

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION EDUCATION QUALITY ENHANCEMENT IN THE EU'S NEW MEMBER STATES

Editors:
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NISPAcee
The Network of Institutes and Schools of Public Administration
in Central and Eastern Europe

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Public Administration Education Quality Enhancement (PAQUALITY)
Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership KA203
No – 2018-1-SK01-KA203-046330, Slovakia, 09/2018-08/2021

August 2021

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The Network of Institutes and Schools of Public Administration
in Central and Eastern Europe

Intellectual Output 8 of PAQUALITY project – Policy Recommendations for Implementation of the European Public Administration Accreditation At Different Levels

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Published by:

NISPAcee Press

Polianky 5

841 01 Bratislava 42

Slovak Republic

e-mail: nispa@nispa.org

<http://www.nispa.org>

ISBN 978-80-99939-06-7

Note:

This publication represents the Intellectual Output number 8 of the project:

Public Administration Education Quality Enhancement (PAQUALITY), Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership KA203, No – 2018-1-SK01-KA203-046330, Slovakia, 09/2018-08/2021, co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union. More information about the project and its outputs are published on the project portal: www.nispa.org/paquality

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Introduction

This report represents a comprehensive overview and summary of the findings and knowledge gained and experience resulting from the activities of the PAQUALITY project launched between 2018–2021 by NISPAcee in cooperation with major partners, namely EAPAA, Masaryk University, Corvinus University of Budapest, Ljubljana University, Babes-Bolyai University and other HEIs from the new member states (hereinafter: NMS).

The main aim of the PAQUALITY project is to enhance the changes in the area of public administration (PA) education in conformity with the Bologna objectives, mainly:

- By promoting the European co-operation in quality assurance/international accreditation with a view to developing comparable criteria and methodologies, and
- By promoting the necessary European dimensions in higher education, particularly with regard to curricular development, inter-institutional co-operation, mobility schemes and integrated programmes of study, training and research, which haven't been fully applied in the area of the public administration higher education in the new EU states yet.

The project consisted of a number of research activities (surveys, interviews, documentary analyses, desk research) and internal and external consultations, workshops that enabled project partners to get a deeper insight and understanding of the major characteristics of PA education systems and their relevance to practice (see Section 1) and the standards and practices of quality assurance and accreditation systems on a national and international level in NMS (See Section 2.1–2.2). The project also provided a systematic review on current challenges and benefits of European standardization and accreditation in the field of PA education in NMS (See Section 2.3–2.4). At the end of the report, based on our experience and findings, a number of recommendations were concluded in order to improve the accreditation process both on a national and international level. Section 2.5. contains comments and recommendations for an achievement of the European quality in public administration education and opportunities of EAPAA accreditation/certifications. Opportunities for an acceptance of the EAPAA accreditation at national

levels were reviewed, and recommendations towards this end were developed for selected countries.

This report represents a brief summary of the key finding of project Intellectual Outputs (IO1 – IO7) and aims to disseminate and share our experience and knowledge in order to improve PA education in general and provide some lessons and good practices to the wider community of higher education institutions in the field of PA and accreditation agencies. For detailed information and full reports, please visit the project website: <https://www.nispa.org/paquality>

SECTION 1

**Country Studies on
Public Administration
Education and
Assessment of
Methodology and
Materials of PA
Teaching and Its
Relevance for
Practice**



1.1 Country Specific Information on PA Education

This part focuses on the summary and updated findings on PAQUALITY partner countries’

- national educational system related to the present state of PA education,
- system of evaluation/accreditation,
- findings on PA programmes existing in the country,
- the programmes’ relevance to practice, based on research among alumni and civil servants/employers.

The data collection was delivered by partners in 2019 under the Intellectual Output 1 and updated under preparation of Intellectual Output 8 in 2021.

1.1.1 Public administration education in Bulgaria

PA education specificities

The Higher Education Act in Bulgaria gives HEIs the opportunity to develop, accredit and introduce PA education programmes (bachelor’s, master’s, doctoral degree programmes) for students related to the professional field 3.7. Administration and Management, which is within the field of higher education 3. Social, Economic and Legal Sciences. According to the law, there is no specific professional field of Public Administration that can prepare specialists for the needs of the Bulgarian public sector. The PA discipline is usually situated in faculties of: Administration and Management; Economics and Administration; Business and Management, but also in faculties of: Police; Law; Social sciences; Philosophy; Economics; Management; History and Law.

In Bulgaria there are only bachelor’s and master’s degree programmes titled “Public Administration”; doctoral programmes are carried out under an accredited professional field of Administration and Management and titled “Organization and Management outside the sphere of material production” – at some cases with specification “Public Administration” or “Management of Public sector” in brackets.

The bachelor's degree programmes in PA provide broad-profile fundamental knowledge and skills to: work and be able to coordinate in complex hierarchical administrative systems; work with citizens, groups of people, families, non-governmental organizations, social partners, etc.; analyze administrative processes; understand the regulatory information system; find solutions to organizational and management problems; keep records, have foreign language skills and IT skills. The PA master's degree programmes in the country offer specialized and up-building managerial and administrative knowledge, skills and competences. The PA doctoral programmes build on the bachelor's and master's degree and are developed for prominent students or practitioners. During the study an individual guidance and in-depth theoretical and applied preparation is offered, so that the results of the PhD study represent an actual input to the practice.

The implementation of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) facilitates mobility and internationalization of training, it has notably led to increasing the recognition of the Bulgarian education system (but also specifically in Public Administration) and the competitiveness of Bulgarian students and graduates on the European and national labour markets. The training in Public Administration in Bulgaria bears the marks of "modern" education, programmes are often developed with the view of what the practice of established universities from all over the world is and what the requirements that the employers ask from future graduates are (Parashkevova et al, 2019, pp. 7–10.).

PA established as own discipline

PA is a well-established own discipline in Bulgaria. It has been introduced in a large part of the higher education institutions since the 90s of the 20th century until nowadays – PA discipline is introduced by 14 state and private universities as bachelor's and master's degree programmes titled 'public administration'.

It should be underlined that the development of PA as a university specialty in Bulgaria is subordinated to the principle of the HEIs' academic autonomy, regulated in the acting Law on Higher Education. In this sense, HEIs which offer PA training have the freedom to teach, the freedom to conduct researches, the freedom of training, the freedom to collaborate with other academic institutions and scientific organizations in the country and abroad. All this, as well as the fact that PA in Bulgaria doesn't belong to the state regulated specialties, accounts for the lack of explicit state standards in connection to the content of the PA curriculum. The structure and organization of PA education in Bulgaria comes down to observing the legal requirements on the realization of the educational process conducted according to educational documentation (qualification characteristic, curriculum and syllabuses) for each specialty/program. The specifics of the environment in which modern PA in Bulgaria operates determine the content of PA discipline – mostly connected with

a balanced presentation of the different elements of interdisciplinary PA education, such as legal, political, managerial and economic knowledge:

- Legal knowledge – based on courses: Fundamentals of Law, Administrative Law and Process, European Union Law, Constitutional Law, etc.
- Political knowledge – based on courses: Politics and Public Power, European Policies, etc.
- Managerial knowledge – based on courses: Introduction to Management, Introduction to Entrepreneurship, Fundamentals of Public Administration, Organization and Technology of Management, Psychology of Management, State Governance and Administration, Human Resource Management, Local Self-governance and Regional Development, Strategic Management in the Public Sector, Conflict Management, etc.
- Economic knowledge – based on courses: Globalization of Economy and Development, Economics of the Public Sector, Accounting of Budget-Funded Enterprises, Public Finance, Regional Economy, etc. (Parashkevova et al, 2019, pp. 4–6.)

