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ASSESSMENT OF METHODOLOGY AND MATERIALS OF PA TEACHING AND ITS RELEVANCE FOR PRACTICE - VARNA FREE UNIVERSITY “CHERNORIZETS HRABAR”

**The analysis of practical relevance of programme competences
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1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the project in this IO1 phase is stated as: »to provide data for an analyses how the PA curricula is linked to practice, and analyses of the gap between competences needed in practical work in public administration and those obtained in the educational programmes.« I.e., we should assess the relevance of the competences of our programmes for practice – and our programmes differentiate substantially, if you scrutinize them, which means that we have also different competences listed. Thus, programme competences are starting points. Not to mention, that needs for practice might differentiate. Furthermore, this output of IO1 serves also as **an input for IO5** (Methodological framework for development of competences relevant for practice), finally as international evaluations of PA programmes and feasibility studies for suggested improvements.

Moreover, according to the arrangements, we should scrutinize and review only our own programmes, and, furthermore, **PA related programmes** exclusively (not as parts of mainly legally or policy or economics oriented but autonomous programmes; i.e., a rough benchmark should be EAPAA accreditation eligibility criteria – these criteria should be taken under consideration in advance). Scrutinized should be, if possible, **MA level programmes** only, due to the application's theoretical grounds (*Staronova & Gajduschek, Brans & Coenen, etc.*), a more developed PA specific competences on this level and more convergent state of the art to gain comparable results; and only **programme-specific competences**, that is PA (in general, as stated in accredited programmes) are in the core study of this project.

1.1 . PROGRAMME DESCRIPTION

Master's degree in Public Administration and Management at Varna Free University "Chernorizets Hrabar" is carried out by the Department of Administration, Management and Political Science, part of the Faculty of International Economics and Administration. It can be traced back to 1998, when the first class of postgraduate students in Public Administration have been accepted. More specifically, a Master's Program in "Central State Administration" was established in that year.

In connectin with the accession of Bulgaria to the European Union and in response to the new demands of the labor market which was characterized by increased internalization and high requirements for administrative employees, in 2004 the MA program "Public Administration and Management - European Administration" was established. This program is one of the broad range of unique master's degrees that are offered in the Varna Free University (there are no similar programs in other Bulgarian universities). These programs are taking into account the needs of employers and in their frameworks, the practical and training sides of the theoretical courses are enhanced.

The **Master's program "Public Administration and Management - European Administration"** is in compliance with the Higher Education Act in force in the Republic of Bulgaria, the state requirements for the Master's degree and the world educational practices. The academic diplomas have unconditional European and national legitimacy, determined by:

- awarded national accreditation by the National Agency for Assessment and Accreditation within the framework of the program accreditation of the professions "Administration and Management", with the next accreditation in 2019;
- award of the European Diploma Application "DS Label";
- Conducted training in modern curricula coordinated with the regulations of the European University Credit Transfer System (ECTS) and the international quality management standards ISO 9001: 2015.

During the time at Varna Free University, the students have access to modern lecture halls, specialized cabinets, electronic library. They can use a hotel-style residence, a student canteen and buffet restaurants, a health center with balneology, a gym, sports facilities and an Internet café. In the process of quality assurance and access to up-to date information the following tools are used: 1.) academic mobility for students and staff is promoted and facilitated thanks to the expanding opportunities in the European educational space; 2.) professional memberships of the university and of the department and 3.) participation in the activities of the European Association of Universities, the Black Sea University Network, the Bulgarian-Russian Educational Association, NISPAcee, IASIA and others.

The mission and objectives of the Master's program follow and fulfill the general missions and objectives of the university and represent their concretization.

The mission of the Master's program in Public Administration and Management - European Administration is:

- to establish its position as a leading academic program among other similar programmes in the country, providing a stable base for professional development of the graduate students;
- to offer market-oriented high-quality training and to address the needs of public administration and non-governmental organizations.

The main objectives of the Master's program can be defined as follows:

- to offer specialized training on problems and challenges that the administration is facing currently, taking into account the contemporary European requirements for the administrative activity;
- to achieve high quality learning based on knowledge, skills and good practices;
- to enhance competence-based qualifications and professional competences in order to facilitate the problem-solving in the field of administrative and management activities in the context of the changing world;
- to help students to develop complex research skills and to teach them how to use modern research tools in order to facilitate the implementation of applied researches in the practice fulfilling all the stated requirement;
- to prepare competent, creative professionals with critical thinking that have a desire for self-development and lifelong learning and are not only capable to assume leadership positions in the public administration but are also willing to work in Bulgarian institutions and in the EU institutions.

A competitive advantage of this program is the integrated skills approach. The study duration of this Master's program differs depending on the previously acquired academic degree: for

bachelors in the "Administration and Management" is two-semester and for bachelors in another professional field is three semesters. The main focus lies on acquisition of the integrated knowledge and skills needed to understand the effective cooperation/ interaction between public administration and business administration when absorbing EU funds. For this purpose, during the training, interactive training methods such as business games, case studies, development of specific administrative and managerial tasks and projects are implemented. The Master's students, that are enrolled in this program, are expected to actively participate in all of them.

The main learning outcomes are the formation of the necessary general and specific competences that are described in more detail in point 1.2. and 1.3. In general, after successfully finishing the degree program, graduates are expected to be able to:

- apply the theoretical knowledge in the analysis and evaluation not only of real facts from the administration but also of the administrative phenomena. They have to place their perspective in the context of European integration;
- apply acquired creative skills and problem-solving skills in order to analyze and evaluate administrative problems and situations and to generate management decision alternatives;
- apply acquired communication skills (including negotiation, teamwork, etc.).

The figures and statistics from the last 14 years on student and Master's degree program at Varna Free University show sustainability. Namely- the average annual number of enrolled students lies between 28 and 30 and the average annual number of graduates is between 18 and 20. The VFU's Master in PA puts graduates in an excellent position to pursue a wide range of career opportunities in numerous sectors:

- EU institutions and other European and international organizations - as senior officials and experts;
- state and territorial administration, public service organizations, etc .;
- the business sector - in companies operating in the EU's single market;
- consulting and research companies that directly work in the field of the absorption of EU funds;
- the non-governmental sector - in organizations that operate in the field of 'European interest representation';
- media and information centers that cover the problems in administration as well as the interaction of EU institutions with business and civil society.

In accordance to the national high education requirements, the Master's program "European Administration" consists of three 3 modules (compulsory, elective and facultative courses) for bachelors in Public Administration and has a 4-th additional one for Bachelor's degree graduates in other specialties. The modules are listed below:

Module of compulsory courses comprises: Global problems of modernity; Legal and Institutional System of the EU-Policies and Mechanisms; Social Interactions and Teamwork; European Administrative Space. Transformation of Administrative System; EU Regional Development - Challenges and Perspectives; EU Structural Instruments and Their Application in Bulgaria; Public Sector Risk Management.

Module of elective courses consists of: European Foreign Policy; Comparative Public Administration; E-Governance at Public Organizations; Project Management Development; Public Sector Change Management; Administrative Outsourcing; European Cooperation and Territorial Integration; Leadership under Crisis Circumstances.

Module of facultative courses includes: Combating Administrative Corruption; Administration and Media; European Initiatives for Black Sea Cooperation; European Marketing; Administrative Conflicts Management; Public Domain Event Management.

Module of equivalent courses (for Bachelor's or /and Master's degree holders in other majors) contains: Politics and Government; Administrative Law and Process; Local Self-governance and Regional Development; Sociology of Governance; Psychology of Management; State Power and State Administration.

During the course of the study, Master students are offered the possibility to do internships and practicums within the Administration of EC in Brussels, the Mission of the Republic of Bulgaria to the European Communities, Committee of Regions and others; municipality administration in Germany and France; administration of high state authorities, regional, municipal and deconcentrated administrations and etc.

1.2 . LIST OF GENERAL COMPETENCES FOR THE PROGRAMME¹

A. Communication and Emotional Intelligence

- A1. Communication in Native and Foreign Language – competences to communicate in an appropriate way in different social and cultural situations
- A2. Persuasive Communication – competences to plan and deliver oral and written communication that make an impact and persuade the intended audiences
- A3. Building Collaborative Relationships– competences to develop maintain and strengthen partnerships with others inside or outside the organization who can provide information, assistance and support
- A4. Competences to use the emotional information –to be guided through thinking and behaviour

B. Technologies and Digital Competences

- B1.IT Knowledge – competences to apply the IT knowledge and methods in reply to administrative necessities

¹In Bulgaria, according to national regulations on assessment and accreditation, there is no practice to accredit an explicit list of general and specific competencies of the master's programs. Specific knowledge and skills are described in the qualification curriculum of the programs as well as in the respective curricula for the individual disciplines, which are an integral part of the curriculum and a mandatory element of the accreditation procedure. The lists of general and specific competencies proposed in this report are a summary of the knowledge and skills acquired as a result of masters training and form the requisite professional competence for graduating students. The list of general competencies for the Master's program "European Administration" is adapted to: https://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/school/competences_bg - Information on the web page of European Commission/ Education and Training; <http://en.competencemap.bg/> - Information on the web page of National Network for Competences Assessment; Lifelong learning — key competences, European Commission, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=LEGISSUM:c11090> (accessible at 02/13/2019); National strategy for Life Long Learning for the period 2014 – 2020 (2014), Ministry of Education and Science, <http://www.strategy.bg/StrategicDocuments/View.aspx?Id=880> (accessible at 02/13/2019)

B2. Digital Competence – competences to confident use of information society's technologies for work and communication in communities and networks on public and professional purposes

C. Self-management Competences

C1. Personal Effectiveness and Time Management Skills – competences to organize and execute actions, intended to plan and control the time for different activities which are directed to future situations management

C2. Initiative, enterprise and innovation – competences to transform the ideas to actions, including creativity, taking risks and project management capability

C4. Flexibility, adaptability, facilitating change – competences to do things on different and new ways, willingness to modify one's preferred way of doing things

C5. Personal Credibility – competences to demonstrate concern that one be perceived as responsible, reliable, and trustworthy.

