

## EXTERNAL PROJECT EVALUATION REPORT

Programme	Erasmus+
Sub-Programme	Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices
Action	Capacity Building in Higher Education
Sub-Action	Joint Projects
Call for Proposal	EAC-A04-2015
Project number	574076-EPP-1-2016-1-BA-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP
Agreement/decision number	20163217
Project	Introducing competence-based preschool teacher education curricula in Bosnia and Herzegovina
Project Start: 15/10/2016	Planned – Project End: 14/10/2019 Actual – Project End: 31/05/2021
Project leader/coordinator	University of Travnik
Address	Aleja Konzula No. 5, Travnik, Bosnia and Herzegovina
Project partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*"1 DECEMBRIE 1918" UNIVERSITY OF ALBA IULIA, Romania</li> <li>*THE ASSOCIATION OF PRESCHOOL INSTITUTIONS EMPLOYEES IN THE FEDERATION OF BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA, Bosnia and Herzegovina</li> <li>*HERZEGOVINA UNIVERSITY, Bosnia and Herzegovina</li> <li>*INDEPENDENT UNIVERSITY BANJA LUKA, Bosnia and Herzegovina</li> <li>*UNIVERSITY OF BIHAĆ, Bosnia and Herzegovina</li> <li>*UNIVERSITY OF MOSTAR, Bosnia and Herzegovina</li> <li>*PUBLIC INSTITUTION UNIVERSITY OF TUZLA UNIVERSITAS STUDIORUM TUZLAENSIS</li> <li>*MATEJ BEL UNIVERSITY IN BANSKÁ BYSTRICA, Slovakia</li> <li>*THE MANCHESTER METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY, United Kingdom</li> <li>*UNIVERSITY OF ZAGREB, CROATIA</li> </ul>
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Report submission date: 15/07/2021

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The External Project Evaluation Report (hereafter referred to as the Report) analyses the implementation of the project entitled: *Introducing competence-based preschool teacher education curricula in Bosnia and Herzegovina (TEACHER)*

Preparation of the External Project Evaluation Report has been planned within work package 6: Quality assurance and monitoring which states that the Report will be prepared by an independent agent, and that it will then be publicly available.

The External Report will elaborate on the project success and impact achieved during implementation and immediately after the completion of the project.

The Report consists of 9 parts.

The *Introduction* (1) presents the aim, purpose and intention of the Report. The second part (2) *Methodology and the report preparation process* describes the report preparation process itself. The third part (3) *Project description and goals* describes the project and goals in detail, and the fourth part (4) *Description of the work packages* specifies the work packages which have encompassed all the activities implemented within the project. The fifth part of the Report (5) *The progress, execution and outcomes achieved in project implementation according to the work packages* deals with the presentation of the results which were achieved within each work package. The sixth part (6) *Attitudes on the progress and achievement of the set project goals* presents the attitudes on the progress and achievement of the set project goals. The seventh part (7) *Attitudes on the availability, dissemination and exploitation of the project outcomes* refers to the attitudes on the availability, dissemination and exploitation of the project outcomes. The report ends with *Conclusions* (8) and *Recommendations* (9).

The primary goal of this project is to innovate and modernise the Early Childhood Education and Care first cycle academic studies in Bosnia and Herzegovina by introducing a competence-based curriculum. The project activities are directed towards identifying the competences the labour market requires, which therefore have to be introduced into the curriculum. The project target groups are the teaching and administrative staff of the Higher Education Institutions participating in the project, stakeholders and employers (local authorities, public and private kindergartens as employers, professional preschool teacher associations) and students from the project partner institutions.

The project contains eight work packages:

1. Development of a competence-based curriculum aligned with the labour market's needs
2. Curricula modernisation
3. Modernisation of the teaching methodology
4. Improvement of transversal skills
5. Accreditation of study programmes
6. Dissemination and exploitation of the project results
7. Quality assurance and monitoring
8. Project management

The project partners are 7 institutions from Bosnia and Herzegovina, 6 Higher Education Institutions and one association from the professional field of the project, as well as 4 Higher Education Institutions from the European Union:

1. UNIVERSITY OF TRAVNIK, Bosnia and Herzegovina, project coordinator
2. HERZEGOVINA UNIVERSITY, Bosnia and Herzegovina
3. INDEPENDENT UNIVERSITY BANJA LUKA, Bosnia and Herzegovina
4. UNIVERSITY OF BIHAĆ, Bosnia and Herzegovina
5. UNIVERSITY OF MOSTAR, Bosnia and Herzegovina
6. PUBLIC INSTITUTION UNIVERSITY OF TUZLA, Bosnia and Herzegovina
7. THE ASSOCIATION OF PRESCHOOL INSTITUTIONS EMPLOYEES IN THE FEDERATION OF BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA, Bosnia and Herzegovina
8. MATEJ BEL UNIVERSITY IN BANSKÁ BYSTRICA, Slovakia
9. THE MANCHESTER METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY, United Kingdom
10. UNIVERSITY OF ZAGREB, Croatia
11. "1 DECEMBRIE 1918" UNIVERSITY OF ALBA IULIA, Romania

The Report will specify whether the project goals have been achieved, whether and to what extent the expected results have been achieved, as well as the conditions under which the project was implemented in relation to the initial project proposal.

The report will encompass the period from the beginning of the project implementation on 15/10/2016 to the project completion on 30/05/2021.

The project duration was initially planned to be 36 months, ending on 14/10/2019, which is a total of 36 months.

Due to circumstances present in the project implementation, the project end date was moved. The first time was due to the study programmes' accreditation process which did not have formal procedures at the state level in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and which the project participants could not affect.

The project completion was also moved due to the Covid-19 pandemic which paralysed the entire world and put a stop on all processes from January 2020, which affected the TEACHER project implementation and the project's end. The Covid-19 pandemic could not have been foreseen, and its consequences, which significantly altered and directed the project toward searching for possible solutions which were at disposal during that time, could not be affected. Approval from the Agency in Brussels was obtained for everything, and it is substantiated by the documentation which the coordinator delivered during the process of preparing the documentation for writing the Report<sup>1</sup>

The project is financed by the European Union grant within the ERASMUS + programme: Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices – Capacity Building in Higher Education

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<sup>1</sup> The documentation can be found in the External Project Evaluation Report folder.

## 2. METHODOLOGY AND THE REPORT PREPARATION PROCESS

The Report preparation process took place in several stages:

1. Familiarisation with the project and project documentation through formal documents and application forms obtained by the Executive Agency in Brussels.
2. Familiarisation with the project documentation of the coordinator and all partners, project participants.
3. Analysis of the project documentation content on two grounds: work packages and partners.
4. Interview with the project coordinator.
5. Project content finalisation.

Each of the stated units had its procedures which had to be implemented so as to reach the final Report.

All project partners participated in the preparation of the Report through the delivered documentation, which was the task of all the partners stated in the work package 6, item 6.5. referring to the participation in the external evaluation at the end of the project.<sup>2</sup>

The preparation of the Report began in the last month of the project implementation (May 2021), which was stipulated by the work plan for the final project year, stating that 4 weeks will be devoted to the preparation of the Report in the final month.<sup>3</sup>

### 2.1. Familiarisation with the project and project documentation

The documents used in the preparation of the Report are:

- Call for Proposal EAC/A04/2015, Introducing competence – based preschool teacher education curricula in Bosnia and Herzegovina (TEACHER), DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT
- Grant agreement for an action with multiple beneficiaries
- Mixed financing (reimbursement based on percentage of eligible costs and lump sum(s) and/or unit contribution(s))
- AGREEMENT NUMBER – 2016 -3217/001-001
- Project reference number – 574076-EPP-1-2016-1-BA-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP
- The FIRST Report dated 15/04/2018
- Guidelines for the Use of the Grant, version 01: 08 December 2016.

This is the formal project documentation describing the project and providing the formal and legal framework for the project implementation.

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<sup>2</sup> Call for Proposal EAC/A04/2015, Introducing competence – based preschool teacher education curricula in Bosnia and Herzegovina (TEACHER), DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT, p. 90, WP.6. – QUALITY ASSURANCE AND MONITORING

<sup>3</sup> Call for Proposal EAC/A04/2015, Introducing competence – based preschool teacher education curricula in Bosnia and Herzegovina (TEACHER), DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT, p. 90, WP.6. – QUALITY ASSURANCE AND MONITORING, p. 53, Work plan for project year 3.

