and support service activities	9	149	1	0	159
O. State administration and defence; compulsory social security	13	1 055	6	0	1 074
P. Education	23	3 100	33	90	3 246
Q. Health and social protection	20	471	44	2	537
R. Arts, entertainment and recreation	0	122	0	0	122
S. Other service activities	6	35	0	0	41
T. The activity of the household as an employer; households that produce goods and services for their own needs	0	0	0	0	0
Total	**189**	**5 972**	**106**	**94**	**6 361**

2021	Education Qualification Level				Altogether
Activity	WE	VII-1	VII-2	VIII	
A. Agriculture, forestry and fisheries	0	6	0	0	6
B. Mining	0	4	0	0	4
C. Manufacturing	3	43	0	0	46
D. Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply	1	25	0	0	26
E. Water supply; wastewater management, control of waste disposal processes and similar activities	5	67	0	0	72
F. Civil engineering	4	153	1	0	158
G. Wholesale and retail; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles	27	171	1	0	199
H. Traffic & storage	3	162	1	0	166
I. Accommodation and food services	4	72	1	0	77
J. Information and communication	25	145	6	0	176
K. Financial and insurance activities	11	155	2	0	168
L. Real estate business	1	23	0	0	24
M. Professional, scientific, innovation and technical activities	16	221	8	2	247
N. Administrative and support service activities	12	184	5	0	201
O. State administration and defense; compulsory social security	8	521	0	0	529
P. Education	30	2 417	28	99	2 574

Activity	WE	VII-1	VII-2	VIII	Altogether
Q. Health and social protection	41	670	115	0	826
R. Arts, entertainment and recreation	2	87	0	0	89
S. Other service activities	11	47	7	1	66
T. The activity of the household as an employer; households that produce goods and services for their own needs	0	0	0	0	0
Altogether	**204**	**5 173**	**175**	**102**	**5 654**

Year 2022	Education Qualification Level				Altogether
Activity	WE	VII-1	VII-2	VIII	
A. Agriculture, forestry and fisheries	0	8	0	0	8
B. Mining	0	0	0	0	0
C. Manufacturing	1	36	1	0	38
D. Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply	1	71	0	0	72
E. Water supply; wastewater management, control of waste disposal processes and similar activities	1	59	1	0	61
F. Civil engineering	5	156	0	0	161
G. Wholesale and retail; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles	16	175	0	0	191
H. Traffic & storage	2	122	1	0	125
I. Accommodation and food services	1	83	0	0	84
J. Information and communication	41	219	3	0	263
K. Financial and insurance activities	16	152	2	0	170
L. Real estate business	3	18	0	0	21
M. Professional, scientific, innovation and technical activities	22	236	6	2	266
N. Administrative and support service activities	7	236	3	1	247
O. State administration and defense; compulsory social security	10	1 003	1	0	1 014
P. Education	92	4 269	19	94	4 474
Q. Health and social protection	47	460	157	0	664
R. Arts, entertainment and recreation	2	99	1	0	102
S. Other service activities	6	102	2	0	110
T. The activity of the household as an employer: households that produce goods and services for their own needs	0	0	0	0	0

Total	273	7 504	197	97	8 071

Source: employment agency of montenegro

Year 2023	Education Qualification Level				Altogether
Activity	WE	VII-1	VII-2	VIII	
A. Agriculture, forestry and fisheries	0	5	0	0	5
B. Mining	0	6	0	0	6
C. Manufacturing	1	80	0	0	81
D. Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply	0	66	0	0	66
E. Water supply; wastewater management, control of waste disposal processes and similar activities	0	74	0	0	74
F. Civil engineering	11	210	0	0	221
G. Wholesale and retail; repair of motor vehicles and motor-cycles	6	180	2	0	188
H. Traffic & storage	2	76	0	0	78
I. Accommodation and food services	2	66	0	0	68
J. Information and communication	25	92	0	0	117
K. Financial and insurance activities	21	185	2	1	209
L. Real estate business	0	15	0	0	15
M. Professional, scientific, innovation and technical activities	20	249	4	2	275
N. Administrative and support service activities	20	134	4	1	159
O. State administration and defence; compulsory social security	13	1 165	0	0	1 178
P. Education	112	4 743	13	75	4 943
Q. Health and social protection	53	615	203	0	871
R. Arts, entertainment and recreation	3	115	2	0	120
S. Other service activities	7	88	0	0	95
T. The activity of the household as an employer: households that produce goods and services for their own needs	0	1	0	0	1
Total	296	8 165	230	79	8 770

As expected, the most significant need for new employment (75% of total needs) is in *Education (P)*. Then they follow *Public administration and defence and compulsory social insurance (O), administrative and support activities (Q), administrative and support service activities (N) and professional, scientific, innovation and technical activities (M).*

Education is individually the most important resource for new employment, reaching almost 50% of total needs and showing a trend of a significant increase in needs per year. As the second most numerous activity for public administration and defence, the need has decreased in the last year (from 17% to 15% of total needs). Individually, all other activities are below 10% of the total needs.

The dominant need for the VII-1 sublevel of education (up to 93%) in the observed reporting period is illustrative. The need for the VI level of education is 3-4.5% of the total needs, and for the VII-2 sub-level, 1-2%.

The number of registered job vacancies for the VII-1 sub-level of qualifications in the last year of the observed period was significantly higher than the number of unemployed (5,557 compared to 4,101), while in the VI level, the share of job vacancies is below 10% of the number of unemployed (216 compared to 2,908).

Challenges/recommendations:
› Effective implementation of continuous
› unemployment analysis after higher education and monitoring job openings can connect the needs and supply of jobs and quickly provide positive effects on employment after graduation, resulting in a well-harmonized educational policy with a long-term employment policy.

4.4. Analysis of the Impact of the Previous Strategic Document

Strategy for the Development of Higher Education in Montenegro 2016-2020[63] had the following objectives:

1. Improving the quality of higher education and creating competitive staff.
2. Aligning education with the needs of the labour market.
3. Improvement of scientific research and increased level of participation in international projects.
4. Internationalization of Higher Education.
5. Lifelong learning.
6. Creating a sustainable financing model.

4.4.1. Summary of the Achieved Results

A detailed analysis of the results achieved in implementing the set goals is given in the Final Report on the Implementation of the Strategy for the Development of Higher Education 2016-2020, adopted by the Government of Montenegro in December 2019.[64] It was concluded that the planned activities were mostly implemented since 85.7% of the planned obligations were fully implemented, 10.7% were partially completed, and 3.6% were not completed.

The implementation of strategic commitments began with the adoption of the Law on Higher Education in 2017, which defined *the 3+2+3 model of study*, except for study programs in the field of regulated professions. Also, compulsory practical classes have been introduced as an integral part of the study programs, with a minimum volume of 25%. The obligation to implement European standards and guidelines for quality assurance and for establishing the Agency for Control and Quality Assurance of Higher Education has been defined. The Agency was established by a Government Decision in 2017 and began operating in 2018.

To comprehensively review the situation and real assessment of the quality of higher education in Montenegro, through the HERIC project "Higher Education and Research for Innovation and Competitiveness", for the first time in 2013/2014, an external evaluation of higher education institutions was conducted by a team of international experts hired by the independent agency for institutional evaluation of higher education European University Association (EUA) "Institutional Education Programme ".– IEP". In accordance with the methodology of the IEP evaluation, the re-evaluation of the institutions of the so-called follow-up evaluation was carried out in 2017/2018. This evaluation included six higher education institutions (University of Montenegro, University of Donja Gorica, Mediterranean University, Faculty of Administrative and European Studies – Podgorica, Faculty of Business Management – Bar and Faculty of Transport, Communications and Logistics – Budva), and the initial evaluation was conducted at three higher education institutions (Adriatic University – Bar, Faculty of International

63 Strategy for the Development of Higher Education in Montenegro (2016-2020), Podgorica, July 2016.
64 Final Report on the Implementation of the Strategy for the Development of Higher Education in Montenegro 2016-2020.

Management in Tourism and Hotel Management – Miločer and Faculty of Montenegrin Language and Literature – Cetinje) that were not included in the 2013/2014 evaluation. The results of the IEP evaluation have been prepared as a set of recommendations for higher education institutions and competent state authorities.[65] Their significance for further commitments has already been emphasised.