C6. Stress Management – competences to keep functioning effectively when under pressure and maintain self-control in the face of hostility or provocation

D. Continuous Learning and Improvement – competences to persevere and succeed in learning, to look for new learning opportunities and apply already learned to various professional situations

1.3 . LIST OF PROGRAMME-SPECIFIC COMPETENCES FOR THE PROGRAMME²

A. Competences to lead and manage in public governance

A1. Competences to develop expertise in professional field

A2. Competences to model the skills and power of leadership

A3. Competences to develop ability to network and cooperate at complex hierarchical systems

A4. Competences to produce consensus or consent among diverse stakeholders

B. Competences to participate in and contribute to the policy process

B1. Competences to develop capacity to analyze policy process, implementation and evaluation

B2. Competences to analyze policy issues from multidisciplinary perspectives

B3. Competences to design policy-implementation methodology

C. Competences to analyze, think critically, solve problems and make decisions in the public domain

C1. Competences to select and apply appropriate methods, techniques and tools to analyst and solve problems

C2. Competences to create networked/collaboration solution to complex problems

C3. Competences to identify evaluate and model best practices

C4. Competences to use the results of research for decision-making

²The list of general competences for the European Administrative Master's program is adapted to: Haupt, B., N. Kapucu & Q. Hu (2013) Core competences in Master of public administration programs: Perspectives from local government managers, (pp. 611 – 624), http://www.naspaa.org/JPAEMessenger/Article/VOL23-1/JPAE%2023_01%2020170118%2007_Haupt.pdf (accessible at 02/13/2019); Reichard C & van der Krogt T (2014) Towards a set of specific competences for academic degree programmes in Public Administration in Europe, The 22nd NISPAcee Conference, Budapest, 22–24 May 2012, pp. 1-19

D. Competences to articulate and apply public service perspectives

- D1. Competences to understand and handle problems with regard to the economic, political, legal and sociological reality
- D2. Competences to communicate public interest based on ethical reasoning and democratic participation
- D3. Competences to value and demonstrate commitment to professionalism and integrity in serving public sector
- D4. Competences to analyze and solve problems from the perspective of third parties, particularly politicians, professionals, citizens and representatives of civic organizations
- D5. Competences to apply policy agendas to the decision making process, adapting activities to suit specific public services context

E. Competences to communicate and interact productively in the public domain

- E1. Competences to incorporate various communication tools and strategies in the management of public organizations
- E2. Competences to model the skills of interaction with politicians, professionals, citizens and non-profit organizations
- E3. Competences to develop an ability to co-operate in multidisciplinary teams and communicate in an intercultural context
- E4. Competences to negotiate interest-based resolutions with stakeholders experiencing conflict

F. Competences to understand public domain

- F1. Competences to make use of the theoretical knowledge of the PA-related disciplines to analyze and solve problems in the public domain
- F2. Competences to compare and evaluate different PA systems

2. COMPETENCE SCREENING HISTORY AT THE DEPARTMENT OR FACULTY LEVEL

2.1 . HISTORY OF PREVIOUS COMPETENCE SCREENING ENDEAVOURS

At VFU “Chernorizets Hrabar”, the screening and reviewing of competences, programmes structure, its accordance to the needs of the practice and perception of students about the quality of education is an already established tool and part of the internal quality assurance system.

The Department of Administration, Management and Political Science (with professional fields – Administration and Management; Political Science) is responsible for the delivery of the **Master's program "Public Administration and Management - European Administration"** and being part of the Faculty of International Economics and Administration, every year, the Department realizes:

- **Inquiry among students about their assessment of the quality of the educational process.** At university level, according to Order No. 3 on the academic staff, annual surveys among students are foreseen with the purpose of assessing the overall quality of the educational process. The queries are conducted by the department according to an approved model of the questionnaire and the results are reported to the Faculty Council.
- The department of Administration, Management and Political Science conducts **queries among students with the purpose to assess their satisfaction of the simultaneous teaching by lecturer and practitioner**, undertaken in all programmes of the department with the purpose to improve the overall quality off the educational process.

In the period 28.05.2013 - 27.02.2015, at university level has been realized the project BG051PO001-3.1.07-0029 "Actualization of the study documentation and educational process at VFU "Chernorizets Hrabar" in correspondence to the requirements of the labour market". The project was realized under the "Human Resource Development" programme of the European Social Fund of the EU. Partners in the realization of the project were: the Nacioanal Association of firms for trade security and safety, Sofia; Bulgarian Association of Software Companies (BASSCOM), Sofia; Chamber of Commerce, Varna. Description of the project is to be found in App. 2. The following activities were undertaken within the project:

- A **primary research of the needs of the employers' organizations of cadres in the professional field of Administration and Management for the Public Administration and Management Programmes**, Bachelor's degree was carried out. A questionnaire was used for this purpose. The aggregated results of the survey (see App. 3) conducted were used to prepare a profile of the needs of consumer organizations by staff in the field of Public Administration and Management.
- A **primary research of the employers' organizations needs regarding the knowledge, skills and competences that the students of the Public Administration and Management programmes**, Bachelor's degree should acquire for successful realization in practice has been carried out. For this purpose questionnaire was used. The aggregated results of the survey (see App. 4) were used to prepare a profile of competences in the Administration, Management and Political Sciences department for the Public Administration and Management programmes.

2.2 . MAIN FINDINGS

Assessment of competences is an approach that allows to organizations to define human capital requirements, assess discrepancies between these requirements and the real degree of readiness of their employees, and to engage in the development of such action and training programs to eliminate these differences.

In accordance with the objectives of project BG051PO001-3.1.07-0029, a survey of 30 practitioners involved in the management of public sector organizations was conducted in the period September-December 2013 with the purpose to define the competences that the respective managers and employees are expected to possess. The summarized results of the survey were presented at a working seminar - a discussion with the Branch Board of

Trustees, which discussed the proposed competency profiles in the updated curricula and programs of the Public Administration and Management Programmes at the department of Administration, Management and Political Science, to the Faculty of International Economics and Administration of VFU "Chernorizets Hrabar".

Below are proposed main findings about the required skills and competences of employees to meet the needs of public sector organizations in the Republic of Bulgaria, based on the researches and activities on the project.

The summarized results of the survey (See App 3 and App 4) and the meetings and seminars with employers and representatives of the Branch Board of Trustees to the professional field of Administration and Management show that future specialists with high potential for management and implementation activities are realized in the system management in various sectors of the public sector such as managers, consultants, analysts, researchers, contractors and others. They need to be able to orient themselves in **socio-economic and organizational-technical situations, to possess entrepreneurship, analytics, initiative and social activity, knowledge of human psychology.**

The most important (over 50%) are the **communication skills, continuous skill and improvement, emotional intelligence - adequate social and working behavior, flexibility, adaptability, ease of change, leadership and entrepreneurial competences**. The following (between 40% and 50%) are the **language culture, the normative competence (knowledge and application of standards and requirements), the computer skills and the work with specific software products, the cooperation skills, the command of another language.**

In the discussions with the employers and the Branch Board of Trustees to professional field Administration and Management the emphasis is on the need for the employees, specialists and experts, to have more knowledge about: **administrative procedures and quality policies, time management, management of administrative processes, the specifics of the logistics operations,, incl. and event planning, as well as forecasting; financial and accounting knowledge, knowledge of human resources management, knowledge of business correspondence, knowledge of organization and planning of marketing activities, etc.**

Employers believe that skills are essential for: **teamwork, document processing, self-decision making, communication and dealing with clients, dealing with unforeseen situations; organizational skills; planning of activities and processes; computer skills** a.o.

At national level, concerning the profile of the competences, expected by the public sector of the Republic of Bulgaria, of a separate interest should be the difficulties and problems towards the recruitment of competent specialists in the field of the Public administration and Management, identified by the Public Administration Institute of the country³, and namely:

- There is missing a system for human resource planning in the administration. Positions are not designed to meet the changing needs of the administration, resulting in low staff efficiency. There are a number of recruitment and selection competitions that fail to provide staff with the necessary skills.
- There is a need to introduce flexible working conditions, which would lead to more efficient use of the employees in the administration and to increase their motivation.

³ Analysis of the education needs of the servants in state administration, PA institute, 2015.

- There is a growing interest in the career development systems of the employees in the administration, for which the HRM experts should be timely and adequately prepared. Much of the mentoring and coaching programs are expected to make it easier to get in work and increase employee productivity. Another positive effect of the implementation of these practices would be the better continuity and transfer of knowledge to the administration.

It is generally considered that the normative tools for motivating people in the administration are insufficient. This leads to the conclusion that managers need to **increase their skills to motivate people**, as well as reviewing and refining existing tools, even if a change in the legal framework is needed. There is also a need to develop **negotiating skills**. **There is a need to refine the skills to formulate goals and to prioritize, to deal with many important and urgent tasks in a short period of time, and to tie the goals and activities for their implementation with the necessary budget. Difficulties are also encountered in formulating organizational values and turning them into shared values of the people in the organization.**

The *creation of a profile of competences in the public sector of the Republic of Bulgaria* is conditioned by some preliminary regulatory requirements. The Civil Servant Act generally addresses the requirements for civil servants. The Law on Administration and the Associated Classification Officer of the Administration indicate the distribution of positions at the official levels and the minimum requirements for the occupation of each position. **They are defined only by the degree (in most cases the Master) and by the professional experience measured in the number of years of the respective position.**

The specific requirements for occupying a particular position are determined by relevant regulations, internal rules, etc. normative acts. Additional requirements in most cases include digital and / or linguistic competence, depending on the specificity of the position. In general, the basic and additional requirements are mainly related to the qualification, which is evidenced by diplomas, certificates and other documents. The skills, attitudes and values that the candidate for the position must possess are rarely checked. However, the rapid development of requirements for the administration itself will soon put forward the introduction of a competence approach in the recruitment of employees in the public sector, as well.

Executive bodies and their administrations are key actors in the process of developing and implementing public policies. According to the Methodology for Strategic Planning developed in 2010 by the Council for Administrative Reform, more than 30 laws define the obligation of the state authorities to develop strategies. The Law on Administration also regulates the coordination mechanisms in the strategic planning process. The Council of Ministers formulates, develops and implements state policy and adopts the strategic documents prepared by the respective ministers. At the territorial level, the development of a system of strategic planning documents related to regional development and policy, as well as private municipal strategies, is mandatory.