## **2.2. Familiarisation with the project documentation of the coordinator and all partners, project participants.**

The project documentation of the coordinator and all partners, project participants, which is the actual project documentation since it was created during project implementation comprises the following:

- Partnership Agreements
- Individual project documentation of each partner created during project implementation and archived in the project partners' folders which are situated at the archives of the Office for International Cooperation (Picture 1).
- Project documentation according to the work packages created during the implementation of activities within each work package (Picture 2).
- The remaining documentation created during project implementation.

## **2.3. Analysis of the project documentation content on two grounds: work packages and partners.**

- Each of the work packages, with a total of eight (8), has its own folder containing the documentation related to that work package.

Within each work package, there are tasks defining the outcomes, target group. It states the organisation/partner in charge of that work package, which organisations/partners participate in the implementation of the work package and the estimated time for the implementation. At the end of the project, all organisations/project partners delivered a Report on the implementation of activities within the work package which served in preparing this Report, thereby participating in making this Report.

- The partners' documentation contains Partnership Agreements, appointed work teams in charge of all the project activities, documentation related to the implementation of staff activities and partner team travels, as well as the results of project activities. This documentation served as an insight into the implementation of planned activities and whether the documentation submitted as proof of the implemented activities is in line with the activities that had to be implemented within the work packages and partners' responsibilities.

## **2.4. Interview with the project coordinator**

During the preparation of the Report, with the goal to obtain information related to the specificities of the situations which the TEACHER project faced, there was an interview with the project coordinator. Accreditation and the Covid-19 pandemic are situations which caused the project completion to be moved, and all the information about these situations were obtained from the project coordinator.

Communication with the Executive Agency, which was conducted via e-mail and related to obtaining an approval of the project extension request, was archived in the folder entitled Executive Agency – Brussels. This folder also contains the documentation referring to the Agreements with the Agency, the Project Implementation Report – first, approvals by the Agency for changes which were requested during the project implementation, and all other communication relevant to the project documentation.

## 2.5. Project content finalisation

Based upon insight into the stated documentation, formal project (2.1.) and actual project (2.2.), which was created during project implementation, analysis of the work packages, partners' documentation, correspondence with the Executive Agency in Brussels, and the interview with the project coordinator, the Report was finalised according to the stated chapters.

It is important to point out that, during the Report preparation, the entire project documentation was at our disposal and the project coordinator professionally prepared all the documentation and led the necessary procedures. The connection between all project partners is visible, and it was evident during the process of finalising all the information for the needs of this Report which is a benefit of the TEACHER project and lies in strengthening the relationships between partner institutions and developing further cooperation for the same project and some other project ideas in the field which connected them in this project.

## 3. GENERAL PROJECT INFORMATION

### 3.1. Project description

**The title of the project proposal:** Modernisation and innovation of Early Childhood Education and Care study programmes through introducing a competence-based curriculum in Bosnia and Herzegovina

**Type of project:**

Joint projects /National project

**National priority:** Education and teacher training

**Duration:** 36 months

**Focus:** The goal of this project is to innovate and modernise the Early Childhood Education and Care first cycle academic studies in Bosnia and Herzegovina by introducing a competence-based curriculum. The project strives to identify competences the labour market requires, which therefore have to be introduced into the curriculum. Apart from this, the project seeks to improve the interactive teaching methodology and the academic staff's transversal (transferable) skills needed to modernise the study programme as a whole.

The project target group consists of the partner institutions' academic staff and students. In a broader context, educational institutions and the entire Early Childhood Education and Care System in Bosnia and Herzegovina will equally benefit from the project.

In accordance with the previously stated, the project attempts to harmonise and modernise the heterogeneous Early Childhood Education and Care curriculum and update the teaching methodology.

## Participants/partners

Coordinator:	University of Travnik, Aleja Konzula 5, Travnik 72270, BA (abbreviation UNT)
Partner	The Association of Preschool Institutions Employees in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, BA, (abbreviation DZPU)
Partner	Herzegovina University, BA, (abbreviation SVEHERC)
Partner	Public Institution University of Tuzla Universitas Studiorum Tuzlaensis, BA, (abbreviation UNTZ)
Partner	Independent University Banja Luka, BA, (abbreviation NUBL)
Partner	University of Zagreb, HR, (abbreviation UNIZG)
Partner	The Manchester Metropolitan University, UK, (abbreviation MMU)
Partner	"1 Decembrie 1918" University of Alba Iulia, RO, (abbreviation UAB)
Partner	University of Mostar, BA, (abbreviation SVEMO)
Partner	Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica, SK, (abbreviation UMB)
Partner	University of Bihać, BA, (abbreviation UNBI)

The project partnership was carefully created so as to allow the Higher Education Institutions to use the existing resources and achieve greater efficiency, implement the harmonisation process as well as create incentives for quality improvement. All partners possess the necessary resources which were needed for the administrative aspects of the project and active participation in the project preparation process, which was the key for successful understanding of the project.

The project beneficiaries (7) are located in the entire territory of BiH, both the Federation of BiH and Republika Srpska, and they represent the majority of institutions which have Early Childhood Education and Care programmes.

The Consortium also comprises 4 countries from the European Union with extreme expertise and experience in this field.

The TEACHER project is represented by the University of Travnik as the leader and candidate which holds responsibility for project administration and the entire coordination and project communication.

Other Higher Education Institutions which comprise the project beneficiaries include the private and public institutions in Tuzla, Bihać, Mostar and Banja Luka. The partner which does not belong to the Higher Education Institutions is the Association of Preschool Institutions Employees in the Federation of BiH, and it was included as a professional institution which organises annual seminars for teachers with the goal to strengthen the cooperation between preschool institutions (the labour market) and the academic partners.

The European Union partners include the Manchester Metropolitan University from the United Kingdom, which was selected due to the specific, exceptional competence-based departments/disciplines, and the staff members the project is directed towards; the University of Zagreb was selected due to the wider cultural as well as social and economic context, and the entire close connection between their and the education system in BiH; the University of Alba Iulia from Romania with specific expertise in the professional development of staff, and Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica from Slovakia which has special references for modern teaching methods.



### **3.2. Project target groups and goals**

Project target groups are:

- The Higher Education Institutions' teaching staff (more than 180) and administrative staff (more than 30) participated in the project, took part in the needs assessment, capacity building training in improvement of methodical and didactic skills and transversal competences and in the evaluation of innovated programmes.
- Stakeholders and employers (more than 80): local authorities, public and private kindergartens as employers, children and parents associations, professional preschool teacher associations participated in the Introduction conference, workshops in the development of competences and an online survey.
- Students of more than 200 innovated programmes, 200 participated in needs assessment, 20 participated in the Introduction conference and more than 800 participated in the evaluation of innovated curricula.

Project goals:

1. Modernisation of the Early Childhood Education and Care study programme through introducing a competence-based curriculum;
2. Accreditation of study programmes;
3. Modernisation of the teaching methodology through teacher (university professor) training;
4. Improving transversal (transferable) skills of university professors;
5. Modernising technical and didactic equipment;

### **3.3. Expected impact and results**

Short-term impact

1. Competence-based curricula for preschool teachers developed and implemented by the Higher Education Institutions
2. Strengthened professional competences of the teaching staff in soft skills and teaching methods.
3. Better equipped learning facilities at Early Childhood Education and Care Faculties

Long-term impact

1. Improved quality of higher education in the field of Early Childhood Education and Care
2. Increased number of students participating in the programmes
3. Better Early Childhood Education and Care job market opportunities

Results:

1. Up to 12 innovated and accredited Early Childhood Education and Care curricula;
2. Modernised teaching methodology and practice;
3. Improved transversal skills of the academic staff;
4. Higher Education Institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina better equipped with technical and didactic supplies for implementing the Early Childhood Education and Care study programme;
5. Improved interinstitutional cooperation;

### **3.4. Project management and establishing a teamwork model**

The project implementation structure relies on adequate management and support – Project Management Unit (PMU) that will be set up at UNT's Office for International Cooperation along with the project administration.

Core project management activities will be organised through the PMU, Steering Committee (SC), and Quality Assurance and Monitoring Committee (QAMC) composed of all partners. SC will have an overall responsibility in mapping milestone activity progress and data management. Each partner has delegated its most competent staff to form task-related project teams. Concrete roles and responsibilities assigned to the partner are formally outlined in Partnership Agreements.

Role and task division among partners was agreed upon in the pre-drafting stage based on fair distribution, previous knowledge and expertise and specific institutional needs and contexts, as well as the capacity for transferring specific knowledge to the beneficiaries. Concrete roles and responsibilities assigned to the partner are formally outlined in Partnership Agreements. Each EU partner has provided the know-how in the field of its competitive advantage: MMU and UNIZG in curricula modernisation and innovation processes, while UAB and UMB were in charge of the best practices in staff professional development. Each BiH partner institution has carried out group activities resulting in modernising preschool teacher curricula and went through the self-evaluation and accreditation procedures at their own Higher Education Institutions, which were subject to the reaccreditation procedure.