Entrance to civil service

In connection to the professional realization of the PA graduates as civil servants in Bulgaria, there are specific regulations (basic requirements, formal exam required) given mainly in the Administration Act and the Civil Service Act.

The basic requirements for occupying a particular position in public administration (compulsory minimum level of education and professional experience or rank defined by law) are defined in the Classification of administrative positions, which is approved by the Council of Ministers and published in the State Gazette. Also, there could be other additional requirements, which can be determined by the rules of procedure of the respective administration. It is compulsory to pass an exam before taking up the duty of a civil servant. The evaluation procedure involves:

A centralized stage – organized by the IPA (Institute of Public Administration – an institution of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Bulgaria) and is carried out through tests to determine the level of general competences and basic knowledge necessary for the position. When the position is for a managerial level, the centralized stage includes a test to determine the level of general competences and knowledge needed to hold managerial positions. When the candidates pass the test, the results are valid for a period of three years from the date of their announcement and the candidates cannot take centralized tests more than twice a year.

A decentralized stage – aims at determining the level of the specific competences, professional and business qualities of the candidates in order to occupy a particular position. This stage of the selection procedure is held by a Commission consisting of three to seven members and determined by an order of the Appoint-

ing Authority. The Commission includes the immediate superior responsible, an employee or a person with legal studies and a representative from the Human Resources Department. Representatives of the trade union of the civil servants from the respective administration, as well as external experts in the respective area can also be members of the Commission. The only eligible candidates in the decentralized stage are candidates who have successfully passed the centralized stage (Parashkevova et al, 2019, pp.10–11.).

Table 1
The list of existing PA programmes in Bulgaria

Higher Education Institutions	Bachelor SP	Master SP	Unified 5 – years long	PhD	Executive	TOTAL
Public HEIs						
Trakia University – Stara Zagora	1		1			2
Agricultural University – Plovdiv	1	4				5
Academy of the Ministry of Interior – Sofia	1	1				2
St. Cyril and St. Methodius University of Veliko Tarnovo	3	1				4
University of Economics – Varna	2	2				4
Plovdiv University “Paisii Hilendarski”	1	2				3
University of Rouse “Angel Kanchev”	1	4				5
Sofia University “St. Kliment Ohridski”	2	3	5			10
D. A. Tsenov Academy of Economics – Svishtov	1	1	2			4
Technical University of Gabrovo	2	1	1			4
Technical University – Sofia	1	1				2
University of National and World Economy – Sofia	1	4				5
South-West University “Neofit Rilski” – Blagoevgrad	2		7	1		10
Burgas Prof. Assen Zlatarov University			1			1
Private/Foreign HEIs						
New Bulgarian University – Sofia	2	5		1		8
Burgas Free University	1	2				3
Varna Free University “Chernorizec Hrabar”	1	2		1		4
American University in Bulgaria – Blagoevgrad	1					1
International Business School – Botevgrad		1				1
TOTAL	24	34	17	3		78

1.1.2 Public administration education in the Czech Republic

PA education specificities

The legal status of higher education institutions and the framework of their educational and research activities is regulated by the Public University Act (Act. Nr. 111/1998 Coll. as amended), in the Czech Republic. The act differentiates public, private and state higher education institutions (“*vysoké školy*”). Public universities realize their studying programmes based on accreditation (the system has changed based on amendments from 2016 as outlined below). Private universities may realize their studying programmes based on the State approval (procedures for obtaining the approval are similar to external accreditation as outlined below).

There are two main specifics of PA education in Czechia. First, historically PA education has been rather law-oriented. Programmes titled as “Public administration” were rather scarce and were delivered particularly by law-oriented faculties. On the other hand, besides the law faculties, faculties of “economics and administration” have also been providing public programmes focusing on the public sector and PA. This is still reflected in the accreditation system. It is expected by the legislation that studying programmes will be accredited within the so-called “study areas” that are enumerated in legislation. PA is not a specific field recognized within these areas. PA can be accredited within the field of economics or law. This supports the traditional separation of faculties teaching public administration and PA teaching may be too law-oriented or, if delivered by economic faculties, economics-oriented, which hinders the multidisciplinary of such programmes. Public management as a discipline is also an underdeveloped field, which raises further questions about the multidisciplinary of PA education in Czechia.

Second, fragmentation is another key specific feature of PA education and training in the Czech Republic. The fragmentation can be seen in:

- the number of existing PA programmes,
- the content of existing PA programmes,
- the duties imposed on the training of civil servants and its coordination and management (Špaček – Nemeč 2019, pp.5–6.).

PA established as own discipline

PA is not a well-established own discipline. As outlined, it is neither recognized as a study field in the accreditation framework, nor as a separated multidisciplinary field of research. There is no national standard either defining what a PA programme is. A national curriculum, or any other standard defining what a PA programme is, does not exist (Špaček – Nemeč 2019, pp.4–5.).

Entrance to civil service

Czechia was a country without general civil service legislation and had rather fragmented legislation on public administration employees until 2015. This was despite the fact that the country was criticized by the European Commission and the OECD for the absence of specific legislation on the rights and duties of civil servants, which went hand in hand with the absence of a more coordinated civil servant training system in the pre-accession period.

Czechia only formally responded to the European Commission's criticism by the acceptance of the State Civil Service Act (Act No. 218/2002 Coll.), because the legal force of this act was postponed nearly every two years since 2003, when it was expected to come into force. As a reason for this, limited financial resources for the implementation of the act were repeated in official documents of the Government. Besides the Civil Service Act, the Act on Civil Servants of Self-Government (Act No. 312/2002 Col.) was approved specifying some aspects of HRM. This act came into force at the beginning of 2003, it is a rather short act that regulates only some specific areas (mainly requirements on recruitment, education and training, release of senior civil servants, accreditation of institutions providing training for civil servants according to the Act), in case of other areas the act refers to the general Labour Code. So, prior to adopting the new State Civil Service Act (no. 234) in September 2014, Czechia did not have an effective civil service legislation that would regulate civil servants of central authorities and their organizations. Civil servants of these authorities were employed under the general Labour code with some specific rules e.g. on salary, on their education or examination.

Both acts – the act 312/2002 on civil servants of municipalities and regions and the new act on the 234/2014 – establish a basis for a rather decentralized training of civil servants.

The **act on civil servants of self-governments** specifies three types of training: *entrance training, in-service continuous training and special professional qualification training* (the so-called ZOZ – “zvláštní odborná způsobilost”). Such training can be offered only by institutions accredited by the Ministry of the Interior. Although the act specifies what the entrance training should include and the Ministry published recommended studying texts, the requirements on content are rather general and entrance training is not examined anyhow on the central level. Only the special professional qualification is examined by the Ministry of the Interior, but only in cases when a civil servant did not graduate within studying programmes/fields that are enumerated in the regulation on *equal education acknowledgment* (currently by the ministerial decree no. 304/2012). Graduates of the programmes that are enumerated in the regulation are not required to pass entrance training and to have the special professional qualifications. The respective regulation contains the list of relevant study programmes, but it was not created in order to reflect appropriate curricula (some national standards on PA education), based on an analysis of edu-

cational needs in public administration. Rather it was a product shaped by lobbies from public and private universities.