From this perspective, in general, the training in the Public Administration Management programmes of VFU "Chernorizets Hrabat" aims to prepare highly qualified civil servants, specialists and experts in public administration and management to work competently and loyally in responsible positions in the administration in the conditions of changing the socio-political and economic environment in the European Union and the world. They should have common theoretical knowledge and practical skills to: efficiently assist state and local authorities and conduct national and local policy; timely and quality delivery of public services to citizens and businesses on the basis of European standards and good governance

standards; capacity building for the full integration of the Bulgarian administration with the European administrative area, as well as for the efficient absorption of the funds from the European funds

In the development of curricula and programs, the focus is set on the need to prepare competent management and executive staff in the field of public management, taking into account the experience and good practices of leading European and American universities, institutes and schools in this field on the basis of exchange of ideas, lecturers and students among them.

As a result of the training, specific knowledge is acquired concerning: the Bulgarian and European institutional, administrative and legal system; the role and place of administration in the public sector, as well as its interaction with civil society and business; principles, challenges and forms of successful realization of the goals set in the field of government and local self-government; the interpretation and application of European and Bulgarian regulatory documents concerning governance, policies and practices in the public sector; strategic and tactical governance in the public sphere, as well as more widespread approaches, methods and technologies for its practical implementation in the various sectors of government, local self-government and civil society; selection, attestation, staff development and motivation of employees in the new high-professional, depolitic and mobile administration; the modern requirements and standards in the compilation and shaping of the management and administrative documentation; the main state legal and political structures of the European Union, European principles and good practices in administrative activity; challenges and responsibilities to the Bulgarian administration in accordance with the European criteria and requirements and the expectations of the Bulgarian society for a competent and economical administration.

In line with the European Competence Framework, the preparation of students in all levels of Public Administration and Management education (Bachelor's, Master's and PhD) at the department of Administration, Management and Political Sciences at the Faculty of International Economics and Administration of VFU "Chernorizets Hrabar" stimulates the development of the following transferable skills and competences:

Skills to: Identify problems in the field of policy and practices in government, local self-government and the public sector and their hierarchical prioritization according to the chain of "goals–priorities– activities -tasks"; a sound use of public procurement and public choice mechanisms, as well as of those for enhancing the quality of public services for individuals and legal entities; analyzing and diagnosing the degree of correspondence between the powers of the state authorities and the activity of the administration; forming a professional position and defining the tools for creating and implementing public strategies at different levels of government; competently assessing current processes and trends in a globalizing world in view of their predictability; performing functional and structural analyzes to optimize the functions and structure of the administration and to improve the quality of the preparation of public decisions; use of modern technologies for development and implementation of public projects and programs and targeted complex events on topical public issues; adequate computer and language skills and communication skills in the European Administrative Space; Skills to work in the Internet environment; appropriate use of information technology in the administration.

Personal competences: autonomy, responsibility, correctness, accuracy; manifestation and constructive use of own initiative; self-motivation and continuing/vocational training attitude, self-improvement and personal development; communication and socialization - communication with different audiences and in a different environment, manifestation of empathy and solidarity, resistance to stress.

Professional competences :Recruiting, processing and interpreting data that is relevant to the specifics and technology of work in a national and international public environment; generating and evaluating innovative ideas, planning, organizing, conducting and analyzing specific tasks, activities and processes; conduct situational and strategic analyzes and management plans for the public sector in international and national environments, as well developing the related public policies; teamwork, constructive negotiation and conflict resolution, maintaining and developing personal labor efficiency.

2.3. CORRECTIVE ACTIONS ALREADY UNDERTAKEN

On 31.10.2013 a Branch Trusteeship was established at the professional field of Administration and Management. The Branch Board of Trustees is an advisory body on issues related to the training, research and applied research of the students. Under the accepted rules of work, they support the academic college in updating curricula and programs, including new disciplines in line with the needs of the labor market and business; for continuation of the training in more specialized courses of the next educational degree, conducting of scientific and applied research and research by the students, implementation of practices and internships during the training.

As a result of the discussions with students and consumer organizations, in the period 2014 – 2017, in the department of Administration, Management and Political Science 2 new curricula for Master's degree programmes in Public Administration and Management were developed, altogether 17 syllabuses were updated and 6 new syllabuses were included in the curricula of Bachelor's students, with the purpose to be built up within the new Master's Programmes that were created.

List of updated curricula of Public Administration and Management, Bachelor's Programme

- **Public administration and management**, 2013-2014, based on: Recommendation of the Branch Board of Trustees and in the frameworks of project BG051PO001-3.1.07-0029 "Actualization of the study documentation and educational process at VFU "Chernorizets Hrabar" in correspondence to the requirements of the labour market"
- **Public administration and management**, 2014-2015, based on: Recommendation of the Branch Board of Trustees and in the frameworks of project BG051PO001-3.1.07-0029 "Actualization of the study documentation and educational process at VFU "Chernorizets Hrabar" in correspondence to the requirements of the labour market"

List of new curricula of Public Administration and Management, Master's Programme

- **European Administration**, 2016/2017, based on: request and proposal of candidate students, because of their interest towards the European administration
- **Education Management**, 2016/2017, based on: change in the legislation (Order № 12/01.09.2016 for the statute and professional development of the pedagogical specialists⁴) and identified interest by practitioners in the education sphere

⁴ Order № 12/01.09.2016 for the statute and professional development of the pedagogical specialists – published SG 75 / 27.09.2016, active since 27.09.2016

List of syllabyses (teaching subjects) included in the curricula of the Public Administration and Management, Bachelor`s Programme and underlied actualization of their contents

- Introduction To Management
- Introduction To Entrepreneurship
- Online Positioning Of The Organization
- Organization And Technology Of Management
- Governance And Administration
- Human Resource Management
- Administrative Law And Process
- Local Financial And Investment Policy
- Conflict Management
- Approaches And Mechanisms For Ppublic Sector Ownership Management
- Sustainable Development
- Local Self-Government And Regional Development
- Spatial Planning
- Tools And Mechanisms For Public-Private Partnerships
- Organizational Behavior
- Strategic Governance In The Public Sphere
- Environmental Management

List of new syllabyses (teaching subjects) included in the curricula of the Public Administration and Management, Bachelor`s Programme

- Vizualization And Interaction
- Legal Protection Of Busness
- Crowdsourcing And Crowdfunding
- Behavioural Research And Analyses
- Coaching And Management
- Application Of Reengineering In Administartive Environment

2.4. BRIEF SUMMARY

The research on the opinion of employers and consumers of employess at VFU “Chernorizets Hrabar” is conducted at different levels - department, faculty, university. The Board of Trustees of the VFU and the Branch Trustees of the Administration and Management and the Political Science Ministry maintain good contacts with the users of cadres from the state and municipal structures of the region and with the private companies, thanks to which the current trends in the respective field are being subject of discussion and therefore curricula and programs are being updated.

What concerns the state and condition of competences in the public sector of the Republic of Bulgaria, according to the researches of VFU “Chernorizets Hrabar” as a whole and of the department of Administration, Management and Political Sciences, as the unit responsible for Public Administration And Management Programmes, the following conclusions can be drawn:

- There is relative durability and stability in the competence of the majority of positions in the public sector. The important changes are related to the modifications in the structure of the relevant organizations and mainly to the development of the responsibilities and

competences of some key positions related primarily to human resources management, public enterprise, partnership development, knowledge and technology transfer, strategic and operational management, project management, innovation management, organizational change management.

- Increasingly important for the activities of the organizations and the work of the specialists in them is the presence, respectively - building the so-called workers' soft skills: coping with problems, teamwork, communication skills, work with people, results orientation, etc. They lead to a better deal with the tasks assigned to the job and better quality of the end product.

3. METHODOLOGY

Methodological Guidelines

To study the relevance of the studying programme for practice is used combination of established and innovative approaches.

This research question requires getting participants to share and compare their experiences with each other in order to explore issues of common interest and importance, to develop and generate ideas. That is why when screening the competences of particular programme, the approach of **focus groups (FGs)** is adopted. As well, focus groups are frequently used as a qualitative approach to gain an in-depth understanding of the research issues despite of being more expensive and time consuming than quantitative evaluating procedures and difficulties to get everyone in the same place at the same time.

As, such given the project focus, the main question that ought to be answered by programme **competence screening is, which of them are relevant for practice (and to what extent – i.e., competences theory-practice fit)**. Therefore, the analysis as such should focus on the **screening/evaluation of programme-specific competences for practice**. It needs to be stressed that **the sole focus is on programme-specific competences of programmes and not on general ones**, according to the project proposal, since we want to identify the matching of those that relate specifically to PA (MA level) programmes. Moreover, the empirical study will try also to identify **the missing competences that** research will put forward. By doing this, we would be able to identify the **gaps and variations in competences needed** in specific countries under consideration.

Several approaches for screening competences exist in practice. To enable theoretically sound and comparable results, the contemporary framework developed by Bergsmann et al. (2018), the so-called **Competence Screening Questionnaire for Higher Education**, is taken as a base. This framework enables flexible screening into which both alumni as well as employers, would be able to insert competences students of specific programmes should acquire in order to fit practice. Moreover, it also enables the comparison on the level of competences achieved at first and second cycle study programmes, general also besides specific one, since the programmes are taken as overall systems, and not summarisations of courses. This setting actually states that no single course builds the competence – i.e., course and content evaluation is thus narrow perspective, whereas this setting takes broader perspective, which enables us to extend the project after its closing to BA programmes and general competences.

Institutions of higher education that focus on competence-based teaching usually define competences students should acquire by a specific study programme. There are several approaches to screen competences of specific programmes. Given the fact that we have mainly competence-based higher education, one contemporary approach that we should consider utilizing is the **IQM-HE (2018)⁵ approach**, which was developed under the framework of *Erasmus+* co-financed project, and is thus, in its approach very generalistic as well as flexible and applicable to different fields. Thus, the screening focus on both cognitive and practical aspects of competences. Namely, this proposed model separates two dimension of competences, i.e., competences have two aspects: **a cognitive aspect (knowledge) and a practical aspect (skill)**. Furthermore, this methodological approach derives from competences and not from topics/contents of the courses within the programme, as we are (i) interested according to the project proposal to compare and screen competences; and (ii) aware that our sampled programmes differentiate substantially on their contents and structure, and we therefore cannot assume that single-form questionnaire might be plausible for this reason. The procedure has therefore two elements.