Activities related to ensuring the stakeholders' and labour market involvement and project sustainability are confined to the national professional associations of preschools in BiH. Each BiH partner has, more or less, the same experience in the field of Early Childhood Education and Care and participation in this type of project. The partners' involvement exclusively depended upon the project management organisation of each partner institution. In places where this management was well organised, the partner institution followed the project implementation, being fully included in all activities and fulfilling its obligations on time. The partner institutions which did not have a complete project management had difficulties with dividing tasks and responsibilities.

At the beginning of the project implementation, a project Team Management – TM 99 was established.<sup>4</sup> All partners participated in the establishment of the team management and its needs. There was a total of 99 people involved in the project's Team Management. TM 99 comprises 11 Steering Committee members, 11 Quality Assurance Team members, 11 official representatives for the partner institution, and 55 expert team members from the partner institutions. 5 representatives of each partner comprise the expert team of the partner institution. One member each is responsible for: stakeholders, study programmes, project seminars, workshop activities and technical procedures, equipment and project administration. And finally, the team management also includes 11 student representatives through the partner institutions. The project coordinator has established the TEACHER Student Office through which students had the opportunity to be directly involved in the project by participating in organising parts of the project, providing technical support, researching, disseminating and professionally participating in the project.

The project has initiated cooperation between Higher Education Institutions and non-academic communities based on which partnership relationships have been established and later developed other forms of cooperation reflected in the exchange of knowledge, using the capacities and resources, signing agreements on teaching practice and business and technical cooperation, professional assistance and other activities which are of mutual interest and satisfaction for the partner institutions.

The available documentation illustrates that the team approach has been developed in all segments of the project. The documentation contains the appointments of all Teams as stated throughout partner institutions.

The correspondence between partners was conducted via e-mail as stated by the Partnership Agreement.

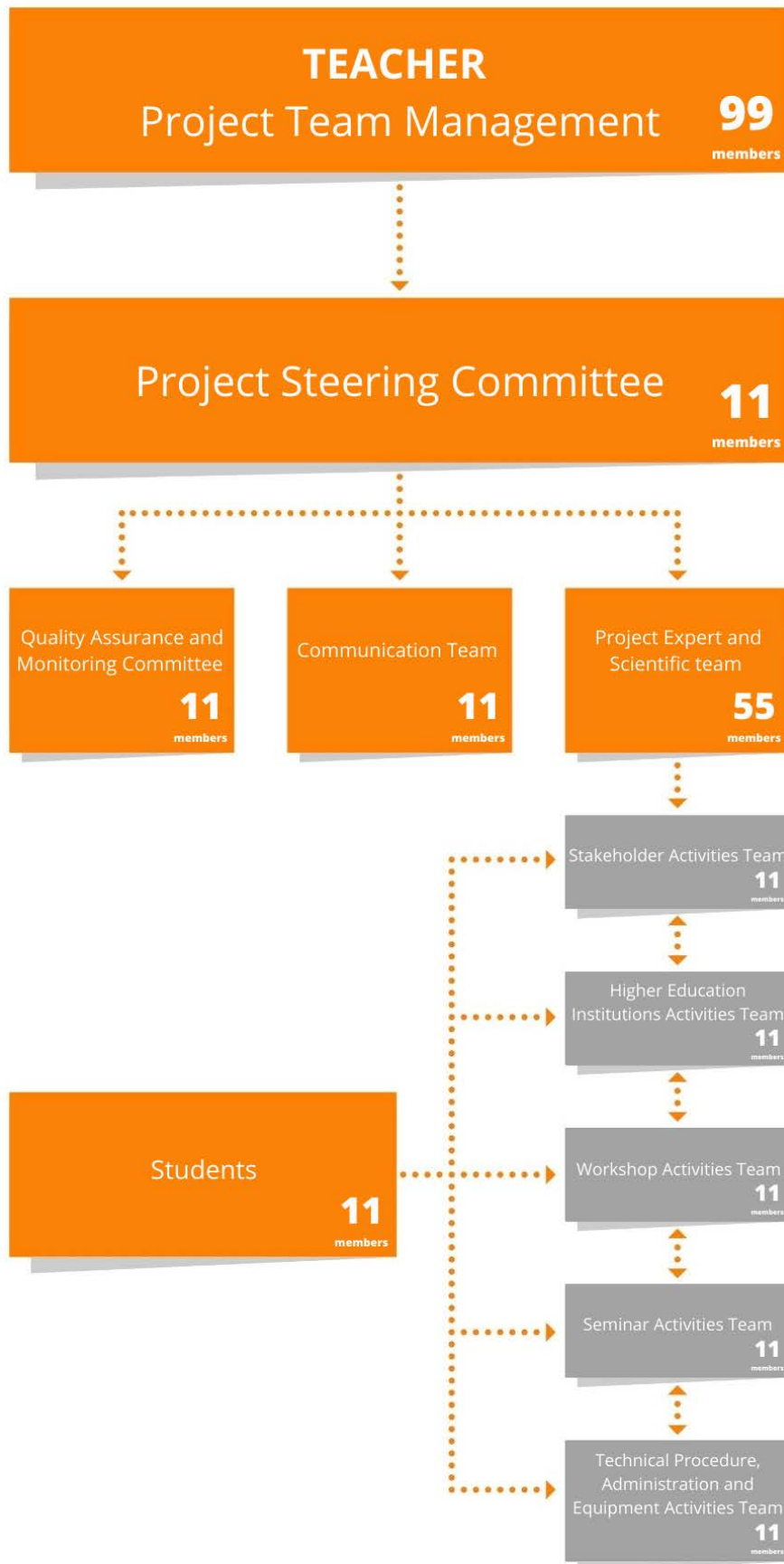
A “project energy” was visible, and it was established among partners, connecting them during each activity within the project implementation. The very fact that this is the first project of such a structure implemented in Bosnia and Herzegovina provides a form of a challenge considering the country's organisation and its very structure. Considering that education in BiH falls under the jurisdiction of the cantons and that each canton has its Law on Higher Education, the project management had to act uniformly, reaching the necessary solutions for everything related to the management through the partners' Teams. Foreign partners were familiarised with the situation related to education in BiH, and they have helped by providing guidance and advice in the implementation of activities they were in charge of.

The project's Team Management is presented on Chart No. 1, and the Teams are illustrated on Chart No. 2.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> The documentation is available at the Office for International Cooperation in the Project Management folder.

<sup>5</sup> Taken from the Projects documents situated in the Project Management folder.



A Schematic Overview of the TEACHER Project Team Management – Chart 1



A Schematic Overview of the Team Management for each partner – 11 official project representatives – Chart No. 2

### 3.5. Cooperation and communication of the project Consortium

The project Consortium, all project partners – representatives – used the collective experience and problem-solving capacity in order to develop and implement the project operational plan. UNT has foreseen its main role as a project coordinator in establishing an efficient and disciplinary collaborative network among the members of the Consortium, i.e., connecting them by ensuring a long-term cooperation outside the project life cycle. Assisted by the SC, it managed the workflow of activities, ensured that the partners had an understanding of issues and the situation, provided directions for efficient implementation of the designed activities, monitored the implementation timelines of the activities, oversaw the budget, facilitated team meetings effectively, prepared project reports.

All partners accepted their role as provider/recipient of services. The decisions were made jointly with the SC. The preferred mode of communication among the Consortium members was the electronic one, and regular inter-personal communication was applied.

### **3.6. Quality assurance and monitoring**

Primary quality assurance (QA) mechanism for ensuring the quality and efficient realisation of the activities is constant, clear, precise and on-time communication with the Consortium and WP teams. In particular, regular quality assurance was enabled through:

1. The Quality Assurance and Monitoring Committee (QAMC) which has a role to monitor and report on project quality against the adopted Quality plan on a quarterly/yearly basis;
2. The Quality plan prepared by the Quality Assurance and Monitoring Committee and adopted by the SC to ensure qualitative/quantitative indicators and deadlines against which the project quality assurance will be made and reported on.

Specific quality measures included:

- a. Quality Assurance Reports which were produced quarterly by the Quality Assurance and Monitoring Committee and sent for adoption to the SC, while the progress reports were published annually.<sup>6</sup>
- b. Recommendations from progress reports were followed and the Quality plan amended to address them.
- c. The National Erasmus+ office monitoring visits recommendations were carefully assessed and implemented.