It is also important to note the importance of higher education grades obtained by establishing a Career Tracking System (Tracer Study) as part of the HERIC project.[66] A survey of students who graduated in 2009 and 2013 from higher education institutions in Montenegro was conducted to obtain feedback on the success of graduates, their careers, satisfaction with studies and other areas important for the work of institutions and the creation of educational policies. The research showed that 3 out of 4 graduate students completed their undergraduate studies within the deadline stipulated by the rules of study and that two-thirds of graduates continued their education by enrolling in specialist, master's or doctoral studies. Of the total number of students surveyed, 82% were employed after graduating in 2009 and 66% after graduating in 2013. Students are moderately satisfied with the organisation of classes in the study programs they have completed (average grades are from 2.9 to 3.9, on a scale from 1 to 5), while the grade of satisfaction with the study program is 6.8 (2009) and 6.6 (2013) on a scale from 1 to 10.

The plan to continuously implement this study every year for two generations of university graduates has not been realised in the past ten years. The results obtained by regularly monitoring the careers of higher education students would be of great importance for adequate planning and development of higher education.

Consideration should be given to the possibility, in terms of staff, technical, and institutional capacity, of conducting a Tracer Study regularly every year or every other year, covering two generations of students.

Improving scientific research with increased active researchers began with awarding national excellence scholarships (for master's, doctoral and postdoctoral studies) to students studying at renowned universities abroad. This activity was also implemented through the HERIC project in 2015. Thus, from the funds of the HERIC project, 49 candidates received a national scholarship for excellence in master's studies, seven candidates for doctoral studies and ten candidates for postdoctoral studies. Within the same project, grants were allocated to equip institutions through seven projects (three from the University of Montenegro, two from the University of Donja Gorica, one from the Mediterranean University and one from the Faculty of Montenegrin Language and Literature – Cetinje). At the same time, a significant number of grants were awarded for the improvement of scientific research activities themselves.

Since this activity is designed to be a long-term, permanent and sustainable support program (and was implemented only in 2015), the possibility of continuing the implementation of the Excellence Scholarship Program should be considered to motivate young, talented higher education students to continue their studies at renowned higher education institutions around the world and thus gain invaluable academic, professional, professional and multicultural experience, Upon returning to their home country or working in a foreign environment, they can use them for the economic and social development of their country.

Research development has also been recognised by increased participation in international research programs and improved access to EU funds. The most important program is the EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation "Horizon Europe", in which Montenegro has already achieved the level of participation during the entire duration of the previous Horizon 2020. The EUREKA programme also enables financing market-oriented R&D projects to strengthen European competitiveness by supporting entrepreneurship, research centres and universities. Regarding this program, Montenegro also participates in regional multilateral EUREKA initiatives (Danube Region, Western Balkans).

The Government of Montenegro and the University of Montenegro have established the Science and Technology Park (STP MNE Ltd..) to improve the country's innovative, scientific, and entrepreneurial capacities. The park was officially opened on June 10, 2024.

A significant number of activities, including those of students and academic staff, have been carried out to promote internationalization and mobility, *which have contributed to a greater number of projects, agreements, and* outgoing and incoming mobility.

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65 Dr Thomas Ekman Jørgensen, Evaluation of nine higher education institutions in Montenegro, System Analysis Report, September 2018, www.svo.gov.me.
66 https://www.heric.me/sadrzaj/analiticki-izvjestaj-podataka-prikupljenih-kroz-studiju-pracenja-diplomiranih-studenata.

Internationalisation is recognised as an important commitment in all higher education institutions. For institutional strengthening, as well as better positioning in international rankings, In December 2016, the University of Montenegro adopted the Internationalisation Strategy of the University of Montenegro (2016-2020), and later the University of Montenegro, the Mediterranean University and the University of Donja Gorica adopted the Internationalisation Strategy 2021–2026. This Strategy was developed within the IESP project "Strengthening Internationalization at Montenegrin Universities through Effective Strategic Planning" from November 2019 to November 2022 and was funded by the ERASMUS+ Fund. This strategy aims to intensify the internationalisation of higher education by developing infrastructure to strengthen international cooperation and mobility at the central level and the level of individual university units. At the same time, a functional system for coordinating the activities of the university and individual units will be established.

Systemic support for Erasmus Plus programmes in higher education (CBHE, Erasmus Credit Mobility, promotion of Erasmus Plus Master's programmes and EU policies and practices in the European Higher Education Area) is provided by the Erasmus Plus Office. Within the Capacity Building Programme in Higher Education (CBHE) framework, 50 projects have been approved so far, of which Montenegrin universities are coordinating or have coordinated 10 projects. In the call for 2015, 4 projects were approved; for 2019, 9 projects were approved; for 2020, 8 projects; for 2022, 16 projects; while for 2023, 6 projects were approved.

It is recommended that all higher education institutions continue to be strongly committed to strengthening international cooperation through the development of scientific research, development and structural projects, and student and teaching mobility programmes.

Erasmus International Credit Mobility (ICM) is a collaboration between higher education institutions from Montenegro and around 200 universities from Europe. The number of bilateral credit mobility agreements within the Erasmus programme constantly increases. According to the 2015 competition, 49 bilateral agreements were signed, 117 bilateral agreements were signed for 2019, 39 bilateral agreements were signed for 2021, 181 bilateral agreements were signed for 2022, and 185 were signed for 2023. Within the framework of these mobility programs, about 3,200 outgoing and incoming mobilities of students, teaching and administrative staff were realised.

To develop Erasmus Mundus Joint Master's Programmes (EMJMDs), higher education institutions from Montenegro have implemented two projects for the development of joint master's programmes: Central and Eastern European, Russian and Eurasian Studies (CEERES)[67] And International Master's Programme in South East European Studies (EUROSUD)[68] The programs are not yet accredited. For now, the University of Montenegro has one joint study program, and another is in preparation. There are also four courses in English.

The Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation advertises and administers many foreign government scholarship programs, bilateral scholarships, and exchange programs. Information on scholarships is published on the website of the Ministry and published in the Youth Handbook "Study on Mobility and Scholarship Programs for Students and Academic Staff". Based on bilateral programs and scholarship programs of foreign governments, about 100 scholarships are implemented annually for studying in the People's Republic of China, Italy, Hungary, Japan, the Russian Federation, France, Great Britain, Slovakia, Slovenia, Croatia, Greece, Turkey, etc.

Within the Central European Exchange Programme for University Studies (CEEPUS) framework, which is implemented based on a multilateral agreement on university exchange of Central European countries, the exchange quota of 165 months is generally achieved in a larger volume than envisaged (120%). Approximately 150 outbound and inbound mobility scholarships are awarded annually under this Programme. Exchange programs are also implemented within the IFMSA program, the Visegrad program, the Go Styria program, the Ugrad program, the DAAD program, the Maria Sklodowska Curie program, the Fulbright program, for which students apply independently or through the embassies of countries that offer scholarships.

Through annual competitions, the Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation co-finances master's and doctoral studies for Montenegrin students and co-finances travel costs for beneficiaries of scholarships from foreign governments and mobility programs. Through the National Scholarship Program for the Best Students, about 300 scholarships are awarded annually to students studying in Montenegro or abroad.

For successful internationalisation, the position of institutions in international rankings is particularly important. Times Higher Education (THE) has ranked the University of Montenegro in the category of the 1001+

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67 https://www.gla.ac.uk/postgraduate/erasmusmundus/ceeres/associatepartners/
68 https://www.southeuropeanstudies.eu/our-partners/associate-partners/

best universities in the world for 2020 (between 1001 and 1396 positions in the ranking), its first appearance among the world's best universities. The Times Higher Education Ranking represents a significant ranking of universities worldwide. The University of Montenegro also took a good position in the Webometrics ranking, especially in the category of the highest number of citations by scientists (1,694th position on the list).

Lifelong learning was assessed as a particularly important element for meeting the needs of the labour market and reducing unemployment. Good results in this area require the synergy of the Employment Service, adult education providers, career centres, higher education institutions, the Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation, the Ministry of Economic Development, the Human Resources Directorate, the Chamber of Economy, business associations and the economy. It is particularly important to develop new qualifications that meet the needs of the labour market. There are currently 133 licensed adult education providers.

It is necessary to clearly define the accreditation method of lifelong learning programmes, especially programmes with less than 5 ECTS credits, Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) and Blended Intensive Programs (BIPs). Micro programs enable students to acquire relevant skills in specific areas, increasing their competitiveness in the labour market and allowing individuals to continuously upgrade their skills and knowledge in accordance with market needs.

Higher education institutions have the opportunity to implement lifelong learning programmes in accordance with the Law on Higher Education, for which the Agency for Quality Control and Quality Assurance of Higher Education is competent. The area of lifelong learning for education levels V to VII needs to be better regulated.