- **Element 1: Screening of existing competences of specific programmes:** The first element should focus on the screening of the existing competences, both their cognitive and practical aspects, where we specifically focus only on programme-specific competences, given the purposes of the study, and thus omit the general competences from screening. Since the PA MA programmes under screening have different competences defined, we should incorporate and evaluate them accordingly. Namely, we focus on these programmes, and competences listed differentiate, so this should necessarily be taken into account, when conducting the screening process. This holds in particular from the perspective of alumni's and employers' practical needs. Besides, screening enables variations in estimations of competence achievement, **from level none to level generation**, as in the tables from appendix to this document.
- **Element 2: Evaluation of programmes – missing competences and framework non-alignment:** The second element involves the reporting on the missing elements and competences' address in the existing programmes. This involves both alumni and employers' perspective, cognitive and practical, on existing competences listed in the specific programme under screening.

As far focus groups do not use probability or random samples, convenience sampling is utilized. Individuals with characteristics of the overall population of alumni and employers who can contribute to helping the research gain a greater understanding of the topic are sampled. They formed two groups of 5 people to be interviewed.

Members of the Alumni focus group are (professional field):

1. Administrative Manager
2. Associate Professor at Technical University of Varna
3. IT specialist
4. expert at Municipality of Varna

⁵ More on this proposed methodology and its screening steps see IQM-HE (2018): European Toolkit. Instructions to Implement the European Toolkit for Internal Quality Management in Competence-Based Higher Education. Application is generally speaking based on self-report data of alumni and employers. More on this see <http://www.iqm-he.eu/>.

5. employee at the Municipality of Varna

Members of the employers focus group are (institution):

1. Regional Information Centre (graduated her Doctor degree at Varna Free University)
2. Municipality of Varna (graduated his Bachelor and Master degree in Public Administration at Varna Free University)
3. Municipality of Varna (graduated her Bachelor and Master degree in Public Administration at Varna Free University)
4. Judicial Administration of District Court (graduated his Bachelor and Master degree in Public Administration at Varna Free University)
5. Administration of Varna District

It makes impression that almost all of the members of employers focus group are alumni of VFU “Chernorizets Hrabar”, as well but it has to be clarified that:

- They are not alumni of the Public Administration and Management – European Administration Master`s programme;
- 3 of them have started their professional development at the municipality of Varna after finishing their education at VFU;
- 1 of them chose to complete a PhD degree at VFU, after being already on a position in the municipality administration.

They were invited to take participation in the FG because of several reasons:

- Evidenced engagement towards the PA education quality;
- Personal experience with the education at VFU on the one hand, and on the other – with enrolment and training of new employees;
- Most of them are often invited as guest-lectors in master classes, seminars, lectures in order to improve the connection between theory and practice and to verify that the teaching content, which is proposed to the students, is actual and fits to the real necessities of the practice. Therefore, they have also impression on the attitude of the future graduates towards the civil service.

To ensure that alumni and employers all arrive with the same expectations, those expressing an interest in taking part were phoned and sent the same, pre-prepared introductory mail explaining what is expected of them, and what is the aim of this research and why is important, informing them that notes are going to be taken during the workshops and assuring confidentiality (see app. 5). Next to that all focus group members received the curricula of the Public Administration and management – European Administration Master`s programme, as well as the accreditation criteria of NEAA and EAPAA. They were asked to get informed with the materials in order to ensure better preparation for the discussion during the focus group.

Two weeks before the FG workshops semi-structured questionnaires were submitted (a Delphi technique). To verify the results and understand if there is need to repeat the submission of questionnaires, half-day workshop for individual FG was hold and moderated (nominal group technique).

As focus groups are led by a moderator who is responsible to ensure that group discussions remain focused on the research area the best choice seems to be experienced university professors who have been giving lectures and seminars for more than 20 years. Therefore,

they had no need to develop in addition prompts⁶ and probes⁷ for main questions. In order to be sure all the important research topics are going to be covered a list of questions is developed. It includes open-ended questions because the intent of the focus group is to promote discussion. Questions are like “What do you think of...”, “Can you name reasons why there is such a difference between...”, “What are perspectives for PA...”, “How do you evaluate”, “Are you aware with ...” etc. What do you think of the curricula in terms of balance between disciplines that form the interdisciplinary scope of the PA?

Subject of discussion in the FGA (alumni) were the following questions:

- What is your perception about the importance of the European accreditation of the PA education of the country? Would you think that the quality of education in a programme, that is accredited European level (by specialized in PA accreditation organization) would be higher? Would you apply for a programme, accredited under PA European accreditation standards? Do you think that if your diploma was accredited according to a special PA accreditation at European level, this would represent a significant competitive advantage when applying to civil service positions?
- Are you aware of the competences (common and specific) that you have acquired through your education in the Public Administration and Management – European Administration Master`s degree programme?
- According to your opinion, the development of which competences gives you greater advantage for your professional realization (the common or the specific, and which namely)?
- How would you evaluate the ratio between the theoretical and practical orientation of the disciplines in the curricula of the Public Administration and Management – European Administration Master`s degree programme?
- Are you satisfied by the volume of practical classes in the curricula? How do you think that the practical education in the programme can be improved and differentiated further?
- What do you consider as missing and/or not widely available during your education in the Master`s degree programme?
- To which extent during your education you have achieved confidence in your abilities to cope with the every-day tasks of a public domain position?

The questions, discussed during the FGB (employers) were:

- What according to your opinion would contribute more to the quality of education – better transfer of academic knowledge into practice or vice versa?
- Which according to your opinion are the general challenges towards the quality of PA education?
- What according to your opinion is the quality of PA training that is provided in the Master`s programme of Public Administration and Management - European Administration, based on the scope of the curricula?
- How do you evaluate the balance of the curriculum in terms of the level to which the disciplines cover main directions from the interdisciplinary scope of the PA (governance, law, politics and economics) and in terms of the competences and the disciplines of the curriculum cover?

⁶ Prompts are questions that facilitate discussion if there is not appropriate response to the original question.
⁷ Probes are questions that explore an issue in depth.

- Which competences are the most crucial for PA practical requirements, and which (also) for a disciplinary development? Are the common or specific competences more significant for the quality of work of the alumni, when they enter civil service?
- Is the quality of PA education in the county a national issue and is it influenced by post-communist/socialist transition issues, according to your opinion?
- In connection to the Europeanization, do you consider as necessary that an overall criteria and framework for quality of the PA education should be agreed on European level? From your perspective, would you evaluate higher cadres, which have graduated specialties accredited by supra-national accreditation bodies both in Europe or worldwide?

The role of the moderator is crucial when there is a particularly vocal or dominant participant. The moderator is supposed to prevent them from coercing others to agree with his/her opinion. So-called group thinking is highly probable to appear when in the group are participants on a managerial position. As it is the case of employers' FG.

Both workshops started with a welcome introduction to the participants. Which included an overview of the project and the research topic, statement of the ground rules of the focus group, the role of the mediator and participants and assurance of confidentiality.

Table 1 below, shows the schedule for planning the focus groups, according to the overall timetable of the project and the preliminary activities of the partners on the development of the research methodology, framework and guidelines.

Table 1

Schedule for Planning a Focus Group

Task	Time before actual focus group workshop
Study Purpose	12-16 Weeks
Identify the Participants	8-10 Weeks
Develop Participant Contact List	4-6 Weeks
Select the Facilitator	5 Weeks
Question Development. Revise as necessary.	4-16 Weeks
Develop the Script	4-5 Weeks
Pilot test to check online questionnaire. Revise as necessary.	4 Weeks
Identify and reserve focus group site (and just in case develop Plan B)	2-4 Weeks
Invite Participants	4 Weeks
Verify Invitation to Participants by Phone	4 Weeks
Send invitation to fill online questionnaire	3-4 Weeks
Send reminder to fill online questionnaire if necessary	2 Weeks
Verify Invitation to Participants by Phone	2 Weeks
Analyze data and prate report to present on the workshop	1 Week
Finalize Room Arrangements	1 Week
Reminder Call to Participants	2 days
Organize all Needed Materials	1-2 days

4. QUESTIONNAIRES – RESULTS& DISCUSSION

According to above described Methodology and following the steps of the procedure, an online survey was conducted from 2 to 4 weeks prior the workshop of the focus groups. The aim is exploring the gap between the quality of public administration training and the real needs of knowledge, skills and competences that graduates should acquire in order to be able to get a full-fledged career in this field in other words said exploring the dissonances between the labour market and the educational product offered by the Master's Degree Program Public Administration and Management - European Administration.

The main purpose of this analysis is to provide data as a basis for the discussion of focus groups and to enhance decisive actions in order to overcome one of the main criticisms on higher education i.e. its poor practical relevance to the needs of the labour market.

Data obtained are very context-specific and therefore not generalizable to other institutions or contexts.

4.1 . RESULTS – COMPETENCES SCREENING BY ALUMNI

In the first part of this analysis the alumni point of view is presented (see Apps. from 8 to 13) and conclusions and results from the discussions and the workshop with alumni (chapter 5. Discussion and Recommendations).

The alumni overall assessment of the level of competency acquired during their studies is 4.7 (see App. 8 and Table 4.1.-1), which according to the applied scale of evaluation (see Table 2 of App. 1) corresponds to the level of knowledge and skills acquired above the level of Contextualised competences very near to the level of Expansion. Alumni enhanced their own competences from contextualisation to expansion (see App. 13 where *The Average Level of Enhancement of Competences Evaluated by Alumni* is shown and Table 4.1.-1).

4.2 . RESULTS – COMPETENCES SCREENING BY EMPLOYERS

For the purposes of this project and in accordance with the adopted Methodology for collecting data on the connection between PA programs and employment (see Paragraph 3 of the present report), a survey on the expert opinion of representatives from public management and administration sector was conducted in the period January - February 2019. The topic of the survey is on the dissonances between the labour market and the educational product offered by the Master's Degree Program Public Administration and Management - European Administration.