The overall monitoring and evaluation was conducted externally (Erasmus+ office monitoring and control visits, conducted website surveys) and internally (students, academic and non-academic staff questionnaires). The means for evaluation include progress reports, partner's websites, attendance lists, meeting minutes and reports.

The financial evaluation was conducted through annual accounts and documentation review within the Consortium.

Specific project work plans and results were evaluated against quality and timely delivery through a number of benchmark indicators as outlined in the Logical Framework Matrix of the project which will be the subject of analysis in this Report.

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<sup>6</sup> The Reports can be found in the Work Package 6 folder which relates to Quality Assurance.

#### 4. ACTIVITIES AND PROJECT METHODOLOGY

The TEACHER project content and methodology are based on two pillars<sup>7</sup>:

1. Aligning preschool education curricula towards European Union standards in this sector, and
2. Teaching staff training.

As stated in the project application, the project's content and methodology are designed to transform the way teachers create learning environments for developing key competences in their students through building and improving the two pillars.

The project directly addresses several Common European objectives and benchmarks under the Bologna Process and the Treaty of Lisbon: teacher training; making learning interactive; improving quality assurance; increasing recruitment; improving foreign language and ICT skills.

Structurally, the project consists of 8 WPs leading to particular goals.

**WP1 PROJECT INCEPTION** sets the grounds for an effective implementation nested around the Constitution of project teams, Baseline study on preschool teacher education in BiH, Mapping and analysis of local, regional/cantonal and national stakeholders, Introduction conference on competences in Early Childhood Education and Care.

**WP2 DEVELOPMENT OF COMPETENCE-BASED CURRICULA** adjusts the curricula and prepares the reaccreditation process. The European Union partners share their best practices and guide beneficiary Higher Education Institutions through the process. Curricula harmonisation shall start with a Comparative analysis of the existing curricula. The analysis will result in a report with recommendations used as an input for the Introduction conference. The Conference is designed as a forum for discussing the harmonisation that will gain pace after the related project teams are constituted of professors and students. Each team member will be responsible for improving the students he/she teaches, and within the project team, they will exchange information and best practices as well as discuss the changes they introduced. The partner Higher Education Institutions from the United Kingdom will design study visits for facilitated, guided and enhanced process. The peer-reviewing process shall be initiated to ensure maintaining high quality study programmes and teaching through continuous reviewing and evaluating of standards and benchmarks.

**WP3 MODERNISATION AND INNOVATION OF TEACHING METHODOLOGY** improves the teaching methodology and entrepreneurial competences aiming at equipping teachers with best learning-outcome oriented methods. Emphasis is placed on teacher training that fosters interactive, problem-based learning and entrepreneurial skills development through new and creative ways of teaching. New methodological approaches exercised by the teachers will enable students to work more independently as well as gain wider and more quality knowledge and competences that will assist them in the practical application of the knowledge in real work

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<sup>7</sup> Call for Proposal EAC/A04/2015, Introducing competence – based preschool teacher education curricula in Bosnia and Herzegovina (TEACHER), DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT, pp. 36 - 38)

surroundings. All this will be attained by research resulting in a Needs assessment report indicating the particular needs of each institution with regard to the teachers' methodology and transversal skills development. According to the obtained results, specific interactive seminars will be designed to address gaps between project set goals and current practice. Partner institutions from Romania will design study visits related to teaching methods and entrepreneurship.

**WP4 ENHANCEMENT OF TEACHERS TRANSVERSAL SKILLS** improves soft skills (e.g., the ability to think critically, take initiative, solve problems and work collaboratively) in academic and non-academic staff. Mastering the new concept of transversal skills will be based on the Needs assessment report. Activities under this package will be focused on designing and conducting ToTs, underpinned by the development and production of training-related materials and guidelines.

**WP5 ACCREDITATION/LICENSING AND IMPLEMENTATION OF INNOVATED CURRICULA** purchase and installation of equipment and student enrolment. Activities are milestones for project success and sustainability. Provided that curricula harmonisation is completed, teaching methodologies improved and professional training made an integral part of the harmonised curricula, the new generation of students will be enrolled at the study programmes in the 3<sup>rd</sup> project year. The harmonised study programmes shall be evaluated by both students and teachers.

**WP6 deals with QUALITY.** The Quality Assurance and Monitoring Committee holds meetings and monitors the implementation. Experts in quality control and monitoring will monitor the established performance indicators for evaluating the progress and results. It will prepare guidelines for quality control and procedure monitoring devoted to the introduction of methodologies, criteria and performance indicators for quality assessment of the teaching programme, analysis of satisfaction and stable control of procedures.

**WP7 represents DISSEMINATION and EXPLOITATION,** and it assumes the organisation of promo events, media activities, visual identity, website development, as well as organisation of a dissemination conference. The key elements of sustainability are reflected in English language courses for teaching/non-teaching staff and transversal skills training. Further exploitation of project results will be sustained and strengthened through the development and adoption of skills improvement strategies by each participating Higher Education Institution.

**WP8 MANAGEMENT** ensures proper procedures are developed and followed throughout the project. The Administration office shall be set up with local focal points at partner Higher Education Institutions. A kick-off meeting will be held to mark the official start of the project and the Steering Committee shall be constituted and meetings regularly organised.



## 5. PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION OUTCOMES ACCORDING TO THE WORK PACKAGES

### 5.1. WORK PACKAGE 1: INCEPTION

Lead Organisation: University of Travnik

Participating Organisation: All project partners

#### Tasks:

- 5.1.1. Constitute the project teams
- 5.1.2. Conduct a baseline study on preschool teacher education in BiH
- 5.1.3. Perform an analysis of the local, regional/cantonal and national stakeholders in Early Childhood Education and Care
- 5.1.4. Organise an Introduction conference on competences in Early Childhood Education and Care

#### Results:

- 5.1.1. Project teams constituted for the following structures<sup>8</sup>: (1) Steering Committee, (2) Quality Assurance and Monitoring Committee, (3) local curricula modernisation teams for each BiH partner Higher Education Institution, (4) teams responsible for baseline and stakeholder analyses, ToT guidelines and student practice handbook, (5) Equipment Procurement Committee.
- 5.1.2. The Baseline Report on Preschool Teacher Education<sup>9</sup> in BiH which analyses the ECEC system in BiH (both the Federation and Republika Srpska) was developed alongside the existing academic programmes for preschool teacher education. It identifies the existing need for modernisation and innovation of preschool teacher education in BiH and recommends what actions should be taken.
- 5.1.3. The Stakeholder Analysis Report<sup>10</sup> was established, mapping all ECEC stakeholders and elaborating on their roles and responsibilities in ECEC as well as their relevance in this project. The Report was prepared by the Metropolitan Manchester University with contributions by all BiH partner institutions. The Stakeholder Analysis Report was presented at the Introduction conference.
- 5.1.4. The Introduction conference<sup>11</sup> gathered all relevant stakeholders in the field of Early Childhood Education and Care, and the participants discussed how to embed competences in preschool teacher education curricula so that student competences better fit the needs of the labour market. The Conference was hosted in Travnik with participation of student representatives from BiH partner Higher Education Institutions in order to provide an opportunity for student opinion to be heard. The Conference resulted in a set of recommendations for BiH Higher Education Institutions on what to innovate and the method of introducing innovation in preschool teacher education curricula. A Newsletter from the Introduction conference was developed and posted at the project website: <http://teacher.unt.ba/index.php/introduction-conference/>

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<sup>8</sup> The Project teams' constitution can be found in the Work Package 1 folder.

<sup>9</sup> The Baseline Report with complete documentation can be found in the Work Package 1 folder.

<sup>10</sup> The Report can be found in the Work Package 1 folder and it was uploaded to the project website: <http://teacher.unt.ba/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/REPORT-ON-STAKEHOLDER-ANALYSIS-fin.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> All materials from the Introduction conference can be found in the Work Package 1 folder.

## 5.2. WORK PACKAGE 2: DEVELOPMENT OF COMPETENCE-BASED CURRICULA

Lead Organisation: THE MANCHESTER METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY

Participating Organisation: All project partners

### Tasks:

- 5.2.1 Organise a seminar on curricula modernisation and innovation focusing on competences.
- 5.2.2 Organise a study visit to European Union partners and on-sight learning.
- 5.2.3 Organise 2 workshops dedicated to competences in preschool teacher education.
- 5.2.4 Develop the curricula modernisation and innovation plans and conduct cross-institutional peer-review of the plans.
- 5.2.5 Introduce and adopt curricula changes on the institutional level.