Career guidance and counselling centres at all levels of education should play a special role in promoting lifelong learning. The Career Center of the University of Montenegro has established cooperation with several institutions and organisations (Employment Service, Chamber of Economy, Union of Employers, Bureau for Economic Cooperation, etc.) for activities to encourage access to the labour market and employers, development of entrepreneurship and personal development. Also, the Francophone Employment Office has been established at the University of Montenegro to contribute to the improvement of employability and professional integration of Montenegrin students, as well as the development of an entrepreneurial culture and the strengthening of professional competencies for the 21st century.

In response to the recognised need to improve career guidance and counselling, The Ministry is implementing the Erasmus Plus project Euroguidance/Europass/EQF, which works with its Euroguidance component to improve career guidance practice in education. Within this project, which has been implemented since 2018, useful manuals and studies have been prepared: Career guidance and counselling in vocational schools; The use of social media in career management; Conducting interviews with students; Europass Guide; Europass CV Guide; Europass Mobility Guide and Europass Language Passport; Guide to the Europass Certificate Supplement; Guide on the rights of pupils and students; Guide on the Recognition of Foreign Educational Documents, research and study "System of Career Guidance and Counseling in Montenegro"; Strategy for the promotion of Europass documents, questionnaires for different age groups of learners in printed and electronic versions. Also, a study on student employment models has been prepared, a platform for student employment[69] has been developed, and a legal solution has been prepared in the field of student employment to improve student standards. Within the Ministry, Erasmus Plus projects Agenda for Adult Education, EPALE, E-twinning, Eurydice, and Youth Wiki have also been implemented, which aim to improve policies and practices in the education of pupils, students, and adults.

To improve career counselling, connecting all relevant institutions better is recommended so that each individual realises his full potential in the educational and career path. Institutions that should actively cooperate and develop the system of career guidance and counselling are the Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation, the Institute for Education, the Center for Vocational Education, educational institutions, higher education institutions, the Ministry of Economic Development, the Employment Service, the Chamber of Economy and the Union of Employers.

Funding for higher education has improved significantly. For the first time, undergraduate studies at public institutions are free of charge from the academic year 2017/2018. According to the new model of study, over 3,500 students are enrolled in the first year of undergraduate studies at the University of Montenegro and the Faculty of Montenegrin Language without paying tuition fees for all study programs. Master's studies, according to the reformed model of study, are free of charge from the academic year 2020/2021.

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69 www.studentskiposao.edu.me

Shortcomings in the implementation of the previous Strategy for the Development of Higher Education 2016-2020 clearly indicate the poor implementation of practical teaching at higher education institutions, which is why this strategic document envisages the improvement of this segment. Also, this Strategy will better define learning outcomes for all study programs, which will not be generic but defined in such a way that they are clear and understandable for all stakeholders, both for students and future students, as well as employers, the civil sector, parents and other social partners. It is planned to improve the quality assurance system in higher education through additional external evaluations of both the Agency for Quality Control and Assurance and higher education institutions. The low number of accredited study programs leading to a joint or dual degree and study programs in English indicates that this strategic document should direct additional efforts to improve these areas.

4.5. Challenges and Recommendations for Future Development

The report highlights certain *challenges and recommendations for future development* in the field of higher education:

- ◻ Institutional governance should allow for formulating and implementing clear strategies at the institutional level. This would balance centralised and decentralised management appropriately, with all parts of the institution accountable for their work and results;
- ◻ Improvement of practical training to provide all students with adequate training and preparation for the labour market;
- ◻ Adequate definition and adoption of criteria and conditions for enrollment in higher education institutions;
- ◻ Clear definition of learning outcomes for all study programmes, which are continuously reviewed and evaluated;
- ◻ Continuous improvement of the quality of higher education, which results in well-evaluated reports after periodic evaluations;
- ◻ Compliance of the Agency for Control and Quality Assurance of Higher Education with ESG and its inclusion in the EQAR through an appropriate control process;
- ◻ Promotion of lifelong learning, with monitoring of the quality of the organisation of teaching, including the provision of conditions for the recognition of non-formal and informal education;
- ◻ Continuous improvement of student standards; and
- ◻ Further affirmation of internationalisation and harmonisation with the EU recommendations and guidelines adopted in implementing the Bologna Declaration.

The following chapters will present these challenges, reviews, analyses, and recommendations of the strategy and report in more detail to help plan for future objectives.

4.5.1. SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
Compliance with European documents and policies	Insufficient involvement of practical training in the educational process	Access to international funds	Lack of funding to invest more in higher education and research
International Recognition of Qualifications Framework Reference Levels	Insufficient alignment of learning outcomes with the requirements of the labour market and incompatibility of the educational model with employment policy in the public sector and economy (240 ECTS as a mandatory requirement)	Further improvement of the legal and institutional framework in accordance with EU regulations	Implementation of inadequate governance models in higher education institutions

The existence of a large number of study programs	Insufficient budget for internationalisation	ACQAHE membership in full membership in ENQA	Emergencies that require a new concept of learning (pandemic, cyber threats..)
Staff capacities	Insufficient number of study programs that allow for the acquisition of a double or joint degree	Improving services for students by developing career centres	The emergence of new professions in the labour market
Free Tuition Options	Insufficient number of study programs in English	Promoting bilateral, multilateral and university cooperation programs	Slow harmonisation of the education system with current trends in the labour market
The existence of competent bodies for quality control and assurance	Insufficient involvement of the research component	Improving the environment and conditions for the stay and work of foreign researchers at our higher education institutions	The Rise of Cybercrime
Flexible application of recommendations, standards and guidelines in accordance with national policy	Inadequate enrollment policy	Digitalisation of the educational process and the application of modern information and communication technologies	Fair Procedures for the Recognition of Foreign Diplomas
The existence of an integrated management system	Lack of equipment for advanced research	Harmonisation of the educational model with the most successful EU models	Aligning with rapid scientific and technological developments without overlooking the use of artificial intelligence
Increased number of students with disabilities enrolling and graduating from faculties	Insufficient accessibility of higher education institutions and materials for students with disabilities	High percentage of high school graduates with disabilities compared to those with high school graduation	Dropping out of studies for students with disabilities due to inadequate conditions for them in higher education institutions

4.6. Presentation of the connection between causes and problems with strategic and operational objectives

Key problem 1: Rapidly changing labour market, lack of communication between educational institutions and the economy, outdated curricula that do not meet the needs of employers, and insufficient spatial capacities in higher education	Strategic objective 1: Improving the harmonisation of study programs with the needs of the labour market, adequate recognition of higher education qualifications and improving infrastructure
Cause 1: Programs that focus on theoretical knowledge instead of practical skills, inadequate measurement and monitoring of learning outcomes	Operational objective 1: Reform of bachelor's and master's study programmes with a special focus on learning outcomes
Cause 2: Insufficiently clear and standardised qualifications structure, lack of information and understanding between employers and the economy, different standards and criteria between institutions	Operational objective 2: Improving student standards and employability of higher education students
Cause 3: Discontinuity between high school and university curricula, poor academic preparation of high school graduates, lack of programs to facilitate the transition	Operational objective 3: Adequate connectivity and progression between secondary and higher education
Cause 4: Lack of funding.	Operational Objective 4: Sustainable and adequate financing of public institutions and student dormitories
Cause 5: Insufficient opportunities for the acquisition of practical skills, inadequate access to student internships	Operational objective 5: Application of practical training
Cause 6: Lack of flexible programs for adults, poor promotion of lifelong learning, financial barriers for older people	Operational objective 6: Increasing the share of people aged 25-64 enrolled in lifelong learning in higher education
Cause 7: Outdated infrastructure in higher education and insufficient space for students in student dormitories	Operational Objective 7: Strengthening infrastructure in the field of higher education
Key Problem 2: Insufficient Standardization and Compliance with European Frameworks	Strategic Objective 2: Improvement of the higher education system in line with the EHEA and ERA
Cause 8: Inadequate governance models and poor compliance with European practices	Operational objective 8: Improved organisation of work and management in higher education institutions in line with European practice
Cause 9: Lack of ethical education and poor application of sanctions for integrity violations.	Operational objective 9: Implementation of the principle of academic integrity among the academic community and students
Cause 10: Insufficient infrastructure adapted to students with disabilities and poor implementation of inclusive policies	Operational Objective 10: Achieving equity, accessibility, equity of inclusive and quality higher education for students with disabilities
Key Problem 3: Insufficient capacity to exploit strategic international partnerships	Strategic Objective 3: Strengthening the role of higher education institutions at the international level
Cause 11: Insufficient number of joint study programs at all levels, as well as insufficiently developed programs in English	Operational objective 11: Increasing the number of joint study programmes and projects, study programmes in English and improving procedures for academic mobility

5 STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES, OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVES AND ACCOMPANYING ACTIVITIES

VISION:

To provide a recognisable, high-quality, and dynamic education system that fully aligns with the labour market's needs, promotes research and innovation, guarantees academic freedom and autonomy, and provides access and support to all students for professional and personal development.