The aim of this analysis is to serve as a basis for discussion and to enhance decisive actions in order to overcome one of the main criticisms on higher education, namely the lack of practical relevance of the higher education. The first step in this direction was to identify the inconsistencies between the needs of the labour market and the educational system (learning process); the inconsistencies between the acquired specific competences from the MPA graduates and the needed experts in the field of public administration and management. All this was from the perspective of the employers.

This analysis is based on: aggregated results from a survey among employers (see App. 14-17); aggregated conclusions and results from the discussions and the workshop with employers (see Paragraph 5 of the present report).

4.3 . DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- **What concerns the attitude of the FGs towards the purposefulness and importance of European accreditation of the PA education and programmes, the general impression is that both alumni and employees see this as a positive but not an obligatory option.**

Alumni reacted positively to the opportunity that their diploma is supported with targeted at PA accreditation on European level, but they agreed that the reason of this lies in the fact that despite the requirements of the ECTS/DS system, very often universities and employers outside Bulgaria (in the Western European countries, more specifically) refuse to recognize diplomas of alumni, who have graduated in the Republic of Bulgaria. The overall evaluation of the group was that this is on the one hand problem towards the right for mobility, access to work and study within the EU, and therefore – if there were unite standards for EU accreditation as a whole, this would help people, who want go live elsewhere. On the other hand, the member of FGA admit, that they do not know in details the procedures for accreditation and recognition of previous studies, and therefore can not be sure if there are really problems in this area, or it is only roomers and attitudes, which circulate in the society of the country. The FG members also stated that as far as they have had a look on the NEAA and EAPAA accreditation criteria, they have similarities but both are too heavy and too bureaucratic for application and would burden the HEIs too much.

At the same time, the opinion of the employers is that it is not possible (at least on the present stage) to have unite criteria for PA education at the European level. As far as the unite European market and the EU membership as a whole, does not presuppose loss of sovereignty and each of the member countries yet has its national specifics, the opportunity of application country-specific educational standards should be kept, as far as it corresponds to the overall educational policy of the union. Employers consider that it is not of their competence to know and comment on the accreditation systems and their contents, but to plan better the needs of cadres and their knowledge, skills and competences and to communicate them in an adequate manner. Also, the question of the European qualification framework was set by one of the group members and in the process of discussion, everybody agreed that there is already a mechanism on European level that supports the equity of education level within the EU. So the FG decided that of the introducing a new quality assurance framework for the PA education will just create another amount of procedures, which will again move the focus from quality to formalization.

The comparison of the results of the survey of the employers' and the alumni opinion regarding the special competences that form the expertise of the employees in the public administration and public administration has outlined **the following main directions and trends** which have been discussed during the workshops conducted in the respective focus groups Focus Group A (FGA – Alumni) and Focus Group B (FGB – Employers).

- **It can be summarized that employers appreciate the quality of PA training that is provided in the Master`s programme of Public Administration and Management - European Administration.**

The complex training in the specialty prepares specialists, who are competent to understand the nature of the public sphere. Higher assessment is given to the acquired knowledge to

derive the necessary benefits from theoretical knowledge and PA-related disciplines (*F1. Competences to make use of the theoretical knowledge of the PA-related disciplines to analyse and solve problems in the public domain* – knowledge is rated to), than to the acquired skills for analysing and solving problems in the public sphere (*F1. Competences to make use of the theoretical knowledge of the PA-related disciplines to analyse and solve problems in the public domain* – skills are rated to). Lower scores receive *F2. (Competences to compare and evaluate different PA systems)*..

These results guided the discussion to the question of the degree of balance of the curriculum. It was expressed with one voice that the disciplines involved in the curriculum and the competences they provide cover in a balanced way the main directions (governance, law, politics and economics) that form the interdisciplinary scope of the PA. In support of this, the representatives of the Municipality emphasized the presence of management disciplines in the curriculum, such as: Project Management Development; Public Sector Change Management; Administrative Outsourcing; Administrative Conflicts Management; Public Domain Event Management; E-Governance at Public Organizations a.o.

The court administration representative expressed satisfaction that the legal subjects, studied in the bachelor's degree, were built further by the master's education through the following subjects: Legal and Institutional System of EU Policies and Mechanisms; European Administrative Space. Transformation of Administrative System. Deputy District Governor of Varna District Administrative Center emphasized the importance of the disciplines related to regional development and policy, namely: EU Regional Development - Challenges and Perspectives; EU Structural Instruments and Their Application in Bulgaria, European Foreign Policy; Comparative Public Administration, European Cooperation and Territorial Integration, European Marketing. The same subjects have a direct relation to the competences, developed in this group.

- **It might be accepted as impressive, the high evaluation that the graduate students award to the training provided in the Master's programme.**

During the FGA discussion, participants shared that their own knowledge and skills for understanding of the public sphere in the learning process were substantially upgraded. With regard to the sub competences in this group, to the specific competences of *F1 (Competences to make use of the theoretical knowledge of the PA-related disciplines to analyze and solve problems in the public domain)* and *F2 ((Competences to compare and evaluate different PA systems)*, the awarded assessments are similar, especially what concerns the knowledge and skills acquired during training. It is confirmed, the positive attitude towards the quality of training, which the Public Administration and Management – European Administration programme ensures, as well as the certainty of the alumni in the high level of the acquired competences, which are crucial in the process of their professional qualification.

There was also a coincidence with respect to the group of special PA competences that received the lowest rank (average score in the two focus groups). Both employers and alumni give the highest scores for group E. (*Competences to communicate and interact productively in the public domain*).

- **In the opinion of employers, *E2 (Competences to model the skills of interaction with politicians, professionals, citizens and non-profit organizations)* can be identified as the least represented competence in the group.**

The discussion in this direction outlined one of the weaknesses of PA in the Master's programme and namely – the insufficient emphasis on the specifics of these interactions. Notwithstanding the attendance in the curriculum of disciplines such as: Combating Administrative Corruption; Administration and Media; Social Interactions and Teamwork a.o., employers in the PA domain have doubts about the competence of graduates in the subject of effective, communication and interaction with other public-sector actors. Somewhat this is

due to the vicious practice in the Republic of Bulgaria, where in the relationship between administration and politicians, it is more about obedience than about interaction. In this perspective, the overall manner is that in the process of public discussion and decision-making, devoted to formulation and implementation of policies, the government and its administrations do ignore professionals, citizens and only inform them for the after-effects and the results of already implemented decisions.

There is a clear need to increase the quality of training in this area, notably by enhancing training in a real practical environment, conduction of master classes with the participation of students, alumni, politicians, representatives of NGOs, etc., with the purpose to "roleplay" in a real environment the way and process of interaction, the place, the importance of each of the participating parties in the processes of discussion, acceptance and realization of the decisions that are related to the development of the public sphere.

The question was raised about forming **special competencies in students, related to the ability to pursue an active information policy** that should ensure the transition from the "duty of the authorities and the administration to publicity in the formation and implementation of policies" to the irrevocable right of everyone interested "information about all processes and activities of public governance".

The right to information implies:

- To transit from "passive publicity and transparency" to activity of providing all relevant bodies and individuals with relevant knowledge of the essential activities and processes of governance. Publicity, although it is a fundamental principle in public governance, in most cases fixes the final moment of a government act of power. To a large extent, the questions of the "kitchen" in the preparation and adoption of a managerial decision remain hidden for a wide range of people. In European practice, there are several requirements regarding the type and nature of information related to management decisions, namely: complete, differentiated, targeted, effective, accessible (usage an appropriate form of language and expression), equality (equality for all), neutral respect for political interests), legitimate, and so on;
 - to implement an effective information policy that will provide new attitude and quality development of the relations to media work - promotion, information, publicity, special information service for the media and the population, active forms of contact, local municipal press, bulletin, modern communications and others. The main direction in the activities of the authorities and the administration in this respect is that the media should be not only informants for events and decisions, but also an active unit in the propaganda and training for successful local government moves, in plain and accessible language;
 - To practice active awareness, covering all large-scale reorganizations, significant experimental and pilot projects related to the implementation of public governance. This requires active explanatory work at all phases and stages, multilateral public discussions with all stakeholders.
- **Alumni's opinion on the competences that are most weekly represented in this group coincides with the position of employers. The sub competence that stands out again is E2. (Competences to model the skills of interaction with politicians, professionals, citizens and on-profit organizations).** It makes impression that, the values of the average knowledge and skills assessments that alumni determine as their own are approximately close to their evaluation of knowledge and skills acquired during the training. This would lead to the conclusion that no upgrade of already acquired competencies took place through the education in the Master's degree.

These results confirm the opinion, that precisely the development of this competence is one of the weak points of PA training in the programme. Part of the reasons for this inconsistency

between training and practice is somewhat due to the incomplete understanding of the students and alumni of the specific competencies of the PA, which are formed in the process of learning the relevant disciplines (as noted above, in the curricula of the specialty are included concrete disciplines, which are oriented towards the acquisition of the specific competences of the commented subgroup).

All of this provoked a discussion within the FGA on the relation "disciplines studied - acquired competencies". Opinions were expressed by the participants that during the training itself, this connection should be more explicitly introduced to students, so that the alumni are able in the job application process to more clearly motivate their expertise, as well as to be more successful in the process of performing their daily activities and tasks.

This also sets some challenges with regard to the national assessment and accreditation procedures in the country - the criteria should focus on the competences acquired (such as the PA learning outcomes) and not on the curriculum in which the knowledge and skills, but the relationship with relevant competencies is not sufficiently visible.

- From the **employers' point of view**, alumni acquire incomplete competence in terms of expressing and implementing public service prospects (**group D. Competences to articulate and apply public service perspectives**).

During the discussion, *D4. (Competences to analyze and solve problems from the perspective of third parties, particularly politicians, professionals, citizens and representatives of civic organizations)* was highlighted as the weakest competencies in PA training in the MPA organizations. This result complements the above-mentioned view of the lack of abilities and skills in relation to the interaction between the subjects in the public sphere and the proactive approach towards solving of the complex administrative problems.