### Results:

- 5.2.1. MMU and UNIZG professionals delivered a seminar on competence-based curricula.<sup>12</sup> Six BiH partner Higher Education Institutions agreed on the steps to be taken and the methodology to be used in the process of modernising and innovating the curricula. The details are presented in the Seminar Report and can be found in the Work Package 2 folder.
- 5.2.2. 2 study visits to Manchester and Zagreb organised by the partner Higher Education Institutions from the European Union were conducted.<sup>13</sup> Complete materials from the conducted visits can be found in the Work Package 2 folder. The agendas from the conducted visits are posted at the project website:
- 5.2.3. 2 lists were made<sup>14</sup>, and the BiH partner Higher Education Institutions agreed upon them during the 2 project workshops organised and facilitated by the European Union partner institutions. One list comprises the generic, and the other one encompasses the field-specific competences. Both lists represent the basis of the curricula innovation process. All workshop materials can be found in the Work Package 2 folder.
- 5.2.4. During and in the period between the workshops, the BiH Higher Education Institution Teams worked together to innovate the curricula so as to orient them towards competences (generic and field-specific). This was followed by the development of institutional plans indicating all the details, including: the time, changes, impact, actors, deadlines, etc. The plan preparation process was mentored and facilitated by MMU and UNIZG as well as DZPU guidance, resulting in comments and instructions from employers. The work methodology grouped the BiH partner institutions in pairs, and the complete documentation can be found in the Work Package 2 folder.
- 5.2.5. The changes were introduced to the curricula of 6 BiH partner Higher Education Institutions<sup>15</sup>, and adopted (approved) by the Scientific and Teaching Councils and the Senate of the institutions. The adoption acts ensure sustainability of the changes introduced in the institutions.

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<sup>12</sup> <http://teacher.unt.ba/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Introduction-to-Teacher-Competencies.ppt>

<sup>13</sup> <http://teacher.unt.ba/index.php/study-visit-to-eu-partner-3/>

<sup>14</sup> <http://teacher.unt.ba/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Competences.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> Decisions on the Adoption of Changes by the partner institutions' Scientific and Teaching Councils and the Senate can be found in the Work Package 2 folder.

### 5.3. WORK PACKAGE 3: MODERNISATION AND INNOVATION OF TEACHING METHODOLOGY

Lead Organisation: MATEJ BEL UNIVERSITY IN BANSKA BYSTRICA

Participating Organisation: All project partners

#### Tasks:

- 5.3.1 Organise a study visit and on-sight learning.
- 5.3.2 Conduct a needs assessment for improving the teaching, didactic and transversal skills and competences.
- 5.3.3 Organise four methodical/didactic seminars.
- 5.3.4 Develop a handbook on student practice.

#### Results:

- 5.3.1. A study visit to Banska Bystrica was organised and hosted by UMB. The BiH Higher Education Institutions had an opportunity to learn from watching and experiencing the teaching and organisational practices at UMB through visiting lectures, courses, different facilities, talking and interviewing staff and students at host institutions, and to familiarise themselves with the EU practices.<sup>16</sup>All documentation related to the conducted visit can be found in the Work Package 3 folder.
- 5.3.2. A needs assessment survey was conducted and<sup>17</sup> carried out by UMB and UAB to assess the needs for the improvement of methodical, didactic and transversal skills and competences. This assessment was carried out among the teaching staff and students of 6 BiH partner Higher Education Institutions through a questionnaire survey. It had 2 parts: the 1st part assessed the needs for improving the methodical and didactic skills, and the 2nd part assessed the needs for the improvement of transversal skills. The results were used to prepare 4 methodical and didactic seminars (within WP. 3) and ToT sessions as well as local knowledge transfer sessions (within WP.4). The complete materials can be found in the Work Package 3 folder.
- 5.3.3. 4 methodical and didactic seminars were held with regard to improvements in skills and competences. This outcome refers to better skills and competences of a minimum of 96 teaching staff (24 per seminar) from BiH partner Higher Education Institutions.<sup>18</sup> The complete documentation can be found in the Work Package 3 folder.
- 5.3.4. The Handbook on student practice was jointly prepared by experts from UMB with written contributions from BiH partner staff. The handbook serves as a guide for junior teaching staff on how best to organise student practice in terms of developing professional competences at partner institutions, and it was distributed to the partner institutions' teaching staff. The Handbook is available at the project website.<sup>19</sup>The documentation related to the implemented activity can be found in the Work Package 3 folder.

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<sup>16</sup> <http://teacher.unt.ba/index.php/study-visit-to-matej-bel-university>

<sup>17</sup> <http://teacher.unt.ba/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/skeniranje0048.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> <http://teacher.unt.ba/index.php/methodic-didactic-seminar-iv/>

<sup>19</sup> <https://bit.ly/2WE4mDR>

#### 5.4. WORK PACKAGE 4: ENHANCEMENT OF TEACHERS TRANSVERSAL SKILLS AND COMPETENCES

Lead Organisation: "1. DECEMBIRE 1918" UNIVERSITY OF ALBA IULIA

Participating Organisation: All project partners

##### Tasks:

- 5.4.1 Organise a seminar on transversal skills and competences in professional teacher development.
- 5.4.2 Design the ToT modules and develop training materials
- 5.4.3 Organise five ToT sessions
- 5.4.4 Develop ToT guidelines
- 5.4.5 Organise parallel in-house thematic courses for the teaching staff

##### Results:

- 5.4.1. A seminar on transversal skills and competences was organised and delivered by UAB experts. The objective of this seminar was to ensure understanding of the importance of transversal skills for achieving a better working environment and interpersonal relationships at universities in relation to colleagues and students.<sup>20</sup>
- 5.4.2. UAB experts designed 5 modules and training materials (ToT programme). The complete materials can be found in the Work Package 4 folder.<sup>21</sup>
- 5.4.3. 24 ToT training participants from 6 BiH partner Higher Education Institutions who successfully completed all 5 modules earned the certificate of trainer.<sup>22</sup> These participants will be able to independently prepare and deliver crash courses and training sessions in any field of transversal skills and with any target group – students, colleagues and adults. All documentation related to the certificates can be found in the Work Package 4 folder.
- 5.4.4 ToT guidelines were jointly prepared by experts from UAB with written contributions from BiH partner staff participating in ToT sessions. This guide/handbook was not completed due to adverse work circumstances caused by the pandemic. Considering that the representatives of the BiH partner institutions completed all 5 modules and obtained the certificates, it was agreed that the certified trainers will develop guidelines for the teaching staff at each institution. The proposal was made by the Quality Assurance and Monitoring Committee and adopted at the last meeting of the Steering Committee so as to overcome the situation caused by the pandemic which could not be affected. The complete documentation related to the above mentioned can be found in the Work Package 4 folder.
- 5.4.5 The trainers who participated in the ToT programme with 6 BiH partner institutions have delivered 2 in-house sessions for the improvement of transversal skills at their institutions. More than 180 teaching and administrative staff from the 6 BiH partner

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<sup>20</sup> <http://teacher.unt.ba/index.php/seminar-transversal-competences-in-teacher-professional-development/>

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> [http://teacher.unt.ba/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/TEACHER\\_ToT\\_cert.pdf](http://teacher.unt.ba/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/TEACHER_ToT_cert.pdf)

institutions were included in the sessions.<sup>23</sup> The complete documentation related to the above mentioned can be found in the Work Package 4 folder.

## **5.5. WORK PACKAGE 5: ACCREDITATION/LICENSING AND IMPLEMENTATION OF INNOVATED CURRICULA**

Lead Organisation: University of Bihać  
Participating Organisation: All project partners

### **Tasks:**

- 5.5.1 Prepare and submit documentation for curricula accreditation/licensing.
- 5.5.2 Conduct procurement and installation of equipment
- 5.5.3 Enrol students and implement the modernised curricula
- 5.5.4 Host the delivery of guest lectures within modernised curricula by the European Union partner staff

### **Results:**

- 5.5.1. All 6 partner Higher Education Institutions went through the self-evaluation procedure of the innovated Early Childhood Education and Care curricula and prepared the documentation for the external evaluation. All documentation can be found in the Work Package 5 – 5.1. ACCREDITATION folders. The Higher Education Institutions could not complete the study programmes' accreditation procedures due to the situation at the state level and decentralisation of education which falls under the jurisdiction of cantonal educational authorities where each canton has different laws and regulations. It is important that the Higher Education Institutions conducted the self-evaluation procedure and adopted the curricula which was used for the enrolment of the new generation of students. All 6 partner institutions delivered their Decisions of the Scientific and Teaching Councils and the Senate as well as the Self-Evaluation Reports. This can be found in the 5.1. folder entitled ACCREDITATION.
- 5.5.2. Equipment was procured for all 6 BiH partner Higher Education Institutions which will be used for modernising and innovating the study programmes. The procurement of equipment was done by following the legal procedures and had its stages which included issuing a public call, the application process, procurement and delivery of equipment. The entire equipment procurement procedure can be found in the Work Package 5 folders, separated into individual folders entitled EQUIPMENT - there is a total of 11 folders containing the equipment-related documentation.
- 5.5.3. A new generation of students is enrolled in modernised and innovated study programmes from the 2018/2019 academic year. Reports on student enrolment from the Higher Education Institutions can be found in the Work Package 5 folder.