MISSION:

To improve the development of the individual, society and the state through a dynamic, high-quality and efficient education system. Higher education will be recognisable and referenced in Montenegro and the EHEA thanks to research-based educational content, compliance with the needs of the labour market, competitive staff, quality internal quality assurance system, modern learning outcomes, access to education for all, institutional autonomy and academic freedom, quality standards and academic ethics, international cooperation and mobility, and an integrated lifelong learning policy that enables continuous training and career counselling.

The education system is an important development process for the individual, society, and the state. The scope, quality, and effects of the development and use of other systems and resources require that education be constantly developed and improved to fulfil its role in a timely, high-quality, and efficient manner. Higher education should be recognised and referential in Montenegro and the EHEA as part of the overall education system.

Based on the above, the Strategy for Higher Education Development of Montenegro 2024-2027 sets out three strategic and 11 related operational objectives, as presented in the table below.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1[70] IMPROVING THE HARMONISATION OF STUDY PROGRAMS WITH THE NEEDS OF THE LABOR MARKET, ADEQUATE RECOGNITION OF QUALIFICATIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND IMPROVEMENT OF INFRASTRUCTURE			
Operational objectives	Activities	Competence	Indicators and sources of verification
OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVE 1 REFORM OF BACHELOR'S AND MASTER'S DEGREE STUDY PROGRAMMES WITH A SPECIAL FOCUS ON LEARNING OUTCOMES[71]	1.1 Analysis of the study model 1.2 Analysis and redefinition of learning outcomes 1.3 Preparation of standards and guidelines for the accreditation of study programmes to improve teaching and learning methods 1.4 Preparation of new curricula to innovate study programmes 1.5 Accreditation/re-accreditation of study programmes and development of qualifications in accordance with innovative curricula	MESI, Higher Education Institutions, Agency for Control and Quality Assurance	Indicator: improved study model and study programs; source of verification: analysis of the adequate study model and reports on study programs for which the analysis has been completed based on the survey of students and teachers on the implementation of the educational process and teaching methods, as well as evaluations and suggestions obtained by surveying employers. Success indicator: clearer perception of study programs; Source of verification: redefined and refined learning outcomes. Success Indicator: Improved Teaching and Learning Methods; Source of verification: Adopted standards. Success indicator: Compliance of study programs with the modern labour market; Source of verification: number of innovated study programmes. Success indicator: New study programs for acquiring a new qualification; Source of verification: an accredited study program for which a new qualification has been developed.
OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVE 2 IMPROVING STUDENT STANDARDS AND EMPLOYABILITY OF HIGHER EDUCATION STUDENTS	2.1. Increase in funds allocated for the award of student scholarships and loans 2.2. Working meetings with employers on the need for Adaptation of the Rulebook on Internal Organization and Systematization of Jobs for the Employment of Bachelor and Master Level Higher Education Students. 2.3. Amendments to the Acts on Internal Organization and Job Systematization	MESI, institutions of higher education, Employment Agency, The Chamber of Economy, Employers (public and private sectors)	Success indicator: Better information for employers about the need to amend acts; source of verification: reports and recommendations from meetings. Success indicator: adapted regulations on internal organisation and systematisation of workplaces; Source of verification: the number of institutions, i.e. companies that have fully adapted the rulebook on the internal organisation and systematisation of jobs for the employment of higher education students of the bachelor's and master's level.

OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVE 3 ADEQUATE CONNECTION AND PROGRESSION BETWEEN SECONDARY AND HIGHER EDUCATION	3.1. Improvement of enrolment rules with clearly defined criteria 3.2. Improvement of services for counselling and support in planning further education and career in secondary and higher education (with special emphasis on information on the patency for enrolment in faculties)	MESI, Institutions of Higher Education	Success indicator: better enrollment policy; Source of verification: Improved rules on enrollment in undergraduate, master and doctoral studies with criteria that ensure competitiveness based on achieved success and completed secondary/higher education, with the affirmation of specifics important for the study program. Success indicator: better information of students in terms of study and career development; Source of verification: improved work of career centres at all higher education institutions and a greater role of career counsellors in secondary schools.
OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVE 4 SUSTAINABLE AND ADEQUATE FUNDING FOR PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS AND STUDENT DORMITORIES	4.1. Preparation of the Analysis of the Number and Structure of Students Enrolled in Undergraduate and Master's Studies 4.2 Preparation of the Analysis of Needs for Improvement of Conditions in Student Dormitories 4.3. Determining the cost of the student	MESI, Institutions of Higher Education	Success indicator: Enrollment policy aligned with the labour market; Source of verification: Report on the number and structure of enrolled students each year. Success indicator: the need to improve the conditions; Source of verification: Report on the need to improve conditions in student dormitories. Success indicator: funding based on the actual cost of the student; Source of verification: the determined cost of the student for each study program.
OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVE 5 APPLICATION OF PRACTICAL TRAINING	5.1 Ensuring the implementation of practical classes during the study	Institutions of Higher Education, ACQAHE, MESI	Success indicator: improved practical knowledge of students; Source of verification: adopted standards and guidelines for the accreditation of study programs with a plan of practical classes as an integral part of the curriculum. On subjects, groups of subjects, modules and areas, the contents should be singled out - thematic units that will be implemented through practical classes and define the outcomes that will be achieved (thematic units with tasks should be supplemented with a description of the working environment in which they can be completed with the required engagement time); implementation of practical classes in line with the standard and guidelines; An increased number of contracts with employers for the implementation of practical training.

OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVE 5 APPLICATION OF PRACTICAL TRAINING	5.1 Ensuring the implementation of practical classes during the study	Institutions of Higher Education, ACQAHE, MESI	Success indicator: improved practical knowledge of students; Source of verification: adopted standards and guidelines for the accreditation of study programs with a plan of practical classes as an integral part of the curriculum. On subjects, groups of subjects, modules and areas, the contents should be singled out - thematic units that will be implemented through practical classes and define the outcomes that will be achieved (thematic units with tasks should be supplemented with a description of the working environment in which they can be completed with the required engagement time); implementation of practical classes in line with the standard and guidelines; An increased number of contracts with employers for the implementation of practical training.
OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVE 6 INCREASING THE SHARE OF PEOPLE AGED 25 TO 64 ENROLLED IN LIFELONG LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION	6.1. Continuous monitoring and quality control of the LLL programme 6.2. Development of support services for continuous training of interested individuals and groups	Higher education institutions, ACQAHE, MESI, CVE	Success indicator: better quality of lifelong learning programmes; Source of verification: Register of Accredited and Licensed Providers of Adult Education in Higher Education and Lifelong Learning Programmes in Higher Education and Analysis of the Required Adult Education Programmes in Higher Education in accordance with the Needs of the Labour Market. Success indicator: better training of persons in the age group from 25 to 64 for the necessary qualifications; Source of verification: number of crawlers, number of new CŽU programs in higher education
OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVE 7 STRENGTHENING INFRASTRUCTURE IN THE FIELD OF HIGHER EDUCATION		MESI, Administration for Capital Projects	Success indicator: Number of adapted and reconstructed spaces at higher education institutions. Indicator of success: Increase in accommodation capacity for students.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2 IMPROVEMENT OF THE HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE STANDARDS OF EHEA AND ERA			
Operational objectives	Activities	Competence	Indicators and sources of verification
OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVE 8 IMPROVED ORGANIZATION OF WORK AND MANAGEMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN LINE WITH EUROPEAN PRACTICE	8.1. Evaluation of the Agency by ENQA based on the self-evaluation report and the visit of ENQA experts 8.2. Teaching, research, innovative work and personal development at higher education institutions in accordance with European recommendations and the innovative acts of ACQAHE 8.3. Establishment of the Rectors' Conference as a form of agreement between higher education institutions, exchange of good practices and improvement of the results of the overall higher education system 8.4. Critical analysis of the existing higher education system 8.5. Analysis of Doctoral Students' Satisfaction with the System of Study and Research in Doctoral Studies	ENQA, ACQAHE, MESI, Higher Education Institutions, Chamber of Economy, Employment Agency	Success indicator: improved quality assurance system in higher education; Source of verification: an audit was conducted by ENQA with a report on the state and directions for improving the quality assurance system of higher education. (In 2021, the document was published: Compliance of the Quality Assurance System of Montenegro with European standards – audit by the RCC, and in March 2024, the Internal Analysis of the Compliance of the Quality Assurance System based on ESG was published); Success indicator: teaching, research, and personal development are carried out in line with modern European practice; source of verification: innovative acts have been adopted that will ensure transparency in work and obligations related to teaching, research, and training. Success indicator: Better cooperation between all higher education institutions to improve higher education; source of verification: The Rectors' Conference was formed. Success indicator: Envisaged measures for improvement in line with the Critical Analysis; Source of verification: Analysis of the current situation in higher education with measures for improvement as a basis for further strategic planning. Success indicator: Envisaged improvement measures in compliance with the Analysis; Analysis among doctoral students and their satisfaction with the study system conducted as an initial analysis that will statistically indicate the situation in this field.

OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVE 9 **IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PRINCIPLES OF ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AMONG THE ACADEMIC COMMUNITY AND STUDENTS**	9.1. Preparation of adequate materials for the prevention of student fraud 9.2. Adoption of a document for the prevention of non-academic behaviour in line with good European practice, laws and acts of higher education institutions 9.3. Training of members of the academic community, developing awareness of screening and prevention procedures 9.4. Amendment to the Academic Integrity Act	Ethics Committees of Higher Education Institutions, The Ethics Committee, MESI, Institutions of Higher Education	Success indicator: disabled/reduced student fraud; Source of verification: adopted/revised codes of ethics Success indicator: teaching, individual work, knowledge tests and assessments are carried out in an environment that prevents and sanctions the use of various types of fraud—the source of verification: adopted documents for prevention. Success indicator: better informing the academic community about fraud verification and prevention procedures; Source of verification: prepared brochures, lectures and seminars to create an adequate climate for prevention and mandatory online courses for academic integrity. Success indicator: a better legal solution to academic integrity issues. Source of verification: Amendments to the Law on Academic Integrity.
OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVE 10 **ACHIEVING EQUALITY, ACCESSIBILITY, EQUITY OF INCLUSIVE AND QUALITY HIGHER EDUCATION FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**	10.1 Implementation of the Transition Procedure and Training for Inclusive Competencies of Teaching and Professional Staff 10.2 Use of accessible format, didactic and communication means 10.3 Architectural adaptation of the accessibility of higher education institutions 10.4 Organizing Academic Support Services	Institutions of Higher Education, ACQAHE, MESI, Department of Education	Success indicator: improved inclusive competencies of teaching and professional staff; Sources of verification: number of adapted higher education institutions, number and type of accessible formats, number of training, number of enrolled students, number of teaching assistants in higher education.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2			
IMPROVEMENT OF THE HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE STANDARDS OF EHEA AND ERA			
Operational objectives	**Activities**	**Competence**	**Indicators and sources of verification**
OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVE 11. **INCREASING THE NUMBER OF JOINT STUDY PROGRAMMES AND PROJECTS, STUDY PROGRAMMES IN ENGLISH AND IMPROVING PROCEDURES FOR ACADEMIC MOBILITY**	11.1 Preparation of new programmes for joint studies at all levels 11. 2 Further progress in international cooperation in the field of higher education through joint research, development and structural projects 11. 3 Better conditions for physical and virtual exchanges of students and teaching staff 11.4. Increased number of study programmes in English and improved literature in English	Institutions of higher education, MESI	Success indicator: a higher number of students enrolled in joint study programs; Source of verification: A new joint study program has been accredited at all higher education institutions. Success indicator: improved international cooperation through joint project work; source of verification: increased number of joint research, development, and structural projects. Success indicator: facilitated procedures for mobility and recognition of acquired loans; Source of verification: preparation of innovative regulations at higher education institutions. Success indicator: increased number of students enrolled in study programs in English, availability of modern literature in English and improved language competencies; Source of verification: 6 new programs in English accredited, library collection of professional literature in English improved by 20%.

6 ACTION PLAN FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGY FOR HIGHER EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT OF MONTENEGRO 2024-2027, FOR THE PERIOD 2024-2025

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1	*IMPROVING THE HARMONIZATION OF STUDY PROGRAMS WITH THE NEEDS OF THE LABOR MARKET, ADEQUATE RECOGNITION OF HIGHER EDUCATION QUALIFICATIONS AND IMPROVING INFRASTRUCTURE*		
OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVE 1	*REFORM OF BACHELOR'S AND MASTER'S DEGREE STUDY PROGRAMMES WITH A SPECIAL FOCUS ON LEARNING OUTCOMES*		
Performance indicator	**Baseline Value 2022**	**Target value halfway through the implementation of the strategic document**	**Target value at the end of the implementation of the strategic document**
Better employers' perception of higher education qualifications	/	Higher Education Perception Index 50	Higher Education Perception Index 70
Number of unemployed higher education students	46069	A decrease of 3% compared to 2022.	A decrease of 5% compared to 2022.

Activities that affect the achievement of Operational Objective 1	Result indicator	Competent institutions	Start date	Planned Completion Date	Funds planned for the implementation of activities	Source of funding
1.1 Analysis and innovation of study programs	Analysis carried out. Numerous new and new study programs	Institutions of higher education, MESI, ACQAHE	IV quarter 2024.	IV quarter 2025	30.000,00 €	Budget 30.000,00 (2025)
1.2 (Re)defining learning outcomes	(Re)defined learning outcomes of all qualifications at UCG	UCG, MPNI	III quarter 2024.	IV quarter 2025	n/a €	Donor funds EU project in the approval phase

OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVE 2	IMPROVING STUDENT STANDARDS AND EMPLOYABILITY OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS		
Performance indicator	Baseline Value 2023	Target value halfway through the implementation of the strategic document 2026	Target value at the end of the implementation of the strategic document 2027
Increase in funds allocated for student scholarships and loans	5.200.000,00 €	30%	50%
Number of Bachelor Qualification Places Advertised	296	An increase of 15% compared to 2023.	An increase of 20% compared to 2023.

Activities that affect the achievement of Operational Objective 2	Result indicator	Competent institutions	Start date	Planned Completion Date	Funds planned for the implementation of activities	Source of funding
2.1 Initiative for employers to adapt the regulations on internal organisation and systematisation for the employment of bachelor's and master's qualifications	The public, i.e. employers, is informed about the necessity of adapting their acts on internal organisation and systematisation	MESI HRA Employment Agency Chamber of Economy	I quarter 2025	IV quarter 2025	No funds required	
2.2 Amendment of Acts on Internal Organization and Systematization of Jobs	Adapted acts on systematisation by institutions, i.e. companies	MESI HRA Employment Agency Chamber of Economy	I quarter 2025	IV quarter 2027.	No funds required	
2.3 Support for co-financing tuition fees for master's and doctoral studies in the country and abroad	Number of Supported Master's and doctoral students. Student	MESI	III QUARTER 2024	III QUARTER 2024	140.000,00 €	Budget 70.000,00 € (2024) 70.000,00 € (2025)
2.4 Awarding of student scholarships and loans	Number of credits awarded	MESI	III QUARTER 2024	IV quarter 2025	5.589.000,00 €	Budget 5.589.000,00 € (2024) n/a (2025)
2.5 Implementation of the Vocational Training Program for Persons with Acquired Higher Education	Implemented program	MESI	I quarter 2024	IV quarter 2025	12.126.216,08 €	Budget 12.126.216,08 € (2024) n/a (2025)

OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVE 3	ADEQUATE CONNECTION AND PROGRESSION BETWEEN SECONDARY AND HIGHER EDUCATION		
Performance indicator	Baseline Value 2023	Target value halfway through the implementation of the strategic document	Target value at the end of the implementation of the strategic document
Number of high school and university students who received professional career support	49838	10% of the total number of high school and university students who received professional career support	30% of the total number of high school and university students who received professional career support

Activities that affect the achievement of Operational Objective 3	Result indicator	Competent institutions	Start date	Planned Completion Date	Funds planned for the implementation of activities	Source of funding
3.1 Development of the Rulebook on Enrolment for All Levels of Higher Education	Rules for Enrollment in Bachelor's/ Master's/PhD Studies Adopted	MESI, Institutions of Higher Education	II quarter 2025	IV quarter 2025	No funds required	
3.2 Creating preconditions for the improvement of services for counselling and support to career education planning in the field of secondary and higher education	Training plan for career counsellors in career centres of higher education institutions created and school career teams.	MESI, Institutions of higher education, secondary and primary schools	I quarter of 2025	IV quarter 2025	100.000,00 €	Budget 100.000,00 € (2025)

OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVE 4	SUSTAINABLE AND ADEQUATE FINANCING OF PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS AND STUDENT DORMITORIES		
Performance indicator	Baseline Value 2024.	Target value halfway through the implementation of the strategic document	Target value at the end of the implementation of the strategic document
Enrollment Plan established in accordance with national development directions, labour market analyses and assessment of the quality of the study program	Work on improving the Enrolment Plan in accordance with national development directions, labour market analyses and assessment of the quality of the study programme.	Enrollment Plan developed in accordance with national development directions, labor market analyses and assessment of the quality of the study program.	Continuity of enrollment in accordance with the defined plan

Activities that affect the achievement of Operational Objective 4	Result indicator	Competent institutions	Start date	Planned Completion Date	Funds planned for the implementation of activities	Source of funding
4.1 Analysis of enrolled students in undergraduate and master's studies	Analysis carried out	MESI, Institutions of Higher Education	IV quarter 2024.	I quarter 2025	No funds required	
4.2 Analysis of the need to improve conditions in student dormitories	Analysis carried out	MESI Institutions of Higher Education Student Dormitories	IV quarter 2024.	III quarter 2025	No funds required	
4.3 Development of a financing model for the University of Montenegro	New financing agreements based on the needs of the labour market, the quality of the study program, the determined cost of students and the established national development priorities	MESI, Institutions of Higher Education	I quarter 2025	IV quarter 2025	No funds required	Budget 70.000,00 € (2024) 70.000,00 € (2025)
4.4 Support to the work of the University of Montenegro	Safe working conditions	MESI	I quarter 2024	IV quarter 2025	71.600.000,00	Budget 35.800.000,00 (2024) 35.800.000,00 (2025)
4.5 Support to the Faculty of Montenegrin Language and Literature	Safe working conditions	MESI	I quarter 2024	IV quarter 2025	1.401.542,84	Budget 700.771,92 (2024) 700.771,92 (2025)
4.6 Support for the work of the Police Academy	Safe working conditions	MESI	I quarter 2024	IV quarter 2025	4.239.186,96	Budget 2.119.593,48 (2024) 2.119.593,48 (2025)

OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVE 5	APPLICATION OF PRACTICAL CLASSES		
Performance indicator	Baseline Value 2024.	Target value halfway through the implementation of the strategic document	Target value at the end of the implementation of the strategic document
Employers' level of satisfaction with the practical skills of high school students	Employer rates college students as "relatively good"	Employer rates university students as "good"	The employer rates higher education students as "very good"

Activities that affect the achievement of Operational Objective 5	Result indicator	Competent institutions	Start date	Planned Completion Date	Funds planned for the implementation of activities	Source of funding
5.1 Conducting practical classes by study years as part of the teaching process	Practical classes in accordance with standards and guidelines with a clearly defined fund of training hours	Institutions of higher education, Employers	IV quarter 2024.	IV quarter 2027.	No funds required	

OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVE 6	INCREASE IN THE PROPORTION OF PEOPLE AGED 25 TO 64 ENROLLED IN LIFELONG LEARNING		
Performance indicator	Baseline Value 2024.	Target value halfway through the implementation of the strategic document	Target value at the end of the implementation of the strategic document
Improving the promotion of lifelong learning in a given age group	Defining a Plan for the Promotion of Lifelong Learning	Organising an info day to promote lifelong learning	3 days to promote lifelong learning.

Activities that affect the achievement of Operational Objective 6	Result indicator	Competent institutions	Start date	Planned Completion Date	Funds planned for the implementation of activities	Source of funding
6.1 Quality control of the LLL program and continuous training of interested individuals and groups	The number of accredited new programs of LLL and the increased number of participants	MESI, institutions of higher education, EMPLOYMENT AGENCY, ACQAHE	IV quarter 2024	IV quarter 2025	n/a	Budget of the UVO n/a

OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVE 7	STRENGTHENING INFRASTRUCTURE IN THE FIELD OF HIGHER EDUCATION		
Performance indicator	Baseline Value 2024.	Target value halfway through the implementation of the strategic document	Target value at the end of the implementation of the strategic document
Number of Renovated and Reconstructed Spaces in Higher Education Institutions	0	10	16
Increase in accommodation capacities for students	2422	2600	2800

Activities that affect the achievement of Operational Objective 7	Result indicator	Competent institutions	Start date	Planned Completion Date	Funds planned for the implementation of activities	Source of funding
7.1 Reconstruction of the Technical Faculties of the University of Montenegro, Podgorica	Completed reconstruction work	Administration for Capital Projects, MESI, UCG	I quarter 2024	I quarter 2025	445.000,00 €	Budget (Capital Budget) 445.000,00 € (2024) 10.000.000,00 € (2025)
7.2 Extension of the Faculty of Architecture in Podgorica	Completed works on the extension	Administration for Capital Projects, MESI, UCG	I quarter 2024	I quarter 2025	890.000,00 €	Budget (Capital Budget) 890.000,00 (2024)
7.3 Construction of the Faculty of Philology in Nikšić	The main project has been revised.	Administration for Capital Projects, MESI, UCG	II QUARTER 2024	IV quarter 2025	8.900,00 €	Budget (Capital Budget) 8.900,00 (2024)
7.4 Arrangement of the Library of the Faculty of Law in Podgorica	Completed works on the arrangement of the Library	Administration for Capital Projects, MESI, UCG	III QUARTER 2024	II QUARTER 2025	267.000,00	Budget (Capital Budget) 267.000,00 (2024)
7.5 Construction of the Gymnasium of the Faculty of Sport and Physical Education in Nikšić	Completed works on the construction of the gymnasium	Administration for Capital Projects, MESI, UCG	III quarter 2024	IV quarter 2025	8.900,00 €	Budget (Capital Budget) 8.900,00 € (2024) 2.400.000,00 € (2025)
7.6 Reconstruction of the Student Dormitory "Plavi dvor", Podgorica	Completed reconstruction work	MESI, Public Institution Dormitory and MK Group	III quarter 2024	IV quarter 2024	220.000,00 €	Public Institution Dormitory of Pupils and Students 120.000,00 € MESI – Budget 50.000,00 € Private Sector (MK Group) 50.000,00 €
7.7 Realization of the tender for the purchase of a facility for the accommodation of students in the territory of the Capital City	Tender has been announced Object put into operation	MESI	III quarter 2024	I quarter 2025	6.600.000,00 €	Current Budget Reserve 3.600.000,00 € (2024) 3.000.000,00 € (2025)
7.8 Reconstruction of the First and Second Phase of the Student Dormitory	Completed reconstruction work	MESI	II quarter 2025	IV quarter 2025	1.300.000,00 €	Loan arrangement with the EBRD (expected to be signed in September 2024)
7.9 Construction of a new Student Dormitory in Podgorica	Conceptual design made Feasibility study prepared The main project has been developed	ACP, MESI, UCG	I quarter 2025	IV quarter 2025	280.000,00 €	Capital Budget (2025)
7.10 Extension of the Faculty of Maritime Studies in Kotor	Completed works on the extension of the building	ACP, MESI, UCG	IV quarter 2024	IV quarter 2025	4.450,89 €	Capital Budget 4.450,89 € (2024) 480.000,00 € (2025
7.11 Adaptation of the ground floor of the Faculty of Economics	Completed adaptation work	ACP, MESI, UCG	II quarter 2025	IV quarter 2025	1.000.000,00 €	Capital Budget 1.000.000,00 € (2025)
7.12 Reconstruction of the laboratory of the Faculty of Electrical Engineering	Completed reconstruction work	ACP, MESI, UCG	II quarter 2025	IV quarter 2025	4.500.000,00 €	€1,500,000.00 (Capital budget) (2025) €3,000,000.00 United Arab Emirates donation (2025)
7.13 Construction of a new student dormitory in Nikšić	Completed Conceptual Design	ACP, MESI	III quarter 2025	IV quarter 2025	40.000,00 €	Capital Budget 40.000,00 (2025)
7.14 Construction of a new student dormitory in Cetinje – Zero emission	The main project has been completed.	ACP, MESI, Ministry of Energy	IV quarter 2024	IV quarter 2025	220.000,00 €	KFW project – Improving energy efficiency in public buildings in Montenegro €220,000.00 (2025)
7.15 Faculty of Dramatic Arts and Music Academy	Conceptual design done	ACP, MESI	I quarter 2025	IV quarter 2025	50.000,00 €	Capital Budget 50.000,00 € (2025)