After the approval of the act on the state civil service of 2014, state civil servants are required to pass the so-called (State) *civil service exam* (“úřednická zkouška”). According to the act, the exam has a general part (its examination should be written) and a special part (that can be examined in a written or an oral form). The examination of the general part should verify if a state civil servant has knowledge on the organization and activities of PA and the relevant general law and ethics, and it is organized by the Ministry of the Interior. The examination of the special part is focused on the area of civil service for which a civil servant is employed and is organized by the relevant central authority in cooperation with the authority where the civil servant is employed. The act strictly stipulates that state civil servants are required to pass the exam and there is no possibility to obtain any acknowledgement of equal education similar to the situation in the civil service in municipalities and regions. There is only a provision saying that only civil servants that obtained the specific professional qualification (ZOZ) are not required to pass the general part of the civil service exam.

A framework for the training of state civil servants has been specified by the Government resolution no. 865 from October 2015. Again, this resolution differentiates *entrance training* and *continuous training* and contains *specific provisions on the training of senior civil servants* and also for *training related to foreign languages*. However, the framework is rather general, related management is decentralized and the Ministry of the Interior is only required to publish annual reports on training. Requirements on training are specified by the *service decree no. 9/2015* of the Deputy of the Minister of the Interior for the State Civil Service. It is explicitly stated that this service decree specifies only *minimum standard requirements*.

Annual reports have been published dealing with education of civil servants, separately for the state civil service and separately for civil service in local governments (i.e. municipalities and regions). The report on 2019 is currently the last available (as of 31.05.2021). It indicates that still in 2019 38% of state civil service authorities did not comply with their duty to approve internal regulation for the education of their civil servants. In the case of education of civil servants of self-governments, 318 educational institutions were accredited by the Ministry of the Interior. From these institutions, 28 were accredited for the entrance education (they were mostly represented by regions, statutory cities or cities or mostly private educational institutes). Most of the programmes focusing on obtaining special proficiency were delivered by the Institute for Public Administration in Prague that is an educational institute established by the Ministry of the Interior (93% of programmes), the rest were provided by the City of Prague, private suppliers or 2 public universities (Špaček – Nemeč 2019, pp.6–7.).

Table 2
The list of existing PA programmes in Czech Republic

Higher Education Institutions	Bachelor SP	Master SP	Unified 5 –years long	PhD	MPA	TOTAL
Public HEIs						
University of Economics, Prague (VŠE)	1	2	0	1	0	4
Charles University (CUNI)	2	1	0	1	0	4
University of Jan Evangelista Purkyně in Ústí nad Labem (UJEP)	1	1	0	1	0	3
University of Pardubice (UPCE)	1	2	0	1	0	4
Masaryk University (MU)	3	3	0	0	1	7
Mendel University in Brno (MENDELU)	1	1	0	0	0	2
University of west Bohemia in Plzeň (ZCU)	1	1	0	0	0	2
Czech University of Life Sciences Prague (CZU)	1	1	0	1	0	3
Silesian University in Opava (SLU)	2	2	0	0	0	4
VSB – Technical University Ostrava (VSB)	1	1	0	0	0	2
Tomáš Baťa University in Zlín (UTB)	1	1	0	0	0	2
University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice (JCU)	1	2	0	0	0	3
Private/Foreign HEIs						
College of International and Public Relations Prague (VŠMUV)	1	1	0	0	0	2
AMBIS	1	1	0	0	0	2
University of Finance and Administration (VŠFS)	1	1	0	0	0	2
Metropolitan University Prague (MUP)	1	1	0	0	0	2
College of Entrepreneurship and Law (VŠPP)	1	0	0	0	0	1
CEVRO Institut (CEVRO)	1	1	0	0	0	2
University of Jan Amos Komenský in Prague (UJAK)	0	0	0	0	0	0
PRIGO (former University of Social and Administrative Affairs; VSSS)	1	1	0	0	0	2
TOTAL	23	24	0	5	1*	53

Note: If we include private providers which do not have a status of HEI, there are about 8 additional MPA or MBA (PA-oriented) programmes offered (by Business Institute, CEMI, ESM, Cambridge business school and Management Institute).

1.1.3 Public administration education in Hungary

PA education specificities

One characteristic feature originates from the historical tradition, namely the PA as a discipline understood as a subfield of law and dominated by theories and concepts from (public) law studies. During the pre-2010 years public administration programmes were run mainly at law faculties, largely based on (public) law and related legal courses with a legalistic approach – according to a 2015 study on the analyses of PA programmes’ curricula the proportion of legal subjects in their curricula was about 60–70%. The other specialty of the PA education derives from the recent political/policy as well as institutional changes. There have been strong government intentions and actions since 2012 toward monopolizing and centralizing the field of PA HE, and eliminating the alternative suppliers of PA programmes. In parallel, the government created and institutionalized a purportedly new discipline named “State sciences” (Kovács – Hajnal 2019, p. 4.).

PA established as own discipline

The Public Administration as a discipline evolved from a subfield of (administrative) law into a discipline on its own right, with a separate identity and academic recognition in Hungary. Recently the focus of PA programmes provided by HEI broadened to some extent, and the recent PA programmes include a variety of courses on political science, management studies, public policy courses, sociology and economics (Kovács – Hajnal 2019, pp. 4–5.).

Entrance to civil service

While some specific educational level might be entry criteria to apply for a civil service position, there is no special entrance exam during the selection or appointment process. The civil servants’ position might be open for applicants with a very diverse educational background, but some degrees provided by specific HEIs (law schools and NUPS) are prioritized and they achieved special recognition by the regulation on the qualification requirements.

In the Hungarian public sector there are several categories of public employees. There are civil servants working for the central and territorial levels of public administration as well as at the local level in municipalities and in government district offices. Employment in the two main job types of civil servants (clerical and administrative) is tied to secondary and higher education diploma, respectively. The most important general-scope compulsory in-service training measure is the Basic Public Administration Examination (“közigazgatási alapvizsga”). This has to be taken by all officials within three years from entry to the civil service. Graduates of certain higher education programmes (such as MLAs or MAs in Public Administra-

tion) are exempted though. The other type of general scope in-service exam called “Advanced Civil Service Exam” is required to be passed in order to get promotion to managerial positions. Senior civil servants (SCSs) are not defined institutionally as a separate cluster (Kovács – Hajnal 2019, pp.6–7.).

Table 3
The list of existing PA Programmes in Hungary

Higher Education Institutions	Bachelor SP	Master SP	Unified 5–years long	PhD	MPA	TOTAL
Public HEIs						
National University of Public Service	3	9	1	1	0	14
Corvinus University of Budapest	0	2	0	1	0	3
Private/Foreign HEIs						
Andrássy University	0	1	0	0	0	1
TOTAL	3	12	1	2	0	18

1.1.4 Public administration education in Romania

PA education specificities

Public administration education (at bachelor, master and doctoral level) follows the general model/requirements of other fields of study. The domain is treated as any other academic domain by accreditation, evaluation and funding institutions (Moldovan – Moldovan 2019, p.6).