- The screening of competences from **the perspective of the alumni**, shows that comparatively lower have been evaluated competences from the **groups A. (Competences to lead and manage in public governance)** and **C. (Competences to participate in and contribute to the policy process)**.

Interesting is the fact that despite the knowledge gained on leadership, governance, policy making, analysis of contemporary problems, impact assessment of public policies, etc. these groups of competences are low rated.

The discussion of the discussed results led to the general opinion that as a result of PA education and training the alumni cannot gain enough confidence as an equal partner in the public governance process, especially in terms of their ability to participate fully in the processes of formation and realization of public policies. All this confirms the above-mentioned considerations that the alumni acquire a certain basic amount of knowledge and skills in the relevant disciplines, but in practice, they cannot link this to the specific competences that actually form their expertise as an AP specialist.

5. CONCLUDING REMARKS & CHALLENGES

The most typical trend of modern civilization is the accelerated, constant and intense (increasingly rapid) nature of change. This characteristic of the environment is also a particular challenge not only for higher education in Bulgaria, but also for all systems. The education and competence requirements of those employed in the public administration are also changing.

Future specialists with a high potential for managerial and executive activities find professional realization in the managerial system in various areas of public administration

and management as managers, consultants, analysts, researchers, contractors and others. They need to be able to orient themselves in socio-economic and organizational-technical situations, to possess entrepreneurship, analytical skills, initiative and social activity, knowledge of human psychology.

The challenges of overcoming the dissonances between the labor market needs and the educational product offered by the PA programmes are mainly rooted in the discrepancies between the curricula and programmes, the specialists sought and the requirements towards their competences.

It should be emphasized that the formation of the necessary portable specific competences in the students, as well as their confident demonstration during the application for occupation of the civil service system and in the daily work process, depends to a great extent on the preliminary formation of common competences. In the context of dynamic changes over the years, specialists will be needed to: possess a high level of language culture and communication skills, use and apply modern information technology in the administration; have the capabilities to analyze public needs in the field of public administration and management; be prepared for continuous learning and improvement.

This basis would allow the alumni to properly shape develop and apply their specific competences to specialists in the field of PA:

- benefit from the basic knowledge gained and easy to orientate in the structure, functions and features of the activity;
- have the skills to work and co-ordinate in complex hierarchical systems;
- to be proactive in their day-to-day work, management processes and in their training;
- have communication skills, competence to communicate with different audiences and groups of people;
- evaluate phenomena and processes in terms of the social and ethical aspects of their day-to-day work or training;
- have habits for teamwork, constructive negotiation and conflict resolution, etc.

Recommendations for improvement of the quality of PA education and training:

With regard to the strong competences, which were identified:

- to outline the as competitive advantages of the Master`s degree programme, where yet on the entrance it is explained to the students which are the competences that are strongly developed by the programme and on the exit – to increase the confidence of the alumni in the concrete elements that form their expertise;
- to prepare actualized profile of the competences of the Master`s degree programme, in correspondence to the results of the present research;
- to research constantly the opinion of the practice on the competence profile of the programme.

With regard to the weaknesses, which were identified:

- to strengthen the ducation in real practical environment: under the form of seminars, master classes, open lectures with the participation of alumni and experts, internships, etc., with the purpose overcome the deficits in the interaction between the stakeholders in the public sector;
- to set concrete practical assignments and case studies to students, with regard to compensation of the identified deficits and upgrade of competences (ex.: analysis and solvation of problems from the perspective of thirs parties; abilities for forming and realization of active information policy).

- to actualize the curricula of the Master`s degree programme, by enriching the palette of elective and facultative disciplines, with the purpose to fill in and build up the gaps in the development of the competences from the A, B, E and D groups.

FG	Main sub/issues debated	Key joint findings	Improvement proposals
A.	Need of special PA education accreditation at European level and its value	Positive but not obligatory; too much formalization; shifts the attention of the HEI from the matter of quality of education to the matter of evidencing on paper that there is a quality that corresponds to certain criteria	N/A
	Awareness of the competences (common and specific) that are acquired through the education in the Master`s degree programme?	Based on the theoretical knowledge given, there is better ability to see the problems in a complex manner, to think critically, to analyze, but lack of awareness about the fact that competences are developed and which they are	To organize 2 a year formal meetings with the purpose to explain the methodological framework of the education, incl. the relation between knowledge-skills-competences and their value for the future professional realization of the students
	Competences giving greater advantage for the professional realization (the common or the specific)	The difference is hard to be made; In the contemporary world the accent is put on common, as far as they describe the ability of the individual to act in social systems. But specific are important as well – most of them are acquired better through practice in a real environment – networking, policy making, etc	Increasing the practical training; Meetings with experts on site or at the university; Completing assignment of the practice and solvation of case studies; Employers proposing more internships;
	Evaluation of the ratio between the theoretical and practical orientation of the disciplines in the curricula; satisfaction of the practical classes;	Theory is necessary and interesting because makes the understanding of the processes and events more clear and logical, but without practice is being forgotten. The ratio is not bad but still is a place to add more practical assignments, excersices, case studies, etc.	Increasing the practical training; Meetings with experts on site or at the university; Completing assignment of the practice and solvation of case studies; Employers proposing more internships;
	Achieved confidence in the abilities to cope with the every-day tasks of a public domain position	Around the middle level; awareness that you cannot be prepared for all types of situations and will need to learn through work	Employers proposing more internships;
B.	Challenges towards PA education	Fast changing environment; revolution 4.0., incl. artificial intelligence are changing the professions; employers	Put the focus on general competences and life long learning

FG	Main sub/issues debated	Key joint findings	Improvement proposals
		<p>difficultly foresee the necessities of cadres and the educational system adapts very slow to novelties; conflict between autonomy and strives for standardization and certification;</p>	
	<p>Need of special PA education accreditation at European level</p>	<p>not possible (at least on the present stage) to have unite criteria for PA education at the European level; the EU membership, does not presuppose loss of sovereignty and each of the member countries yet has its national specifics; the opportunity of application country-specific educational standards should be kept, as far as it corresponds to the overall educational policy of the union; employers don't have the competence to know and comment on the accreditation systems and their contents</p>	<p>N/A</p>
	<p>Capability of alumni to apply knowledge and demonstrate proactive behaviour through the acquired skills and competences</p>	<p>Partial reasons for the inconsistency between training and practice is somewhat due to the incomplete understanding of the students and alumni of the specific competencies of the PA, which are formed in the process of learning the relevant disciplines</p>	<p>Better explaining how different disciplines develop concrete common and specific competences</p>
	<p>Quality of the PA training based on the scope of the curricula</p>	<p>the disciplines involved in the curriculum and the competences they provide cover in a balanced way the main directions (governance, law, politics and economics) that form the interdisciplinary scope of the PA.</p>	<p>Increasing the practical training; Meetings with experts on site or at the university; Completing assignment of the practice and solution of case studies; Employers proposing more internships;</p>
	<p>Is the quality of PA education in the country a national issue and is it influenced by post-communist/socialist transition issues, according to your opinion?</p>	<p>It is problem of the system itself; the perception of society towards civil service is contradictory; post-communist/socialist issues are still playing role, what concerns the need of better understanding of the principles of market economy and the changed role and behavior of participants, that it requires</p>	<p>N/A</p>

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7. APPENDIX

Table 1: IQM-HE-based restructured screening framework – alumni application (source: adapted from IQM-HE, 2018)

Programme-specific competences – THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT – EUROPEAN ADMINISTRATION SPECIALTY (MASTER'S DEGREE) ON																	
	On what level is your own knowledge ? On what level is your own skill ?								Up to which level did the study program promote knowledge ? Up to which level did the study program promote skill ?								
	None	Threshold	Foundation	Interconnection	Contextualisation	Expansion	Generation	None	Threshold	Foundation	Interconnection	Contextualisation	Expansion	Generation			
1. Competences to lead and manage in public governance																	
1.1. Competences to develop expertise in professional field.	Own knowledge	<input type="radio"/>	Taught knowledge	<input type="radio"/>													
	Own skill	<input type="radio"/>	Taught skill	<input type="radio"/>													
1.2. Competences to model the skills and power of leadership.	Own knowledge	<input type="radio"/>	Taught knowledge	<input type="radio"/>													
	Own skill	<input type="radio"/>	Taught skill	<input type="radio"/>													
1.3. Competences to develop an ability to network and cooperate at complex hierarchical systems.	Own knowledge	<input type="radio"/>	Taught knowledge	<input type="radio"/>													
	Own skill	<input type="radio"/>	Taught skill	<input type="radio"/>													
1.4. Competences to produce consensus or consent among diverse stakeholders	Own knowledge	<input type="radio"/>	Taught knowledge	<input type="radio"/>													
	Own skill	<input type="radio"/>	Taught skill	<input type="radio"/>													
2. Competences to participate in and contribute to the policy process																	
2.1. Competences to develop capacity to analyze policy process, implementation and evaluation.	Own knowledge	<input type="radio"/>	Taught knowledge	<input type="radio"/>													
	Own skill	<input type="radio"/>	Taught skill	<input type="radio"/>													
2.2. Competences to analyze	Own knowledge	<input type="radio"/>	Taught knowledge	<input type="radio"/>													

policy issues from multidisciplinary perspectives.	Own skill	<input type="radio"/>	Taught skill	<input type="radio"/>														
2.3. Competence to design policy-implementation methodology.	Own knowledge	<input type="radio"/>	Taught knowledge	<input type="radio"/>														
	Own skill	<input type="radio"/>	Taught skill	<input type="radio"/>														
3. Competences to analyze, think critically, solve problems and make decisions in the public domain																		
3.1. Competences to select and apply appropriate methods, techniques and tools to analyst and solve problems	Own knowledge	<input type="radio"/>	Taught knowledge	<input type="radio"/>														
	Own skill	<input type="radio"/>	Taught skill	<input type="radio"/>														
3.2. Competences to create networked/collaboration solution to complex problems.	Own knowledge	<input type="radio"/>	Taught knowledge	<input type="radio"/>														
	Own skill	<input type="radio"/>	Taught skill	<input type="radio"/>														
3.3. Competences to identify, evaluate and model best practices	Own knowledge	<input type="radio"/>	Taught knowledge	<input type="radio"/>														
	Own skill	<input type="radio"/>	Taught skill	<input type="radio"/>														
3.4. Competences to use the results of research for decision-making	Own knowledge	<input type="radio"/>	Taught knowledge	<input type="radio"/>														
	Own skill	<input type="radio"/>	Taught skill	<input type="radio"/>														
4. Competences to analyze, think critically, solve problems and make decisions in the public domain																		
4.1. Competences to understand and handle problems with regard to the economic, political, legal and sociological reality	Own knowledge	<input type="radio"/>	Taught knowledge	<input type="radio"/>														
	Own skill	<input type="radio"/>	Taught skill	<input type="radio"/>														
4.2. Competences to communicate public interest based on ethical reasoning and democratic participation	Own knowledge	<input type="radio"/>	Taught knowledge	<input type="radio"/>														
	Own skill	<input type="radio"/>	Taught skill	<input type="radio"/>														
4.3. Competences to value and demonstrate commitment to professionalism and integrity in serving public sector.	Own knowledge	<input type="radio"/>	Taught knowledge	<input type="radio"/>														
	Own skill	<input type="radio"/>	Taught skill	<input type="radio"/>														