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2	IMPROVEMENT OF THE HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM IN LINE WITH THE STANDARDS OF EHEA AND ERA	
OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVE 8	IMPROVED ORGANIZATION OF WORK AND MANAGEMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN ACCORDANCE WITH EUROPEAN PRACTICE	
Performance indicator	Baseline Value 2022	Target value halfway through the implementation of the strategic document (2026)	Target value at the end of the implementation of the strategic document (2026)
Successful evaluation of the quality assurance system of higher education in Montenegro by ENQA	0	A team of evaluators has been formed to prepare a report on the quality assurance system in higher education in Montenegro by ENQA; ENQA has begun preparing the report on the quality assurance system in higher education in Montenegro.	Positive report on the quality assurance system in higher education in Montenegro by ENQA

Activities that affect the achievement of Operational Objective 8	Result indicator	Competent institutions	Start date	Planned Completion Date	Funds planned for the implementation of activities	Source of funding
8.1. Evaluation of the ACQAHE Agency by ENQA based on the self-evaluation report and the visit of ENQA experts	ACQAHE preparations for the ENQA evaluation process have been implemented	ACQAHE, ENQA	II quarter 2025	IV quarter 2025	10.000,00 €	ACQAHE Budget 10.000,00 € (2025)
8.2. Thematic analysis of the first cycle: evaluation of all higher education institutions in Montenegro	Reports on evaluation procedures	ACQAHE	II quarter 2025	IV quarter 2025	5.000,00 €	ACQAHE Budget 5.000,00 € (2025)

OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVE 9	IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PRINCIPLES OF ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AMONG THE ACADEMIC COMMUNITY AND STUDENTS		
Performance indicator	Baseline Value 2023.	Target value halfway through the implementation of the strategic document (2026)	Target value halfway through the implementation of the strategic document (2026)
Number of reports of violations of academic integrity among the academic and student population	2	1	0

Activities that affect the achievement of Operational Objective 9	Result indicator	Competent institutions	Start date	Planned Completion Date	Funds planned for the implementation of activities	Source of funding
9.1 Adopted/Revised Documents for the Prevention of Student Fraud and Non-Academic Behavior	Implemented preparatory activities on the development of procedures to prevent and sanction the use of various types of student fraud and non-academic behaviour	Institutions of higher education	I quarter 2025	IV quarter 2025	No funds required	ACQAHE Budget 10.000,00 € (2025)
9.2. Training of members of the academic community, developing awareness of screening and prevention procedures	Preparatory activities for training carried out	Institutions of higher education.	IV quarter 2025	IV quarter 2025	No funds required	ACQAHE Budget 5.000,00 € (2025)
9.3. Amendment to the Academic Integrity Act	A working group was formed	MESI, Institutions of Higher Education, Ethics Committee	IV quarter 2025	IV quarter 2025		

OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVE 10	ACHIEVING EQUALITY, ACCESSIBILITY, EQUITY OF INCLUSIVE AND QUALITY HIGHER EDUCATION FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES		
Performance indicator	Baseline Value 2023.	Target value halfway through the implementation of the strategic document (2026)	Target value halfway through the implementation of the strategic document (2027)
Greater inclusion of students with disabilities	50	10% increase in number	25% increase in number

Activities that affect the achievement of Operational Objective 10	Result indicator	Competent institutions	Start date	Planned Completion Date	Funds planned for the implementation of activities	Source of funding
10.1 Implementation of the Transition Procedure and Training for Inclusive Competences of Staff	Preparatory activities for the implementation of the training	Institutions of higher education; MESI; ACQAHE, BES	IV quarter 2025	IV quarter 2025	n/a	Donors n/a
10.2 Use of accessible format, didactic and communication means	Completed preparations for the application of accessible format, didactic and communication tools	Institutions of higher education; MESI; ACQAHE, BES	IV quarter 2025	IV quarter 2025	n/a	Donors n/a

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3	STRENGTHENING THE ROLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS AT THE INTERNATIONAL LEVEL		
OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVE 11	INCREASING THE NUMBER OF JOINT STUDY PROGRAMMES AND PROJECTS AND IMPROVING MOBILITY PROCEDURES		
Performance indicator	Baseline Value 2023	Target value halfway through the implementation of the strategic document (2026)	Target value at the end of the implementation of the strategic document (2027)
Increased number of joint study programs, study programs in English	2	4	8

Activities that affect the achievement of Operational Objective 11	Result indicator	Competent institutions	Start date	Planned Completion Date	Funds planned for the implementation of activities	Source of funding
11.1 Identifying Joint Study Programs at All Levels	Number of new joint programmes	Institutions of higher education	II quarter 2024	IV quarter 2025	N/a	EU Funds N/a
11.2 Further progress in international cooperation in the field of higher education through joint research, development and structural projects	The number of joint international research programs and projects increased by 20%	AInstitutions of higher education	I quarter 2024	IV quarter 2025	810.000,00 €	Budget 395.000,00 € (2024) 415.000,00 € (2025
11.3 Innovating regulations simplifying procedures for mobility	Work has begun on innovating procedures for mobility and recognition of acquired loans by innovating the regulations at higher education institutions.	Institutions of higher education	IV quarter 2025	IV quarter 2025	No funds required	
11.4 Accreditation of new study programmes in English and increased literature in English	Number of Accredited New Programs in English An enlarged collection of literature in the English language	Institutions of higher education	I quarter 2024	IV quarter 2025	n/a	Budget of the UVO n/a

7 FINANCIAL ASSESSMENT FOR THE PERIOD COVERED BY THE ACTION PLAN (2024-2025)

The Action Plan for the Implementation of the Strategy for Higher Education Development (2024-2027) for 2024-2025 includes three strategic objectives, 11 operational objectives and 43 activities. € 124,765,197.77 has been allocated to implement the Action Plan 2024-2025.

Funds planned for the implementation of the Action Plan 2024-2025 according to the sources of financing:

	2024	2025
National Budget	€ 56,850,581.48	€ 39,235,365.40
Current budgetary reserve	€ 3,600,000.00	€ 3,000,000.00
Private sector	€ 50,000.00	
Public Institution Dormitory of Pupils and Students	€ 120,000.00	
Capital Budget	€ 1,624,250.89	€ 15,750,000.00
EBRD		€ 1,300,000.00
Donations from the U.A.E.		€ 3,000,000.00
The KFW project.		€ 220,000.00
ACQAHE budget		€ 15,000.00
Total:	€ 62,244,832.37	€ 74,520,365.40

		2024				
STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1	IMPROVING THE HARMONISATION OF STUDY PROGRAMS WITH THE NEEDS OF THE LABOR MARKET, ADEQUATE RECOGNITION OF HIGHER EDUCATION QUALIFICATIONS AND IMPROVING INFRASTRUCTURE	National Budget	Current budgetary reserve	Private sector	Public Institution Dormitory of Pupils and Students	Capital Budget
Operational Objective 1	REFORM OF BACHELOR'S AND MASTER'S DEGREE STUDY PROGRAMMES WITH A SPECIAL FOCUS ON LEARNING OUTCOMES	€ -				
Operational Objective 2	IMPROVING STUDENT STANDARDS AND EMPLOYABILITY OF HIGHER EDUCATION STUDENTS	€ 17,785,216.08				
Operational Objective 3	ADEQUATE CONNECTION AND PROGRESSION BETWEEN SECONDARY AND HIGHER EDUCATION	€ -				
Operational Objective 4	SUSTAINABLE AND ADEQUATE FUNDING FOR PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS AND STUDENT DORMITORIES	€ 38,620,365.40				
Operational Objective 5	APPLICATION OF PRACTICAL TRAINING	€ -				
Operational Objective 6	INCREASE IN THE SHARE OF PEOPLE AGED 25 TO 64 ENROLLED IN LIFELONG LEARNING	€ -				
Operational Objective 7	STRENGTHENING INFRASTRUCTURE IN THE FIELD OF HIGHER EDUCATION	€ 50,000.00	€ 3,600,000.00	€ 50,000.00	€ 120,000.00	€ 1,624,250.89
ALTOGETHER:		€ 56,455,581.48	€ 3,600,000.00	€ 50,000.00	€ 120,000.00	€ 1,624,250.89