PA established as own discipline

PA education in Romania does not fall outside Central and Eastern Europe characteristics, but there are however multiple differences regarding the way how each PA department from different universities designs the curricula for BA, MA and PhD studies (ranging from a traditional continental legalistic approach to the Anglo-Saxon managerial approach or different combinations). PA is a well-established discipline in Romania, with a tradition of over two decades.

PA can be regarded as an interdisciplinary field of study, due to the interdisciplinary nature of the public sector and the initial design of top PA programmes (which have later inspired others). In Romania, for a long period of time, there

was a tendency of creating a so-called national curriculum for PA, allowing for little variation, but that changed after 1989 as university decision-makers could design tailor/specific PA programmes within the general guidelines (a minimum of mandatory core courses and multiple electives) established by the legislation, the resort Ministry and the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education. As such, present PA programmes usually reflect the specific area of the university/faculty:

- Programmes established by Law faculties have a more pronounced legal nature, while including disciplines from other fields;
- Programmes established by Economic studies faculties focus on economics/management, while also including disciplines from other fields;
- Programmes established by Public Administration faculties promote a truly interdisciplinary curriculum, including a more balanced mix of disciplines from multiple fields: law, economics, sociology, research methods, political science, urban planning, community development, human resource management, etc. (Moldovan – Moldovan 2019, pp.7–8.).

Entrance to civil service

The Romanian Civil Service is structured in three main types of civil servants according to the level of authority and the obligations entailed by the functions: (a) high ranking officials/public functions corresponding to senior civil servants, (b) civil servants who hold a management position, and (c) civil servants who hold an execution position (execution public functions are further divided in grades: superior, which is the maximum level; principal; assistant; and beginner).

In order to become a civil servant one needs to take an examination that is administered by the hiring administrative institutions in cooperation with the National Agency for Civil Servants. The entrance examination/hiring procedure is, in general, organized by the public institution which wants to employ a candidate and the National Agency for Civil Servants sends a representative in the evaluation/employment committee. A special admission process is required only for entering the category of high ranking officials (who are employed/appointed after a national competition conducted by an independent commission). Entrance in the civil service (as a civil servant and not as a contractual employee) is conditioned by a formal examination. The examinations usually consist of:

- Dossier (which contains identification documents, information on educational background and professional experience).
- Written evaluation/test (usually based on legal requirements and just partially on professional knowledge/skills and abilities);
- Interviews (which can be less objective and incline the balance towards a certain candidate, desired by the interviewer/institution).

The written examination usually includes two broad types of questions, related to:

- The national or civil service specific legislation; and
- Professional knowledge (often demonstrated by theoretical knowledge of the profession/activities and the legislation specific to that activity – which are rarely tested in an empirical/applied way) (Moldovan – Moldovan 2019, pp.8–9.).

Table 4

The list of existing PA programmes in Romania

Higher Education Institutions	Bachelor SP	Master SP	Unified – 5 years long	PhD.	MPA	TOTAL
Public HEIs						
"Babes-Bolyai" University of Cluj-Napoca	4	8		1		13
Academy of Economic Studies Bucharest	1	3				4
National University of Political Studies and Public Administration	2	9		1		12
University of Bucharest	1	5				6
"Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University of Iasi	1	1				2
University of Craiova	1	1				2
"Lucian Blaga" University of Sibiu	1	1				2
West University Timisoara	1					1
Polytechnics University Timisoara	1	1				2
"Ovidius" University Constanta	1	2				3
Petroleum-Gas University of Ploiești	1	1				2
"Valahia" University Targoviste	1					1
"Constantin Bracusi" University Tgârgu Jiu	1	1				2
University of Petrosani	1	1				2
"Dunarea de Jos" University Galati	1	1				2
Oradea University	1	1				2
University of Pitesti	1	1				2
"Aurel Vlaicu" University of Arad	1	1				2
"1 Decembrie 1989" University Alba Iulia	1	1				2
"Alexandru Ioan Cuza" Police Academy	1					1
"Nicolae Balcescu" Land Forces Academy" Sibiu	1					1
"George Emil Palade" University of Medicine, Pharmacy, Science, and Technology of Târgu Mureș	1					1

Higher Education Institutions	Bachelor SP	Master SP	Unified – 5 years long	PhD.	MPA	TOTAL
“Ștefan cel Mare” Suceava University	1	1				2
Private/Foreign HEIs						
Athenaeum	1					1
“Nicolae Titulescu” University Bucharest	1					1
“Spiru Haret” University	1	1				2
“Dimitrie Cantemir” University Bucuresti	1	1				2
“Andrei Saguna” University Constanta	1					1
“George Bacovia” University Bacau	1	1				2
TOTAL	33	43	0	2	0	78

1.1.5 Public administration education in Slovakia

PA education specificities

PA education is part of the standardized educational system of the Slovak Republic, compatible with the systems of the member states of the European Union. The educational system is open, relatively flexible; responsive to the requirements of practice in a competitive environment. PA is a very popular degree and is offered by many universities in Slovakia (Vitálišová, K. et al. 2019, p.6).

PA established as an own discipline

The transformation process in Slovakia has since the 1990s been linked with the perception of the role and position of public administration (PA) at the local, regional and national level. The process also strongly influenced the development of study programmes in PA. Later, the law and structural changes of public administration that were oriented on the decentralization and direct contact with citizens also influenced the development of study programmes. Public administration plays an essential role in the social and economic development, and acts both as a manager and a responsible actor. This is also why PA education and the preparation of qualified workforce for the PA institutions and public policy has also been part of PA reform and government programmes during recent years. However, one of the ongoing challenges regarding Slovak PA institutions is the now permanent lack of qualified workforce with a relevant degree.

The external environment incentivizes the development and implementation of IT technologies in public administration (digitalization of public services and all associated processes). During the last decade, the progressive and resolute development of the PA programmes was partially caused also by more and more challenging requirements of the students, the implementation of new modern teaching methods and technological innovations.

The key milestones in the study program's curriculum development have been the dates of regular national accreditation (until 2015 every 6 years; nowadays by the decision of the accreditation board even more often). Moreover, at some universities the tradition of PA education and research is even longer, e. g. Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice (with the Faculty of Public Administration, which is unique in the Slovak Republic's higher education system), the Faculty of Economics in Banská Bystrica, the Faculty of National Economics of the University of Economics in Bratislava, etc.

In the structure of study fields created by the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic and the Slovak Accreditation Commission there were separately defined study fields until 2019 – Public Administration and Public Policy; Public Administration and Regional Development; and Public Economics and Services. All these fields include the study programmes (bachelor's, master's, doctoral) fully or partially in PA.

The recent change of the accreditation process in Slovakia in 2020 clustered PA programmes in the following two specified fields of studies:

a) Economics and Management

In this field of study, the contents are defined as follows – Economics courses covering topics like micro, macroeconomics, international economics, economic policy, law for economics, research methods and Management courses covering topics like strategic management, general management issues, solving managerial problems, organizational sciences.

b) Political Science

In this field of study, the contents are defined as follows – “traditional” political science courses aimed at political theory, political systems, elections and electoral systems, political ideologies and “traditional” International relations courses aimed at international relations and their development, security studies, geopolitics, European integration and courses aimed at public policy and public administration.