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<sup>23</sup> <http://teacher.unt.ba/index.php/seminar-transversal-competences-in-teacher-professional-development/>

5.5.4. The European Union partner Higher Education Institutions' teaching staff delivered guest lectures to students of innovated and modernised study programmes at 6 BiH partner Higher Education Institutions. The lectures were delivered online due to the situation caused by the Covid-19 pandemic according to the following schedule:

- Date: 18/03/2021 and 19/03/2021

by 2 MMU professors at the University of Travnik and the University of Mostar

- Date: 17/03/2021

by 2 UNIZG professors at the University of Tuzla and the University of Travnik

- Date: 26/03/2021

by 2 UMB professors at the Herzegovina University

by 2 UAB professors at the University of Bihać and the Independent University Banja Luka

The complete documentation related to the delivered lectures can be found in the Work Package 5 folder.

## 5.6. WORK PACKAGE 6: QUALITY ASSURANCE AND MONITORING

Lead Organisation: UNIVERSITY OF MOSTAR

Participating Organisation: All project partners

### Tasks:

- 5.6.1 Constitute the Quality Assurance and Monitoring Committee and hold regular meetings
- 5.6.2 Evaluate project activities upon their completion
- 5.6.3 Organise students and staff evaluation of the modernised curricula
- 5.6.4 Conduct 2 annual progress evaluations
- 5.6.5 Subcontract an independent agent and carry out the external evaluation of the project

### Results:

- 5.6.1. The Quality Assurance and Monitoring Committee was constituted at the kick-off meeting and is comprised of one representative of each partner institution. It regularly met 4 times via Skype during the project lifetime. 2 annual progress reports on project implementation which the Committee had to prepare can be found in the Work Package 6 folder.
- 5.6.2. The conducted project activities (meetings, conferences, workshops, trainings, seminars) were evaluated by the participants in order to assess the following 3 segments: a) satisfaction with the content, b) satisfaction with the lecturer, c) satisfaction with the logistic and working conditions. The evaluation results and the complete documentation can be found in the Work Package 6 folder.

- 5.6.3. Reports on students and professors evaluation of the modernised curricula and their satisfaction with the innovated programme were prepared, serving the Higher Education Institutions as an indicator for further activities. The documentation related to the implemented activities can be found in the Work Package 6 folder.
- 5.6.4. Two annual progress evaluations were conducted, and the Reports can be found in the Work Package 6 documentation. The Reports measure progress in project implementation and contain recommendations for project teams. They were delivered to the project Steering Committee and can be found in the Work Package 6 documentation.
- 5.6.5. An independent agent was subcontracted, and the External Project Evaluation Report will be publicly available.

## 5.7. WORK PACKAGE 7: DISSEMINATION AND EXPLOITATION

Lead Organisation: UNIVERSITY OF TUZLA  
 Participating Organisation: All project partners

### Tasks:

- 5.7.1 Create the project visual identity and website
- 5.7.2 Ensure media promotion
- 5.7.3 Organise English language courses for the teaching and administrative staff
- 5.7.4 Prepare and release periodical e-bulletins
- 5.7.5 Ensure inter-project coaching and synergy with other European Union initiatives
- 5.7.6 Organise a dissemination conference

### Results:

- 5.7.1. The project visual identity and website were created at the beginning of the project. It is clear that the project visual identity was applied on all promotional materials and publications resulting from this project. The project website is well organised and contains all the information about the project, which can be seen through insight into the website: <http://teacher.unt.ba/>
- 5.7.2. The project is promoted in the media, which can be seen at the project website using the link: <http://teacher.unt.ba/index.php/media/>
- 5.7.3. 5 module English language courses were organised at the 6 BiH partner Higher Education Institutions with a minimum participation of 15 teaching and administrative staff members per institution. The goal was to improve the foreign language competence, which was accomplished. The complete documentation related to the courses organised at the Higher Education Institutions can be found in the Work Package 7 folder.
- 5.7.4. E-bulletins - newsletters - were published and placed at the project website with the link: (1) <https://bit.ly/3gO8Hf1> ; (2) <https://bit.ly/2V0jmLX> ; and (3) <https://bit.ly/3zHwnZO>

- 5.7.5. The Consortium members ensured that the project is connected with other European Union initiatives and similar projects through their Higher Education Institutions and projects in which they participate since it is the only possible method due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The Covid-19 pandemic has affected the implementation of ideas developed during the project, and they had to be abandoned due to the “closure” and paralysis of the entire world.
- 5.7.6. The final project dissemination conference was held online and hosted by the University of Travnik. The conference presented the achievements and project outcomes. The conference report can be found at the faculty website<sup>24</sup>, and the documentation related to its preparation and implementation is situated in the Work Package 7 folder.

## 5.8. WORK PACKAGE 8: PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Lead Organisation: University of Travnik  
Participating Organisation: All project partners

### Tasks:

- 5.8.1 Organise the project kick-off meeting and a minimum of 3 Steering Committee meetings
- 5.8.2 Define project management and administration procedures and create template forms
- 5.8.3 Ensure smooth daily project management and administration
- 5.8.4 Ensure regular meetings of the local project teams are taking place

### Results:

- 5.8.1. The kick-off meeting was organised in Travnik. It was the first meeting discussing the project details with the development of the implementation and administration procedures and template forms. The roles and responsibilities were distributed, and funding rules ensured. The complete kick-off meeting report can be found at the project website.<sup>25</sup> Minutes from the Steering Committee meeting can be found in the Project Management folder. The remaining documentation related to the kick-off meeting is situated in the Work Package 8 folder.
- 5.8.2. The project management and administration procedures were defined and template forms created. Application of uniform rules was compulsory in project management and administration. All documentation and procedures created for the project can be found at the project website.<sup>26</sup>
- 5.8.3. The interview with the coordinator represented by the contact person Selma Šeta and the insight into the functioning of the office and project documentation gave rise to the conclusion that the daily project management and administration ran smoothly. Different communication channels were used, starting from the TEACHER Viber group

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<sup>24</sup> <https://bit.ly/3jqUZQW>

<sup>25</sup> <http://teacher.unt.ba/index.php/2017/04/06/teacher-kick-off-meeting/>

<sup>26</sup> <http://teacher.unt.ba/index.php/templates/>



comprising all project members, e-mail communication, Skype, Zoom, and other online applications.

- 5.8.4. The available documentation clearly demonstrates the connection between the local teams of all project partners who worked on the project implementation and took care of the administration, resulting in a high number of working folders created during the project implementation procedure. The project was successfully coordinated by the University of Travnik, and the Office for International Cooperation situated at its headquarters lead the project administration and served all project partners.

## 6. PROJECT TIMELINE AND LFM – LOGICAL FRAMEWORK MATRIX

### 6.1. Project timeline

The project began in October 2016, and according to the initial plan, it was supposed to last 3 years up until October 2019.

The work plan for project years<sup>27</sup> (the first, second and third project year) specified all the work package activities distributed across months, stating the total duration of activities expressed by the number of weeks.

The initial timeline changed in line with the project activities which dictated its shift and project completion deadline. The Executive Agency in Brussels was familiarised with all situations, and it approved the coordinator's request for extending the project completion deadline.

The first extension was granted when the coordinator contacted the Executive Agency in Brussels with a request to move the project completion deadline due to the previously mentioned situation with the study programmes' accreditation procedure in BiH. The coordinator's request was approved, and the project was extended for another year, lasting up until October 2020.