2025							
National Budget	Current budget reserve	EBRD	Donations from the U.A.E.	The KFW project.	ACQAHE budget	Capital Budget	The budget in total.
€ 30,000.00							€ 30,000.00
€ 12,070,000.00							€ 29,855,216.08
€ 100,000.00							€ 100,000.00
€ 38,620,365.40							€ 77,240,730.80
€ -							€ -
€ -							€ -
€ -	€ 3,000,000.00	€ 1,300,000.00	€ 3,000,000.00	€ 220,000.00		€ 15,750,000.00	€ 28,714,250.89
€ 50,820,365.40	€ 3,000,000.00	€ 1,300,000.00	€ 3,000,000.00	€ 220,000.00	€ -	€ 15,750,000.00	€ 135,940,197.77

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2	IMPROVEMENT OF THE HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE STANDARDS OF EHEA AND ERA												
Operational Objective 8	IMPROVED ORGANIZATION OF WORK AND MANAGEMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN LINE WITH EUROPEAN PRACTICE	€ -					€ -				€ 15,000.00		€ 15,000.00
Operational Objective 9	IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PRINCIPLES OF ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AMONG THE ACADEMIC COMMUNITY AND STUDENTS	€ -					€ -						€ -
Operational Objective 10	ACHIEVING EQUALITY, ACCESSIBILITY, EQUITY OF INCLUSIVE AND QUALITY HIGHER EDUCATION FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES	€ -	€ -			€ -	€ -						€ -
ALTOGETHER:		€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ 15,000.00	€ -	€ 15,000.00
STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3	STRENGTHENING THE ROLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS AT THE INTERNATIONAL LEVEL												
Operational Objective 11.	INCREASING THE NUMBER OF JOINT STUDY PROGRAMMES AND PROJECTS AND IMPROVING MOBILITY PROCEDURES	€ 395,000.00	€ -			€ -	€ 415,000.00						€ 810,000.00
ALTOGETHER:		€ 395,000.00	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ 415,000.00	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ -	€ 810,000.00
Total for all strategic objectives:		€ 62,244,832.37					€ 74,520,365.40						€ 136,765,197.77

8 MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation, higher education institutions, the Chamber of Economy, the Agency for Control and Quality Assurance in Higher Education, and the Employment Agency are involved in implementing the strategy's planned activities.

In line with the Action Plan, their individual or joint responsibility is determined to fulfil the planned objectives. For the implementation to be timely and coordinated, it is necessary to form *a coordination team* composed of competent members in the areas covered by the Strategy. The team should be made up of the following members:

- ◻ Three representatives of the Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation, who would coordinate the work of the team and, at the same time, the implementation of the field of organisation and management of the higher education system;
- ◻ Two representatives of higher education institutions;
- ◻ Representative of the Chamber of Economy for the Labor Market and Employment;
- ◻ Representative of the Agency for Control and Quality Assurance (ACQAHE) in the field of quality assurance;
- ◻ A representative of the IT department for the development of this area.

The coordination team will prepare the principles and dynamics of work, and the coordinators will form working groups for each area. The task of the working groups is to plan and control the implementation of activities in their field, following indicators and organising periodic meetings. The working groups would prepare a report on the status of activities on a six-month basis. In contrast, they would prepare annual reports on the implementation of tasks for the coordination team. The Coordination Team would consolidate the working groups' reports, compare the implementation of obligations with the dynamic plan for implementing the Strategy, and submit it to the Government's General Secretariat for opinion.

The Coordination Team would present the final implementation of the obligations planned in the Strategy, with an assessment of indicators and performance, in a report and submit it to the Council for Higher Education for familiarisation before the procedure with the Government.

The Ministry shall submit the final report to the Government of Montenegro for adoption.

An evaluation should be carried out at the end of the four-year period to provide a more objective overview of the situation in higher education and the success of implementing the Strategy. This would be carried out by an independent expert body or experts familiar with the system who are engaged within the system.

The amount of funds required for the evaluation will depend on the model the Government opts for at that moment.

9 COMMUNICATION OF REFORM ACTIVITIES

Various campaigns, trainings, PR activities, information brochures, publications, and media are the information instruments for implementing the policies in the strategic document. Planned activities must be carried out in a spirit of transparency and inclusiveness.

- The planned communication activities should be presented in a detailed Communication Plan. The communication plan should contain a clear communication process adapted to the target group and the nature of the communication channels.

- It is necessary to conduct a detailed analysis of interested parties to identify the target groups to which the planned reforms should be communicated.

- In the communication process of planned activities, achieved results and effects, measurable indicators should be used.

- The messages should focus on the purpose of adopting this document, the importance of improving the situation in this area, and citizens' interest in achieving the strategic document's objectives.

- Adapt communication activities to the digital age so that the messages are visual and the process is interactive.

10 ANNEX I - BASIC CONCEPTS

LEARNING OUTCOMES/COMPETENCIES[72]

Learning Outcomes are competencies a person has acquired through learning and proven after the learning process.

Competences refer to a set of knowledge, skills and the associated autonomy and responsibility, often referred to as competencies in the narrow sense (EU's Key Competence Framework).

A qualification is a complete set of a certain range of acquired competencies, all individually evaluated (learning outcomes).

The student at the center of the process – a necessary condition for the real success of learning and teaching in higher education.

Specific competencies / professional competencies for a specific discipline

Generic Competencies / Key Competencies, Transferable Skills for the 21st Century

Combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes – 8 groups:

Communication in the mother tongue;

Communication in a foreign language;

Basic competencies in mathematics, science and technology;

Digital competence;

Learning to learn;

Social and citizenship competence:

Spontaneous interest in socialising;

Establishing basic emotional (self-)regulation (predominantly good mood...);

*Independent and self-initiated interaction with peers (*feeling safe in society...);

Possession of basic social skills (spontaneous use of basic phrases...);

Independence in basic self-care (diet, basic hygiene, clothing...);

Following the rules that protect yourself and others.

1. *Entrepreneurial skills*

2. *Cultural consciousness and art.*

....

72 Prof. Blaženka Divjak, PhD, **Learning Outcomes – Why and How?**, Ministry of Science and Education, 21.12.2017. (Key competencies for lifelong learning EU http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content).

INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Principles of the Salamanca Convention

Autonomy with responsibility

Progress requires that European universities be empowered to act in accordance with the guiding principles of autonomy with responsibility (adherence to the principles of Magna Charta Universitatum since 1988) and, in particular, to the principle of academic freedom. Thus, universities must be able to create strategies, choose priorities in teaching and scientific research, allocate resources, profile curricula, and set criteria for the admission of professors and students. European higher education institutions accept the challenges of working in competitive surroundings in their environment, in Europe and the world, but to do so, they need certain freedom of governance, a freer regulatory framework to support them and adequate funding, or they will be put at a disadvantage for cooperation and competition (competitiveness).

Education as a Public Responsibility

The European Higher Education Area must be built on the European traditions of education as a public responsibility, broad and open access to undergraduate and postgraduate studies, personal development education and lifelong learning, civil rights, and short—and long-term societal relevance.

Higher Education Based on Scientific Research

As scientific research is the driving force behind higher education, the creation of the European Higher Education Area must be linked to the European Research Area.

Organisational Diversity

European higher education is characterised by diversity in terms of languages, national/state models, types and profiles of institutions, and curricula orientation. *At the same time, its future depends on its ability to organise this diversity effectively to generate positive results and flexibility and overcome possible difficulties and ambiguities. Educational institutions want to treat diversity as an advantage, not as a reason for non-recognition or exclusion.* The institutions are committed to creating sufficient self-regulation mechanisms to ensure a minimum level of cohesion so that their compatibility efforts are not undermined by too much diversity in the definition and application of credits, the main degree categories and quality criteria.

Center of Excellence*

A scientific research institution or a group of researchers in an institution that, by its originality, significance and actuality of the results achieved in scientific research, has achieved top and internationally recognised results in its scientific field of research over five years.

A Centre of Excellence should have:

- The program that improves scientific research at the national level, contributes to the strengthening of the national economy and competitiveness in the European market;
- The link between knowledge, research and innovation, i.e. between research and the economy;
- Focused research programs that include interdisciplinary topics, results from applied developmental and basic research;
- Provide space and infrastructure for the conduct of research;
- The capacity to provide a working atmosphere that contributes to the creation of new results;
- Current, original and internationally recognised research results;
- programs to attract financing through European and other international funds that ensure sustainability and further work;
- Conditions for the application of the scientific research results in practice;

- A program that fosters the creation of a new generation of scientific and technological talents;
- The ability to establish a dynamic partnership relationship with state administration bodies and local self-government.

*Definition from the Law on Scientific Research Activity.