Only future practice will show if this frame may create problems, from a multidisciplinary point of view (Vitálišová, K. et al. 2019, pp. 5–6.).

Entrance to civil service

Formal exams for entrance to the civil service are not part of the Slovak legislation system. Students of study programmes are prepared in terms of general requirements of the public administration and civil service system.

Formal work in civil service is regulated by the following laws:

- Act No. 55/2017 Coll. on Civil Service;
- Act No. 552/2003 Coll. on Execution of Work of Public Interest and on the amendments to certain laws;
- Act No. 553/2003 Coll. on Remuneration of Employees in Execution of Work of Public Interest and on the amendments to certain laws;
- Act No. 311/2001 Coll. Labour Code of the Slovak Republic and on the amendments to certain laws.

Special competences are not required for activities related to economic education. They are required in positions related to construction (urbanism, architecture), energy (water, electric, gas...), transport, entrance to armed forces, police and so on.

However, the education of experts is important. This is evidenced by a number of successful graduates (Vitálišová, K. et al. 2019, p. 7.).

Table 5
The list of existing PA programmes in Slovakia

Institution	Bachelor SP	Master SP	Unified 5– years long	PhD SP	MBA/MPA	Total
Public HEIs						
Slovak University of Agriculture in Nitra	2	2		1		5
Matej Bel University	2	2		1		5
University of Economics	1	1		1		3
Technical University in Košice	1	1		1		3
Alexander Dubček University	2					2
Comenius University		1		1		2
Pavol Jozef Šafárik University	3	2		1		6
University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava	3	2		1		6
Private HEIs						
School of Economics of Public Administration Management in Bratislava	2	1				3
Danubius College	1	1				2
Foreign universities/colleges						
College of International and Public Relations Prague	1	1				2
Private institutes						
Business institut EDU a.s., Bratislava					1	1
University Institute of Economic and Law Sciences					2	2
Total	17	15		7	3	42

1.1.6 Public administration education in Slovenia

PA education specificities

There has been a long-lasting tradition of PA HE education and research in Slovenia, dating back also to the socialist period of the second Yugoslavia.

Several schools of thought have been developed, the so called Ljubljana (the most progressive one in terms of PA disciplinary progress), Zagreb and Belgrade schools.

PA has been developed initially within (faculties of) law, however, rather early an autonomous and interdisciplinary designed Faculty of Administration was established along with institutes of PA.

Over time, several forms of integration could be observed in the development of PA in Yugoslavia; from the expansion of individual disciplines (mainly administrative law and administrative techniques), and programmes in schools and institutes to balance several disciplines, to comparative analyses of the same administrative institutions in different administrative systems, and the design and confirmation of assumptions regarding the legality of administrative organizations and activities with governance theories. In institutional terms, the beginnings were reflected in the establishment of PA institutes, while the majority of research achievements and the modernization of study programmes dates from the 1970s and 1980s.

A turning point was the establishment of an independent School of Public Administration in 1956, which in 2003 transformed into today's Faculty of Public Administration, a member of the University of Ljubljana.

Nonetheless, certain aspects of PA are taught also at other institutions, mainly public (state) universities, since only particular programmes deal with PA holistically. For example, state and administrative law is taught within several faculties of law programmes, public policy analysis is set within the Faculty of Social Sciences at the UL, while public finance and economics is characteristic for faculties of economics, government and European studies or management programmes.

The overlapping occurs also partially due to the discrepancy in the size of the universities in Slovenia in relative comparison to the size of the country.

Slovenian PA was initially rather legally oriented. As a response to a need for a more multidisciplinary orientation, the changes in study programmes in the last two decades have been conducted much more in an economic and managerial direction. Political science as another PA mother discipline is rather underdeveloped in Slovenia; moreover, in the search of more interdisciplinary programmes, legal issues in PA seem recently overlooked.

In the field of research, PA is most often associated with organizational-administrative or political sciences, while from the pedagogical point of view, it is classified most often as part of legal science. Hence PA as a discipline has been and is still developed mainly through interdisciplinary research projects and through the existence of several scientific journals in this field.

In conclusion, PA education in Slovenia is part of a holistic HE system. Having a long tradition, based on legal and interdisciplinary PA development, PA Higher

Education is explicitly in the domain of state and private universities, while trainings and exams are mostly conducted by the Administrative Academy within the Ministry of Public Administration (Pevcin – Kovač 2019, pp. 5–6.).

PA established as an own discipline

PA is a relatively well established discipline in Slovenia. It started to develop as an autonomous science already in the 1950s, mainly at the faculties of law in former Yugoslavia, which Slovenia was part of until 1991.

However, there are ongoing struggles particularly regarding the classification of PA study programmes and also regarding connections to PA research. Despite the efforts and results, PA/administrative science has not (yet) been recognized as an independent science in Slovenia but is categorized subordinately and inconsistently.

Considering the state of the art in contemporary Slovenian PA as a discipline, it may be concluded that the initial ambitions regarding integrative PA studies in the 1950s–1980s resulted in the development of an autonomous administrative science.

At this time, we can speak of a certain degree of integration, yet more in terms of multidisciplinary and the differentiation of specific disciplines than interdisciplinary administrative science.

Despite notable internationalization that calls for an interdisciplinary approach, Slovenia has assumed rather a partial approach (Pevcin – Kovač 2019, pp. 4–5.).

Entrance to civil service

At this time, in Slovenia there are some exams required by general legislation, especially to conduct administrative procedures, but there is no general entry exam.

The Public Employees Act (PEA) was adopted in 2002 as part of the reform package legislation, required to be modernized in Slovenia to become a full member of EU. This law has been in force since 2003, often amended, falling app. 160.000 public servants under its scope. This law acts as an anti-fragmentation tool joining up civil service as a professional force providing public services, or issuing authoritative decisions regardless of a status of an organizational unit where civil servants are formally employed.

One of the key items of PA reforms in Slovenia was the introduction of horizontal training and qualifications at the Administrative Academy, established in 1997 as a part of Ministry of Interior. Since 2004, when the Ministry of Public Administration was founded, the Academy has been run under the MPA. The Academy developed pursuing two basic lines of activity: (1) carrying out programmes of short trainings (seminars and workshops) and (2) implementing various exams determined by the applicable regulations as requirements for holding a certain po-

sition or performing certain public administrative tasks. Today, the Academy acts mainly as a mediator between PA and private trainers – instead of a policy unit as regards training. On the other hand, it has a monopoly on proficiency exams.

Civil servants or civil-service jobs within the state, municipal, and judicial authorities fall into two major categories – officials and staff positions. These are differentiated according to their respective principal tasks and entry requirements, rights and duties, and HRM mechanisms.

PEA provides conditions for appointing public officials (Art. 86) but professional exams were replaced in 2008 by only obligatory attendance at a training.

The special three-day preparatory training, which is in has been run instead of a general entry exam since 2008 is mandatory for all new civil servants within a year after employment.