The Covid-19 pandemic affected the delay of the project, and during the period March-June 2020, all activities in the world were halted, reflecting upon the implementation of the project activities. That is why the coordinator submitted a request to the Executive Agency asking for an extension of the project completion deadline. The Executive Agency asked for an explanation and a detailed plan of activities which had not been implemented, which the coordinator accordingly delivered. The Executive Agency granted the project extension up until 31/03/2021. As the pandemic situation was adverse at each partner institution (a lot of people affected by the disease and some tragic outcomes), the request to move the date of report submission from 31/05/2021 to 31/07/2021 was approved. Taking into account the vacation period, the coordinator was contacted by the Executive Agency via e-mail stating that the final report submission deadline is 31/08/2021.

The entire communication between the coordinator and the Executive Agency with the corresponding documentation can be found in the Project Management folder.

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<sup>27</sup> Call for Proposal EAC/A04/2015, Introducing competence – based preschool teacher education curricula in Bosnia and Herzegovina (TEACHER), DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT, pp. 50 – 53.

## 6.2. LFM – LOGICAL FRAMEWORK MATRIX

The LFM – Logical Framework Matrix <sup>28</sup> lists the following data: wider objective, specific objectives, project indicators, how the indicators will be measured, assumptions and risks, and it represents the project's logical framework. Through insight into the project work packages and the matrix analysis, it can be concluded that the project work package activities, i.e., goals and tasks, are completely compliant with the logical matrix, which shows a harmonised dynamics of the project implementation according to the logical framework from the presented LFM.

## 7. PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES AND THE METHOD OF OVERCOMING UNPLANNED CIRCUMSTANCES

Through insight into the entire documentation, it can be concluded that the project faced the following challenges during the implementation process:

- a) Keeping the partner institutions' teams together from the beginning to the end of the project
- b) Study programmes' accreditation processes in BiH
- c) The Covid-19 pandemic.

### **a) Keeping the partner institutions' teams together from the beginning to the end of the project.**

Due to the long duration of the project, it is extremely difficult to keep one and the same team together from the beginning to the end of the project. Different factors affect team sustainability and work continuity from the beginning to the end of the project.

If the members of the Higher Education Institution project team decide to change their work environment and leave the Higher Education Institution, regardless of the fact that they were included in the project development, this Higher Education Institution must name other project team members, which can create a problem in continuing the work and functioning of the team at the Consortium level.

Other circumstances leading to changes in team composition, such as illness, private reasons or professional circumstances, also represent situations creating a problematic relationship, inevitably leading to certain setbacks until the functional climate is established alongside the new team, i.e. until the appointment of new members.

Even the TEACHER project faced this challenge in the Higher Education Institution THE MANCHESTER METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY, United Kingdom.

In the project application, team members were assigned, starting the project but briefly remaining in this position so the MMU Higher Education Institution completed the project with entirely different team members in relation to the ones it entered into the project. The reasons for this situation lie in the change of the team members' work environment as well as private and business circumstances affecting their team resignation.

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<sup>28</sup> Call for Proposal EAC/A04/2015, Introducing competence – based preschool teacher education curricula in Bosnia and Herzegovina (TEACHER), DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT, pp. 45 – 49.

These changes would not pose a problem if the new team members were familiarised with the processes, documentation and responsibilities of their predecessors. The new MMU team members were included in all the activities requiring their engagement so the project tasks managed by the MMU team members were fulfilled according to the set goals.

Other partners did not have oscillations in the team composition so the activities stipulated by the work packages were implemented according to the set tasks and project goals.

### **b) Study programmes' accreditation processes in BiH**

The second challenge met by the BiH Higher Education Institutions is the study programmes' accreditation procedures. This challenge could not have been affected by the partners since it falls under the jurisdiction of state authorities, specifically cantonal authorities because education in BiH falls under cantonal jurisdiction. By studying the work package 5 documentation concerning the accreditation process, i.e., accreditation/licensing and implementation of the innovated curricula, as well as that stipulated by the work package 6 related to quality, the efforts made by the partner institutions who tried to find ways to implement the TEACHER study programmes' accreditation procedure are clearly perceived. The BiH partner institutions were not passive when it comes to the situation which was, and still is, unresolved when it comes to the study programmes' accreditation. The reports submitted by the institutions clearly state that they have done everything they could at their institutions, which is the most important, and the procedures they used were prescribed by the Agency for the Development of Higher Education and Quality Assurance, HEA. The partner institutions jointly tried to point out the accreditation problems at the meetings with HEA representatives and the Ministry of Civil Affairs, which were organised by the Erasmus Office, seeking assistance to overcome the situation they were not able to affect.

It is important that all Higher Education Institutions conducted the self-evaluation at their respective institutions so as to fulfil the work package 5 tasks and enable the project to continue. Since the accreditation process, according to the Decisions on Institutional Accreditation obtained by all project partner institutions, encompassed the study programmes including the Early Childhood Education and Care programmes, the institutional accreditation can be accepted as the only possible solution in the given circumstances.

### **c) The Covid-19 pandemic.**

The Covid-19 pandemic is unquestionably a global challenge faced by the humanity, and a challenge which changed the functioning of the world in all segments with a clear message that nothing will ever be as it was. Such a sentiment is also visible in the project since other forms of work developed during the pandemic alongside the acquisition of other skills and tools used to accomplish the project tasks which were not implemented before the Covid-19 pandemic.

The three-month period lasting from March to May is the period when everything was stopped, and there was no communication in the physical sense, resorting to online functioning. The project was implemented in such an environment. All initiated work package activities were stopped, and there was a long wait for the start of activities which had to be

organised through physical contacts and mediation. During the Covid-19 pandemic, the partners faced the challenges related to the methods and modes of operation on the one hand, and the absence of team members due to the spread of the virus on the other.

The documentation and analysis of the work packages clearly states the method used in organising the work which had not been completed. The online work method was approved by the Executive Agency in Brussels, and all the activities which could have been conducted online, with guidance and recommendation by the Executive Agency, were successfully completed, which is shown by the work package reports.

The Quality Assurance and Monitoring Committee monitored the implementation of activities, and communication between partners took place regardless of the pandemic.

The BiH partner institutions stated in their reports that they had a lot of infected people, including their team members. Luckily, there were no fatalities, but there were severe symptoms with long recovery.

The available documentation clearly states that all project partners made an effort to answer the new situation in the best possible way so that the project would not suffer. Mutual assistance and support was provided, and considering that many partners met with the online work method and tools used in the project for the first time, this support was also necessary, guaranteeing the successful project completion.

## **8. ATTITUDES ON THE BENEFITS AND ACHIEVEMENT OF THE SET PROJECT GOALS**

Through the overall insight into the project description, the methods in which the project originated and the project implementation course, we can express the following attitudes on the benefits and achievement of the project goals:

### **PROJECT BENEFITS**

- Students benefit from better curricula focused on building competences, better teaching and didactic approach of professors, better equipment used in lectures and during practice.
- The teaching and administrative staff benefit from the better teaching and didactic approach and improved interpersonal relationships.
- Participating Higher Education Institutions benefit from better reputation of the modernised and innovated curricula and teaching practice.
- Children, parents, preschool institutions and the local communities benefit from having more competent professionals working with children.
- Non-academic stakeholders associations benefit from the established cooperation with the academic sector which will foster further cooperation potentials in the years after project closure and offer education more aligned with the labour market needs.

## THE ACHIEVED IMPACT OF THE PROJECT

The overall project outreach was achieved through continuous information sharing, reflection and learning activities during and following the project lifecycle.

The specific approach to stakeholder management – adopted in the communication plan - ensured that new knowledge is integrated into the realistic change management plans. This process engaged people early on in the project and ensured the use of outputs long after its closure, especially because certain methods and tools were used, representing the future in the functioning of Higher Education Institutions. The expectations that the realisation of project activities results will strengthen the relations between academic and non-academic staff from the Higher Education Institutions were fulfilled. Project activities reinforced cooperation and built a strong network of (young) professionals in the field of Early Childhood Education and Care. Purchasing of equipment and training enabled a constant and swift interaction, increasing the potential for lifelong learning of the teaching staff.

Other European Union Higher Education Institutions may well be inspired to follow this process and start their own work on Early Childhood Education and Care curricula developments after the project results are published (through the available harmonisation plans).

Local experts, the media and Higher Education professionals will be reached by national and international openness of the targeted Higher Education Institutions which will bring about innovative practices and offer more competent and highly competitive teaching professionals.

The potential beneficiaries/end users: students at targeted Higher Education Institutions, decision-makers, the wider public, students at targeted partner Higher Education Institutions are given access to modern teaching methods, transversal skill training as well as better equipped teaching facilities. The project results will be used by decision-makers and wider public as relevant results which will be available in the educational resources beyond the project realisation.