4.4. Competences to analyze and solve problems from the perspective of third parties, particularly politicians, professionals, citizens and representatives of civic organizations	Own knowledge	<input type="radio"/>	Taught knowledge	<input type="radio"/>													
	Own skill	<input type="radio"/>	Taught skill	<input type="radio"/>													
4.5. Competences to apply policy agendas to the decision making process, adapting activities to suit specific public services context	Own knowledge	<input type="radio"/>	Taught knowledge	<input type="radio"/>													
	Own skill	<input type="radio"/>	Taught skill	<input type="radio"/>													
5. Competences to communicate and interact productively in the public domain																	
5.1. Competences to incorporate various communication tools and strategies in the management of public organizations	Own knowledge	<input type="radio"/>	Taught knowledge	<input type="radio"/>													
	Own skill	<input type="radio"/>	Taught skill	<input type="radio"/>													
5.2. Competences to model the skills of interaction with politicians, professionals, citizens and nonprofit organizations	Own knowledge	<input type="radio"/>	Taught knowledge	<input type="radio"/>													
	Own skill	<input type="radio"/>	Taught skill	<input type="radio"/>													
5.3. Competences to develop an ability to co-operate in multidisciplinary teams and communicate in an intercultural context	Own knowledge	<input type="radio"/>	Taught knowledge	<input type="radio"/>													
	Own skill	<input type="radio"/>	Taught skill	<input type="radio"/>													
5.4. Competences to negotiate interest-based resolutions with stakeholders experiencing conflict.	Own knowledge	<input type="radio"/>	Taught knowledge	<input type="radio"/>													
	Own skill	<input type="radio"/>	Taught skill	<input type="radio"/>													
6. Competences to understand public domain																	
6.1. Competences to make use of	Own knowledge	<input type="radio"/>	Taught knowledge	<input type="radio"/>													

the theoretical knowledge of the PA-related disciplines to analyze and solve problems in the public domain	Own skill	<input type="radio"/>	Taught skill	<input type="radio"/>													
6.2. Competences to compare and evaluate different PA systems.	Own knowledge	<input type="radio"/>	Taught knowledge	<input type="radio"/>													
	Own skill	<input type="radio"/>	Taught skill	<input type="radio"/>													

Table 2: IQM-HE-based screening framework restructuring – employers' application (source: adapted from IQM-HE, 2018)

	On what level is the alumni's knowledge? On what level is the alumni's skill? (Think of the level most alumnis have in your view)								
		None	Threshold	Foundation	Interconnection	Contextualisation	Expansion	Generation	I do not know
1. Competences to lead and manage in public governance									
1.1. Competences to develop expertise in professional field.	Alumni's knowledge	<input type="radio"/>							
	Alumni's skill	<input type="radio"/>							
1.2. Competences to model the skills and power of leadership.	Alumni's knowledge	<input type="radio"/>							
	Alumni's skill	<input type="radio"/>							
1.3. Competences to develop an ability to network and cooperate at complex hierarchical systems.	Alumni's knowledge	<input type="radio"/>							
	Alumni's skill	<input type="radio"/>							
1.4. Competences to produce consensus or consent among diverse stakeholders	Alumni's knowledge	<input type="radio"/>							
	Alumni's skill	<input type="radio"/>							
2. Competences to participate in and contribute to the policy process									
2.1. Competences to develop capacity to analyze	Alumni's knowledge	<input type="radio"/>							

policy process, implementation and evaluation.	Alumni's skill	<input type="radio"/>							
2.2. Competences to analyze policy issues from multidisciplinary perspectives.	Alumni's knowledge	<input type="radio"/>							
	Alumni's skill	<input type="radio"/>							
2.3. Competences to design policy-implementation methodology.	Alumni's knowledge	<input type="radio"/>							
	Alumni's skill	<input type="radio"/>							
3. Competences to analyze, think critically, solve problems and make decisions in the public domain									
3.1. Competences to select and apply appropriate methods, techniques and tools to analyst and solve problems	Alumni's knowledge	<input type="radio"/>							
	Alumni's skill	<input type="radio"/>							
3.2. Competences to create networked/collaboration solution to complex problems.	Alumni's knowledge	<input type="radio"/>							
	Alumni's skill	<input type="radio"/>							
3.3. Competences to identify, evaluate and model best practices	Alumni's knowledge	<input type="radio"/>							
	Alumni's skill	<input type="radio"/>							
3.4. Competences to use the results of research for decision-making	Alumni's knowledge	<input type="radio"/>							
	Alumni's skill	<input type="radio"/>							
4. Competences to analyze, think critically, solve problems and make decisions in the public domain									
4.1. Competences to understand and handle problems with regard to the economic, political, legal and sociological reality	Alumni's knowledge	<input type="radio"/>							
	Alumni's skill	<input type="radio"/>							
4.2. Competences to communicate public interest based on ethical reasoning and democratic participation	Alumni's knowledge	<input type="radio"/>							
	Alumni's skill	<input type="radio"/>							
4.3. Competences to value and demonstrate commitment to professionalism and integrity in serving public sector.	Alumni's knowledge	<input type="radio"/>							
	Alumni's skill	<input type="radio"/>							
4.4. Competences to analyze and solve problems	Alumni's knowledge	<input type="radio"/>							

from the perspective of third parties, particularly politicians, professionals, citizens and representatives of civic organizations	Alumni's skill	<input type="radio"/>							
4.5. Competences to apply policy agendas to the decision making process, adapting activities to suit specific public services context	Alumni's knowledge	<input type="radio"/>							
	Alumni's skill	<input type="radio"/>							
5. Competences to communicate and interact productively in the public domain									
5.1. Competences to incorporate various communication tools and strategies in the management of public organizations	Alumni's knowledge	<input type="radio"/>							
	Alumni's skill	<input type="radio"/>							
5.2. Competences to model the skills of interaction with politicians, professionals, citizens and nonprofit organizations	Alumni's knowledge	<input type="radio"/>							
	Alumni's skill	<input type="radio"/>							
5.3. Competences to develop an ability to co-operate in multidisciplinary teams and communicate in an intercultural context	Alumni's knowledge	<input type="radio"/>							
	Alumni's skill	<input type="radio"/>							
5.4. Competences to negotiate interest-based resolutions with stakeholders experiencing conflict.	Alumni's knowledge	<input type="radio"/>							
	Alumni's skill	<input type="radio"/>							
6. Competences to understand public domain									
6.1. Competences to make use of the theoretical knowledge of the PA-related disciplines to analyze and solve problems in the public domain	Alumni's knowledge	<input type="radio"/>							
	Alumni's skill	<input type="radio"/>							
6.2. Competences to compare and evaluate different PA systems.	Alumni's knowledge	<input type="radio"/>							
	Alumni's skill	<input type="radio"/>							
Here you can add comments: Which measures would you recommend for quality enhancement and quality assurance?									

*APPENDIX 2. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT BG051PO001-3.1.07-0029
"ACTUALIZATION OF THE STUDY DOCUMENTATION AND EDUCATIONAL PROCESS
AT VFU "CHERNORIZETS HRABAR" IN CORRESPONDENCE TO THE REQUIREMENTS
OF THE LABOUR MARKET.*

On 28.05.2013, the project "Updating the study documentation and the training process at VFU" Chernorizets Hrabar "in compliance with the requirements of the labor market started, which will be implemented within 21 months. The leading organization of the project is the Varna Free University "Chernorizets Hrabar" in partnership with the National Association of Commercial Security and Protection Companies, Association "Bulgarian Association of Software Companies (BASSCOM) and Economic Chamber - Varna.

The project is co-financed under the Human Resources Development Program. The funding received amounted to BGN 195,060.41.

The target groups of the project are 193 lecturers and 10258 students of Varna Free University "Chernorizets Hrabar". The University strives to provide students with knowledge and skills to help them with their professional realization. Therefore, in the realization of the project, the business is allowed to be involved in the elaboration of the curricula and programs, as well as in the development of practical tasks to be set in the training. This will encourage the development of professional skills in students.

For lecturers, it is important to reflect in their work the requirements of employers for specific knowledge and skills. In this sense, the realization of the project activities will support their efforts in this direction. Through workshops, seminars and established branch trustees, teachers and employers 'and branch organizations' representatives will be able to interact and pool their efforts by updating the curriculum and working towards building real practical skills among students and encouraging their opportunities for professional development.

The implementation of the project allows for validation of practice for periodical updating and introduction of new curricula, as well as creation of new curricula, together with the representatives of the business in relation to the dynamics of the labor market. Initially, the project will cover Bachelor's programs at VFU. Upon completion, the affiliate network will continue to work with a focus on masters programs.

The implementation of the project will lead to strengthening the links between the VFU, the research sector and the business, which in turn will multiply the effect of improving the quality of education and professional suitability of graduating higher education in our country.