Pursuant to Rules from 2009 adopted based on PAE, this training includes the following topics in three days: the constitutional system, the EU system, local government, public finance, administrative procedures, legislative procedures, personal data protection, etc. There are approximately 15 such trainings organized annually with around 700 participants.

The Administrative Academy also organizes most of the professional exams as required by the sector or certain types of activities related to specific legislation for public officials. The respective exams especially administrative procedure professional exams are professional exams for inspectors, for health and safety at work, and the exams for a conduct of minor offence procedures Pevcin – Kovač 2019, pp.6–8.).

Table 6
The list of existing PA programmes in Slovenia

Higher Education Institutions	Bachelor SP	Master SP	Unified 5 – years long	PhD	MPA	TOTAL
Public HEIs						
University of Ljubljana	7	4		2		13
University of Maribor				1	1	2
Private HEIs						
New University	2	1		1		4
Total	9	5		4	1	19

1.1.7 Discussion

Comparing the countries based on diversity and structure of the PA education market we can differentiate on the scale of rather monopolistic market to the perfectly competitive, diverse market in which many organisations operate PA education programmes including public and private institutions as well and where entering and there are relatively low barriers/conditions to enter the market (e.g. the accreditation criteria are achievable and all applicants should be subject to the same rules and requirements to qualify for accreditation).

The PA education market can be considered very diverse and competitive in Bulgaria, in Czech Republic, in Romania and also in Slovakia, while in Hungary and in Slovenia the PA education market seems to be rather centralized and rather dominated by one or few providers.

In Bulgaria 14 public organization and 5 private organizations provide PA education programmes with a large variety of BA, MA, unified and PhD programmes (all together 78 programmes were recorded).

The PA as a discipline has been established in the country since the early 1990s and is currently a separate specialty called “public administration” at 14 Bulgarian universities. Parallel to this, 18 educational institutions offer specialties that are close to the professional field of public administration and public services. The PA programmes in Bulgaria are not subject of a separate or special accreditation rules or requirements as far as they are part of the understanding that the public administration is one of all possible objects, underlying administration and management, and therefore – included in the scientific and subject area of the professional field of ‘Administration and Management’.

In Czech Republic 12 public organization and 8 private organizations provide all together 53 PA education programmes from BA level up to PhD level. This market structure seems to be very fragmented and purely coordinated. Fragmentation of PA programmes in Czechia has been determined by the fact that no educational standards for PA programmes have been approved on the national level. Although institutional accreditation of public universities may reduce and is actually reducing the number of programmes, the high number of PA programmes clearly calls for quality monitoring and long-term approach to their evaluation.

In Romania 23 public organization and 6 private organizations provide PA education programmes with a large variety of BA, MA, unified and PhD programmes (all together 78 programmes were recorded).

In Romanian, public administration education (at bachelor, master and doctoral level) follows the general model/requirements of other fields of study. The domain is treated as any other academic domain by accreditation and funding institutions, while PA education in Romania does not fall outside Central and

Eastern Europe characteristics. There are however multiple differences regarding the way in each PA departments from different universities design the curricula for BA, MA and PhD studies (from a traditional continental legalistic approach to the Anglo-Saxon managerial approach or different combinations of the two). PA can be regarded, in general terms, in the Romanian context as an interdisciplinary field of study due to the interdisciplinary nature of the public sector and the initial design of top PA programs (which have latter inspired other BA, MA and PhD programs). 29 Romanian Higher Education Institutions are currently providing public administration study programs, out of which 23 are public HEI and 6 are private; as of 2019 there are no foreign universities/colleges offering BA, MA or PhD programmes in the field of public administration on their own, but some of the top tier programs offered by Romanian universities offer additional foreign certifications or even joint degrees.

In Slovakia 8 public organization and 2 private organizations provide all together 42 PA education programmes from BA level up to PhD level. Slovakia offers a relatively high number of PA study programmes in both private and public universities and other academic institutions. This is largely due to the high number of universities operating in the country and the low initial cost and running cost of PA education. Also, PA as a field of study is popular among students and there are no government limits or special requirements regarding the entrance exams, organisation of the programmes and there is no special entrance exam for civil servants or public administration staff. Quality assurances regarding the offered study programmes are the same in public administration study programmes as they are for other types/fields of study, and they are linked to the accreditation system.

As opposed to the PA education landscape of the previous countries in Hungary and in Slovenia relatively a small number of institutions offer the supply from PA programmes.

In Hungary the PA education system has been transformed in fundamental ways as a result of the direct government intervention unfolding from 2011 onwards. In 2012 the government established the National University of Public Service (NUPS) by integrating the National Military Academy, the National Police Academy and the former Faculty of Public Administration from Corvinus University of Budapest. The new law removed NUPS from the institutional framework of regular higher education institutions and put it directly under the supervisory regime of a ministerial committee (later under the supervision of Prime Minister's Office). At the same time, the law practically abolished the right of any other university to issue the PA degree, which was previously offered by most universities' Law Faculties, and so the state institution became a monopoly for the education of civil servants. Due to these changes 14 programmes out of 18 are operated by NUPS, 3 programmes by Corvinus University of Budapest and 1 by a private institution.

There were other direct measures to strengthen the position of NUPS such as:

- The civil service legislation prescribed the NUPS degree (along with the traditional Law degrees) as a prerequisite for a broad array of managerial positions in the civil service.
- A completely new discipline – “State sciences” – was “founded” and institutionalised. The identity of this new discipline was reinforced by several measures.
- The traditional and long-lasting PA training provided by Law faculties were administratively banned.
- Besides the NUPS there are two other HEIs remained on the Hungarian PA Education System, namely the CUB with the MSc in Public Policy and Management and the Andrásy University with the MA program called European and International Administration.
- In addition, the April 2017 amendment of the Higher Education Act raised further concerns regarding academic autonomy. This amendment requires foreign colleges and universities in Hungary to operate under an intergovernmental agreement and to have a campus in the country in which they are based. The bill that was passed in a speeded-up procedure called as Lex CEU, because the minister responsible for higher education made it clear in his proposal that the amendment aims to eliminate the “privileges” of Central European University (CEU), that gradually built up a strong, internationally highly visible profile in public policy research and education in Hungary. Partly building on its track record in policy research and education at its Department of Political Science, in 2000 it founded its Center for Policy Studies (and in 2006 its Department of Public Policy), and in 2004 it launched its first Master level program in public policy.

In Slovenia the low number of programmes – 19 programmes run by 2 public and 1 private institutions – can be explained rather by the size of the country. Since Slovenia belongs to a group of small states, the number of programmes and institutions dealing with PA teaching is hence rather limited. Nonetheless, there is still relatively weak coordination between programmes: there is a missing link between official stately run training programmes and exams for public employees and HE academic educational programmes.

In assessing the level of current problems on the field of PA education market it is important to recognize both competitive diverse education systems and the rather monopolized education systems have their own problems and their backlashes. One of the main challenges for highly centralized educational system is to preserve their academic independence and some diversity regarding the type of PA educational programs because it seems that the different HEIs’ programs meet different market needs either from the employer/labour market perspective or from the customer ‘student’ perspective. The different PA programs offered by the three institutions prepare their graduates to different position and to different organiza-

tions/various sector of the public sphere by offering different course portfolio and developing highly different skills and competencies of their graduates.