Each European Union partner has provided the know-how in the field of its competitive advantage: MMU and UNIZG in curricula modernisation and innovation processes (WP. 2), while UAB and UMB were in charge of best practices in staff professional development (WP. 3 and WP. 4). All BH partner Higher Education Institutions hosted a minimum of 1 project event (including conferences, workshops, seminars and training), procuring the necessary equipment and participating in staff professional development activities. Each BiH partner institution carried out group activities resulting in modernising preschool teacher curricula, conducting the self-evaluation at the level of their institution.

Activities related to ensuring the stakeholders' and labour market involvement and project sustainability are confined to the national professional associations of preschools in BiH.

The project documentation and a brief insight into the budget clearly indicate that the activities budgetary allocation was based on project objectives which were set to be realistically achieved placing risk as the possible constraint of the operating environment, unaware that the project will face the Covid-19 pandemic circumstances leading to the inevitable introduction of new work forms which were not planned but were established as efficient models to be used in further activities.

This report did not concern the financial items since the finances and everything related to the cash flow are subject to the Financial report.

## 9. ATTITUDES ON THE AVAILABILITY, DISSEMINATION AND EXPLOITATION OF THE PROJECT OUTCOMES

Through the conducted work package 7 tasks, visibility of project activities, results and achievements as well as regular information dissemination to specific and wider public was ensured. The dissemination concerning the diffusion and promotion of project results and milestone processes had specifically planned activities which were implemented for this purpose. The project established strategies for favouring links between beneficiaries, students and professionals through continuous cooperation with local authorities and educational actors, bringing the TEACHER project into closer contact with society. The TEACHER project developed and promoted its visual identity, and the application of web technologies supported the dissemination of project results within the teams and towards a variety of public and private actors. Close cooperation and communication was established among the partners, which was crucial in ensuring the success of the project and sustaining further development of harmonised Early Childhood Education and Care curricula. Recognition of the studies at the national and international level was promoted with support of partner Higher Education Institutions.

The activities involved all Consortium members, contributing to continuous cooperation and connection between partner institutions. Using innovative communication methods enabled the traditional lessons to be supported and integrated with the technical digital tools able to offer the system that will by and large assist the project teams' activities, reducing the project costs and expediting the communication process as well as creating more efficient debates and decisions. The activities focusing on project visibility and publicity efforts included the regular maintenance of the project website and other social platforms, e-bulletins sent to the stakeholders as well as the interested public, and media appearances during the project implementation phase.

The work package 7 ensured the sustainability of results through intensive English language courses and soft skills local training sessions organised for the teaching staff.

The harmonised curricula were adopted by the governing authorities of the BiH Higher Education Institutions. Further exploitation of project results will be sustained and strengthened through the skills improvement strategy by each participating Higher Education Institution. The efforts made for institutional ownership of local stakeholders will allow for the benefits generated by the project to be continued once the programme funding comes to an end.

Sustainability was carefully planned with participation of all stakeholders through a Sustainability Strategy which provided for detailed follow-up activities and impact analysis.

Cooperation, mutual learning and exchange of practical experiences have created sustainable results by pooled resources so as to be prepared to tackle the challenges once the project closes.

Long-term multiplier effects include more coherent, more inclusive and integrative preschool education in BiH, as well as the increased teacher and student mobility rates, and further cooperation with associates from other European Higher Education Institutions.

## 10. CONCLUSIONS

The TEACHER project partnership brought together the skills of people from a range of disciplines covered by the project activities, contributing to the overall project objective and each of the specific ones.

All partners gave a maximum contribution to the project implementation as visible through the project documentation and the results achieved through the project realisation.

The very end of the project was definitely marked by the Covid-19 pandemic which affected the project completion timing and the implementation method of tasks within the work packages which were not completed.

Regardless of the circumstances presented as the challenges faced by the partner institutions in the project implementation, it can be concluded that the project was successfully completed with the implemented tasks and set goals.

### 10.1. Project implementation quality

Through insight into the work package implementation, partner and project documentation, it can be concluded that the TEACHER project was implemented and that the tasks set in all 8 work packages were successfully accomplished, which is confirmed by the provided documentation.

1. The Early Childhood Education and Care curricula of all 6 BiH partner institutions were modernised, which was the main idea and motivation of the project Consortium to create a harmonised, competence-based Early Childhood Education and Care study programme with EU partners' mentorship.
2. The procedures necessary for preparing, adopting and implementing the modernised curricula were carried out at the Higher Education Institutions, enrolling the new generations of students in the new programmes.
3. The professional competences of the teaching staff in soft skills and teaching methods were strengthened.
4. The procured equipment improved the quality of the teaching contents implementation and equipment of the teaching facilities at the partner institutions.
5. The higher education quality was improved in the field of Early Childhood Education and Care.
6. The number of students enrolling in the Early Childhood Education and Care study programme was increased.
7. Better job market opportunities have been established in the field of Early Childhood Education and Care, which were brought by the programme harmonisation and modernisation.

The project, i.e., BiH Higher Education Institutions as the project partner institutions have, through joint work, shown that it is possible to create a joint programme adapted to the requirements of each institution and the governing educational authorities at the level of BiH as a country despite the differences in the legal procedures and cantonal regulations.



## **10.2. Contribution to the European cooperation**

The participation of EU partners in the TEACHER project increased the value of educational results obtained through the project. The connection established with the EU partners and the opportunity for visiting and witnessing the EU partners' practical experiences are the benefits of the BiH Higher Education Institutions which have been transferred to the environments of each Higher Education Institution.

Sharing the obtained experience and getting closer to the EU standards is surely the contribution of the project itself and something the Higher Education Institutions will work on in the future.

Harmonising the Early Childhood Education and Care study programmes with the EU partners' mentorship represents a contribution accomplished through the opportunity to exchange staff, students and knowledge in the EU area through the harmonised Early Childhood Education and Care approaches.

The project results presented in this report provide a contribution to the European cooperation and encourage other Higher Education Institutions to be innovative and adopt a different approach towards their work model so as to modernise the BiH Higher Education Area.

Disseminating the project results and presenting the EU partners' experience also represents a contribution to the European cooperation and promotion of the European partners' values.

## **10.3. Innovation**

The project has integrated the work of the Higher Education Institutions who are the BiH project partners and offered an innovative work approach. Joint results were accomplished respecting the legislative differences and diversity of the educational authorities at the cantonal levels of the Higher Education Institutions.

The project offered new courses, new methods, new teaching staff competences, and a new approach to participants in ECEC.

The very fact that, so far, projects in Early Childhood Education and Care have not been funded by the EU in Bosnia and Herzegovina and that this is a new type of project confirms the innovative approach of the project Consortium and its innovative elements and novelties which the project generated.

The project implementation during the Covid-19 pandemic has offered certain innovative solutions which have not been planned by the project and which have been approved by the Executive Agency in Brussels. This is also an indicator that the TEACHER project created the possibility for new work models which will surely become the future of the higher education system not only in BiH and the EU but also on a global scale.

## **10.4. Dissemination**

Through its realisation and implementation, the project has disseminated its results towards the population interested in its activities, placing the Early Childhood Education and Care at the centre of attention in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The project results presented at the Higher Education Institutions, the dissemination conference and media appearances of the Higher Education Institution representatives, as seen in the materials presented within the work packages, drew attention to the importance of modernising the curricula educating the

future Early Childhood Education and Care pedagogues, which is the greatest project benefit. All project partners presented the project results in accordance with the activities present at their institutions.

The TEACHER project has, through the dissemination activities, made the Early Childhood Education and Care study programme more attractive and inviting for future students.

### **10.5. Sustainability**

The accomplished project goals and tasks are the greatest warranty for project sustainability as seen through the analysis of the work packages and the generated project impact.

By increasing the attractiveness of the Early Childhood Education and Care study programmes at all Higher Education Institutions - BiH partners - we ensured the project sustainability.

Improving the teaching staff competences created the possibility for transferring knowledge and organising different types of education which will, in the BiH partner Higher Education Institutions collective, expand the staff pool able to implement the goals and tasks of a modernised project.

Implementing the tasks at the Higher Education Institutions which the project defines as activities that will continue after the project completion, we contribute to the future project sustainability.

Realising the ideas provided by the partner institutions participating in the project, which are related to the development and extension of continuous cooperation in the domain of experience sharing and development in the area of Early Childhood Education and Care, the project will accomplish the sustainability goals in the long run.

The methods applied in the project implementation, which have been imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic, have opened new ways of sustainability by connecting not only with the EU but also the entire world, which can significantly affect the future continuation of the initialised harmonisation and an increase in work quality in Early Childhood Education and Care.