APPENDIX 3. SUMMARY OF RESULTS OF INQUIRY AMONG EMPLOYERS ABOUT THE TYPE AND QUALITY OF PREPARATION OF SPECIALISTS IN THE FIELD OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT ON THE LABOR MARKET; ABOUT THE NECESSITY OF DEFINITE SPECIALISTS, AS WELL AS ABOUT THEIR COMPETENCES.

30 practitioners participated in the study.

1. On the question „**Do you experience difficulties finding and appointing the following specialists?**“ (more than 1 answer is possible), the answers were distributed as follows:

Type of specialists:	Number of answers:
Experts in the field of project management and realization and public procurement	15
Specialists in spatial planning	13
Specialists in the field of social needs analysis	13
Experts in the development and monitoring of regional and municipal development plans	12
Administration and management specialists with very good computer skills	11
Specialists for specialized administration	10
Selection, Attestation, Staff Development and Motivation Staff in the Public Sector	8
Specialists for general administration	5
Advisers and experts on administrative services and improvement of the quality of public services for physical and legal persons	5
Specialists for the preparation and implementation of the contemporary requirements and standards in the compilation and shaping of the management and administrative documentation	3
Specialists for relationships with social and other partners	1
Occupational safety specialists	1
Electors for the preparation and holding of elections	0
Specialists in organization of document turnover and filing activities in the administration	0
Specialists in the protection of public order and security	0
Other / please write 2: <i>Experts in the field of work with minors and minors with abnormal behavior; Human Resource Management Specialists</i>	0

2. On the question „**If you have any difficulties in recruiting suitable staff, how do you explain them?**“ (more than 1 answer is possible), the answers were distributed as follows:

Proposed answer:	Number of answers:
Inappropriate and inadequate practical training of the graduates of the Bachelor's degree "Public Administration and Management"	17
Inappropriate and inadequate competences of graduates	9
Difficulties in finding specialists with the appropriate personal qualities. Eg: they can not work in a team; have no communicative skills; do not show tolerance and respect for the people and citizens they work with; have no prominent organizational qualities, etc.	9
Graduate specialists in the field of Public Administration and Management are directed to work outside the public and local administration	7
Inappropriate and inadequate theoretical training of the graduates of the Bachelor's degree "Public Administration and Management"	4

Proposed answer:	Number of answers:
Significant discrepancies between your expectations and the acquired skills and competences of relevant professionals	3
Other (please quote)	0

3. On the question „**What deficits do you find in the educational preparation of your employess in general**“ (each true answer is to be pointed), the answers were distributed as follows:

Proposed answer:	Number of answers:
Insufficient practical training	18
Lack of a connection between theory and practice	17
In the field of foreign language training	14
In the field of project work	14
In the field of computer knowledge	9
Insufficient theoretical training	6
Outdated theoretical training	3
Something else:	0
They have no deficits	0

4. On the question „**What other qualities are expected further from the employees, so that the necessities of your institution are satisfied**“ (each true answer is to be pointed), the answers were distributed as follows:

Proposed answer:	Number of answers:
Communication skills	19
Language culture	16
Continuous learning and improvement	15
Normative competence - knowledge and application of standards and requirements	15
Flexibility, adaptability, ease of change	12
Leadership and entrepreneurial competences	11
Emotional intelligence - adequate social and working behavior	10
Skills for cooperation	10
Analytical skills	9
Computer skills for working in the Internet environment	8
Knowledge of a foreign language	7
Specific professional and technical competences (please specify): <i>Knowledge of the work of the court administration, basic legal terms typical of the work of the administration in the bodies of the judiciary, basic knowledge of normative documents regulating the status of court officials,</i>	1
Something else:	0

5. On the question „**What types of specialists in the field of public administration and management do you foresee to be needed in your institution in the next 10 years? If possible, point out expected number.**” (each true answer is to be pointed), the answers were distributed as follows:

Proposed answer:	Number of answers:
Experts in the field of project management and realization and public procurement	16
Specialists in the field of social needs analysis	15
Other / please write / Specialists in spatial planning	15
Human resources management specialists	12
Specialists in using and applying modern information technologies in the administration	11
Specialists in strategic and tactical governance in the public sphere	10
Experts in the development and monitoring of regional and municipal development plans	7
Specialists for specialized administration	5
Planning specialists	5
Specialists in managing relations with citizens and legal entities	4
Administrative managers	3
Specialists for general administration	2
Something else:	0

6. On the question „**What competences of the specialists in public administration and management do you foresee that you would appreciate in 10 years?!**“ (each true answer is to be pointed), the answers were distributed as follows:

Proposed answer:	Number of answers:
Skill for continuous learning and improvement	21
Communication skills	20
Regulatory competence - knowledge and implementation of laws and other normative documents, standards and requirements	18
Flexibility, adaptability, ease of change	17
Ability to work under pressure	16
Skills for cooperation	15
Other: Own, incl. referred to 15 competences ; Economists, lawyers, computer specialists; Creativity	15
Leadership and entrepreneurial competences	14
Language culture	14
Emotional intelligence - adequate social and working behavior	14
Specific professional and technical competences	13
Computer skills	13
Knowledge of a foreign language	11
I can not judge from now	0

APPENDIX 4. SUMMARY OF RESULTS FROM THE EMPLOYERS SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE ON THE KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND COMPETENCES THAT STUDENTS OF THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT SPECIALTY (BACHELOR'S DEGREE) SHOULD ACQUIRE FOR SUCCESSFUL REALIZATION IN PRACTICE

30 PA practitioners participated in the study

	Extremely important	Important	It is not very important	It is not important
1. Knowledge: Students have extensive and in-depth knowledge in the field, including the latest achievements. They independently interpret the acquired knowledge by associating them with their application in practice and through critical perception, understanding and expression.				
1.1 Students are familiar with and understand the key concepts of management and public administration.	11 36,7%	19 63,3%		
1.2. Students know and use both classical theories and modern trends in the development of European public administration and governance in the context of so-called good governance.	7 23,3%	20 66,7%	3 10%	
1.3. Students have achieved maximum basic knowledge and are easy to orientate in the structure, functions and features of modern public administration at national and territorial level.	16 53,3%	11 36,7%	3 10%	
1.4. Students have the knowledge to develop projects under the European programs and funds.	18 60%	7 23,3%	5 16,7%	
1.5. Students are familiar with the legal framework and are capable of solving specific legal problems arising in public practice.	17 56,7%	11 36,7%	2 6,6%	
1.6. What other knowledge should students have (please specify): <i>Foreign language preparation and knowledge in the field of modern information technologies (2); In the field of information technology, fluency in more than one foreign language; Practical skills to work with European and national legislation and subnational acts, directives, rules and guidelines to be able to easily understand and apply them in their day-to-day work; By applying the use of modern information technologies in the administration</i>				
2. Skills: Students have methods and means to solve complex tasks. Apply logical thinking and demonstrate innovation, creative approach to solving non-standard tasks.				
2.1. Students have skills for work and coordination in complex hierarchical systems (eg ministry, agency, municipality, town hall, municipal company, etc.).	11 36,7%	17 56,7%	2 6,6%	
2.2. Students have skills to work with citizens, groups of people, families, non-governmental organizations, social partners,	21 70%	9 30%		
2.3. Students have basic skills for analyzing administrative and business processes.	6	17	7	

	Extremely important	Important	It is not very important	It is not important
	20%	56,7%	23,3%	
2.4. Students have basic skills for guidance in the regulatory information system.	18 60%	12 40%		
2.5. What other skills should students have (<i>please specify: Initiation, desire for in-depth knowledge of a particular case, skills for logic tying and analyzing processes and procedures; Legal-regulatory services</i>)				
3. Personal and professional competences				
3.1. Self-sufficiency and responsibility				
3.1.1 Students have organizational skills.	17 56,7%	12 40%	1 3,3%	
3.1.2. Students are proactive in their day-to-day work, in their management processes and in their training.	14 46,7%	15 50%	1 3,3%	
3.1.3. What other competences for autonomy and responsibility should students have? (<i>please specify</i>): <i>Compliance with deadlines, timely accountability; Adaptability, normative competence, teamwork skills; Self-learning, self-improvement of knowledge and skills in a self-employed practice regime; initiative and entrepreneurship in everyday engagements; Awareness of personal responsibility in fulfilling duties, motivation in performing tasks, awareness of the role of everyone in the team; Discipline in the workplace</i>				
3.2. Learning competences				
3.2.1. Students have an attitude towards further informal or formal learning.	10 33,3%	17 56,7%	3 10%	
3.2.2. Students have an attitude of out-of-the-way self-preparation.	6 20%	15 50%	9 30%	
3.2.3. What other competences for learning and responsibility should students have? (<i>please specify.</i>) <i>Awareness of personal responsibility in fulfilling duties, motivation in performing the tasks, awareness of the role of everyone in the team; Skills for continuous learning and improvement; Analysis of the implementation of the existing rules and norms in order to improve them</i>				
3.3. Communicative and social competences				
3.3.1. Students have communication skills, communication skills with different audiences and groups of people.	15 50%	15 50%		

	Extremely important	Important	It is not very important	It is not important
3.3.2. Students have a broad internal worldview that shows solidarity with other people and communities.	7 23,3%	19 63,3%	4 13,4%	
3.3.3. What other communicative and social competences and responsibility should students have? (please specify.): Communicative and willing to expand knowledge in a wider range of areas beyond the specific narrow specialization; Responsible behavior in performing duties and assigned tasks; Knowledge of a foreign language				
3.4. Professional competences				
3.4.1. Students can recruit, analyze, and interpret relevant data in the field of administration and management designed to solve emerging problems.	14 46,7%	15 50%	1 3,3%	
3.4.2. Students can independently conduct surveys and research relevant to the administration of services in their respective structures.	1 3,3%	17 56,7%	12 40,0%	
3.4.3. Students can assess the importance of different factors in a complex social environment and identify priorities in their day-to-day work.	11 36,7%	19 63,3%		
3.4.4. Students can evaluate phenomena and processes in terms of social and ethical aspects emerging during their day-to-day work or training.	10 33,3%	20 66,7		
3.4.5. What other professional competences and responsibility should students have? (please specify): <i>Analytical skills, consistency; Professional behavior and attitude to work processes and duties</i>				