In the countries lie on the other end of the scale the recent trend shows increasing number of PA education programmes that led to a fragmentation, lack of transparency and disables proper quality control and quality assurance. There is no string national standard on PA programmes that would provide a better coordination and quality assurance within the system.

1.2 Educational Programmes and their Relevance in the Practice of PA

These analyses are based on the findings and key conclusions of country studies “Assessment of methodology and materials of PA teaching and its relevance for practice” delivered under Intellectual Output 1 (see Pavlov et al. 2019, Špaček 2019 a, b, Kovács – Hajnal 2019b, Moldovan – Moldovan 2019, Pevcin – Kovač 2019b, Ručinská – Fečko 2019, Jacko – Černěnko 2019, Vitálišová et al. 2019b).

1.2.1 Key points on the practical relevance of the programmes

To start with the exposition, and to understand challenges that endeavor to address the practical relevance of PA programmes, it needs to be recognized that PA as a discipline is still characterized by the goal of raising awareness about itself, rather than its methodology. In this view, PA is not a discipline in the ‘conventional sense’ because at its core there is no mutual conditioning between object and method, a feature of other sciences. This explains why approaches and methods from other social sciences are used in this field, as the object of study takes precedence over the method. This also generates an important prelude to understanding how PA is and should be taught.

Although there have been and still continue to be ongoing efforts to standardize PA education, there is still no single model for it. Thus, there continues to be a variety of PA courses and programmes across countries. This is reflected in the academic sponsors of the programmes, the labels of the programmes, their duration and their clients. This diversity may be attributed to some extent to the wide discretion that nation states still have in organizing higher education, and to the autonomy that PA academics have in the subjects they specialize in. It may also reflect the necessary attention PA programmes pay to the employability of their graduates in local and national contexts.

Diversity in the development and status of PA education and programmes in CEE countries can also be observed regionally, as studies on these have been performed within Intellectual Output 1 and 2, which served as a starting point for

the focus of this project. In summary, the historical background of PA education differs across CEE countries, also reflecting the different political and economic contexts of these countries prior to the 1990s, and this can serve as a starting point for examining the development of PA education after the transition processes of the 1990s. From the cross-country comparisons it can be concluded that the historical context has had an important influence on the development of PA education during the last thirty years, but the influence of the various PA ideologies, contextual factors (i.e. the positioning of PA programmes within academic fields) on shaping the programmes should also be recognized.

The implication of the above is that there is a missing uniformity in PA education across CEE countries, where the national context is the main factor in shaping the structure and content of programmes, in some cases even creating new 'sciences'. Thus, although one would expect that there would be some convergence in PA programmes three decades after the transition began, it can be argued that these programmes are now even more diverse. This would give internalization and/or international accreditation a special role in reshaping and reversing the processes of divergence in the future. Another challenge is the perceived consolidation of PA programmes in these countries due to various factors (e.g. suboptimal fragmentation, demographics, declining popularity and demand, etc.) that would affect the number and structure of programmes in the future. This would support convergence efforts, but at the same time negatively affect the perceived market impact of the programmes.

Still, our suggestion is that PA education should continue to draw on multiple disciplines. Thus, PA's educational domain can best thrive as a multi-, inter-, or trans-disciplinary field to provide integrative knowledge capable of dealing with the complexity of problems, issues, and phenomena. So, practical reasons are the main drive here, and education should fundamentally equip graduates with the kind of competencies that will enable them to become 'flexible generalists' to deal with existing governance challenges. To achieve this, there are three options for PA education: the strong discipline – weak interdisciplinarity approach, the weak discipline – strong interdisciplinarity approach, and a hybrid option of the two. The last option is based on the proposition that students cannot fully benefit from interdisciplinary studies until they acquire a solid foundation in the various disciplines that interdisciplinarity seeks to bridge. I.e., in this option the case for interdisciplinarity is optimally accommodated within the outcomes of the course or qualification. We can acknowledge that the choice of the specific option for generating 'flexible generalists' also depends on the level of PA education. The first approach might be more appropriate for teaching PA at undergraduate level (first cycle), the hybrid option at master's level (second cycle) and the second option at doctoral level (third cycle).

1.2.2 Gaps in practical relevance

The diversity of existing programmes has implications on portraying the relevance of PA programmes to practice. This was specifically addressed within the project's first Intellectual Output (IO1), where analyses of the selected partners' programmes were conducted, involving extensive competency screening. On this basis, six key findings were extrapolated.

First, based on the institutional analyses performed on PA education, there is a suggestion that PA programmes should develop a more competency-based education approach that allows students to advance competencies that might better prepare them to deal with daily public administration challenges, handling public policy issues or delivering executive function. The second key lesson concluded from the analyses is that PA encompasses very different tasks and professions and the critical competencies vary depending on the profile of the public organization, the specific position and the particular responsibilities and activities of individuals in the position. When developing a training program, it is important to determine what type of professional and for which specific position the university intends to train and then identify the competencies most essential for that position, which generates a challenge for uniformity. Alternatively, more multidisciplinary approaches should be warranted within individual courses, taking into account not only the content but the study methods and the cooperation of all programme stakeholders. The third lesson suggests that PA education should better utilize the idea of a dual education system, which combines long-term apprenticeships in one of the PA organizations and a theoretical learning part at the university.

The fourth lesson stresses the potential for the development of policy/change labs, where an advisory role for PA is fostered, which will create an active environment and facilitate exchanges of ideas. The fifth lesson stresses the role of practice/internships, i.e. the fact that higher levels of competences could be developed in practice, supporting the principle of learning by doing. This could be done either through existing or new courses, via new forms of assignments, case study focus and/or different methods of tuition, also involving cross-disciplinary learning, where courses start with problems, and their main purpose involves finding solutions. This problem solving approach in teaching could be executed through faculty projects merging various competences and disciplines in collaboration with employers. The sixth lesson addresses the necessity to address the so-called 'soft' competencies, which are difficult to be taught in the classroom, so the focus in this case is more on the self-development of these competencies.

1.3 Implications for Policy and Practice: Recommendations for Improvements

The following subsection is based on the key findings of the study called Methodological framework for development of competencies relevant for practice (Pevcin et al. 2021) developed under Intellectual Output 5.

1.3.1 The reform of PA education

If we continue with the recommendations for improvements and reform in PA education, we should stress that it is generally accepted what PA programmes should be able to provide graduates with the competencies needed to work in PA. However, the challenge remains in structuring these competencies according to the different cycles that PA programmes have, and more importantly – given the purpose of the research within the project – in what ways PA should be taught to achieve these competencies required. Modern PA teaching approaches include theory-practice studies and methods that professors commonly rely on to ensure the integration of theoretical and practical objectives in course lessons.

The need for incorporating impact skills in PA curricula is also increasingly emphasized in the literature due to the new emphasis on outcomes assessment in academic programmes. Outcomes assessment promotes a focus on the expected values and skills of graduates, i.e. ‘the product’, as a means of designing curricula and assessing their success. This takes the form of professional values and practical knowledge and skills required for successful work in public organizations and for meeting the interests and needs of modern democratic societies.

Some authors here recognize the context of the paradigm shift in public administration, i.e. the move towards network governance as a new form of governance, and emphasize the importance of negotiation and persuasion for public sector organizations as a means of exercising their leadership. This, then, includes the political management skills at the core of the public value paradigm. In PA education this means starting with practice and working your way up, rather than starting with theory and working your way down, as it was documented within Intellectual Output 5 of the project. This becomes all the more important in light of evidence re-

ported in several previous Intellectual Outputs of the project, where the conclusion was made that some degree of so-called supply-driven teaching exists, meaning that graduates are taught what teachers can teach, not what they really want or need for their future profession.

The reform of PA education involves two dimensions, i.e. the content and the method dimensions. As for the content dimension, the results of our project and other studies show that PA education is strongly influenced by the numerous different approaches as well as the existing paradigms, which, in addition to the national contexts, generates the diverse structure and content of the existing programmes (e.g. traditional administrative-bureaucratic, New Public Management, New Public Governance). The recommendation would be that values of public administration should lie at the core of PA education, to which then three key components – structure, resources and processes – are connected. The three elements should represent pedagogical focus: theories, practices, and professional skills. For the teaching method dimension, it should be taken into consideration that some methods are per se better suited to interdisciplinary PA education, such as case studies, experimental/experiential learning, problem-based learning, team teaching, and comparative public administration (Pevcin et al. 2021, pp. 22–23.).

Therefore, the reform of education basically involves creating topics around the contemporary challenges of PA, developing both disciplinary foundations and interdisciplinary perspectives and solutions to the specific challenges, and then proposing the most appropriate teaching methods. This builds upon the methodology of competency-based curriculum development. It links theory to practice and bridges a gap between the competencies needed in practical work in public administration and those taught in educational programmes. The development of competency-based curricula is based on the idea that the competency outcomes drive the goals of the curriculum and the programmes have a learner-centered orientation; therefore, the identification of specific competencies of public administrators is necessary to develop effective and appropriate curricula (Pevcin et al. 2021, p. 23.).

As the analysis has shown, discrepancy was found in the so-called program-specific/PA generic competencies as well as soft competencies/pervasive skills that are connected to practical work in PA but are not necessary and do not relate to the knowledge of PA. For instance, currently missing, but important general competencies to be included in PA would therefore be, for example, for students to know how to:

- evaluate public policies and legislation analytically and critically in order to improve them;
- be able to plan sectoral public policy, legislation and strategic management through coordination between different sectors (e.g. to overcome conflicts of interest such as economic development vs. environmental protection);

- develop better regulation and public policies;
- be able to argue and defend their opinions, proposals and reasons;
- evaluate and develop innovative mechanisms of participatory and collaborative public administration.

1.3.2 Recommendation for the methodological framework

The reform of PA education is operationalized through the development of a specific methodological framework. This framework builds on the integration of recognized and identified knowledge gaps between PA education and practice, with the goal of bridging these gaps (Pevcin et al. 2021, p. 37.).

To this end, ultimate output is represented in the form of labs, which consist of prepared modular lessons that teach both specific competencies for PA practice and pervasive skills. The approach focuses on integrating the teaching of both simultaneously to improve candidate readiness for work in practice.

Overall, the above elaboration raised several potential issues/problems that are of particular relevance to current PA practice. These include challenges such as capacity and capability issues of PA, non-evidence based and non-participatory style of policy making, lack of strategic planning and management, lack of readiness of PA in the areas of e-government and digitalization, and the need to focus on crisis management and anti-corruption in PA. The last point can be identified as one of the main problems plaguing PA in this particular context.

The identified issues are taught in a way that also aims at improving competencies throughout. The particular focus is on improving skills in dealing with uncertainty, enabling critical and analytical thinking directed towards problem solving, conducting policy assessment and policy implementation, promoting co-creation and co-production, enabling decision making and improving communication at all levels and aspects. This shall be achieved through the use of innovative teaching, learning and assessment methods. As a result, an application of appropriate teaching and learning methods was pursued, with the proposed mix of these methods aiming at improving the levels of competences relevant to PA practice, thus avoiding perceived 'know-do' gaps between PA teaching and practice.

The idea for a hands-on laboratory for teaching PA was supported by the fact that social sciences have seen an emergence of problem-based approaches but have not adopted a laboratory-based model, a gap that has also been extrapolated for the PA discipline. The term 'lab' is not used to limit the technique to a single pedagogical approach, but to include complex case studies, applied policy problems, management tasks, etc.

As presented within Intellectual Output 5, we have used an approach consistent with laboratory design, consisting of several modules that can be used indepen-

dently or integrated into existing curricula, including their partial use. The focus of the modules is to specifically integrate problems and topics that are of particular relevance to the practice of PA. As it has been noted that these issues are sometimes missing from PA practice, we have recognized that they should be particularly and specifically addressed in order to align PA education with the needs and problems of practice. Recognizing this, the proposal is provided for four separate teaching modules that can be used to align teaching with practical needs in PA. These proposed multi-topic and multi-purpose modules are: Strategic Management and Planning in PA, Capacity and Capability in PA, E-Government and Digitalization in PA, and Crisis, Change and Issue Management in PA. It is worth noting again that although the modules are labeled as thematic, they are also designed to develop relevant pervasive skills and can be used as parts of existing courses or alternatively as separate courses (Pevcin et al. 2021, pp. 41–57.).

SECTION 2

Feasibility of the EAPAA Accreditation in New EU Member States



2.1 An Overview of EAPAA Procedures and Criteria and Their Applicability in the CEE Region

This section focuses on summarizing an overview of EAPAA criteria and procedures and perceptions from the programmes accredited/certified based on the report developed under Intellectual Output 6 and 7. EAPAA is a discipline-specific accreditation agency, active since 1999. It has accredited or certified 67 study programmes, sixteen (24 %) of them were from states that became EU members in 2004 or later (two from Czechia, two from Estonia, two from Hungary, two from Poland, two from Romania, two from Slovakia and two from Slovenia). The majority of programmes evaluated have been from the developer countries, especially from the Netherlands (30, i.e. 45 %).

Educational programmes under accreditation process can generally be clustered into strong ones, where accreditation/certification is not in doubt; those minimally meeting the requirements; and those insufficient, and will receive either a conditional decision or an outright rejection. Based on recent experience, EAPAA rejections are relatively rare because of self-selection: programmes that are uncertain of meeting the requirements usually refrain from applying in the first place.

In the self-evaluation report the programme management required to describe their programmes based on the following specific criteria (for more details see European Association for Public Administration Accreditation 2013):

- Mission, objectives and competencies: what the programme is meant to achieve and clear statement on the program's educational philosophy and mission, competencies expected from students.
- Entrance criteria into the programme: description on the procedures and requirements that apply when students enter the programme, description on the diversity of students' backgrounds.
- Curriculum structure: description on the internal logic of the programme structure, course distribution.
- Curriculum content: description on the list of the mandatory core curriculum courses (course title, ECTS, faculty) and how they relate to the programme ob-

jectives and a justification that the curriculum covers the broad domain of public administration.

- Didactic approach and description on the teaching methods.
- Student assessment: information about the ways in which the programme assesses the individual performance of students.
- Preparation for the labour market: Description on how the programme prepare students for the labour market. This should at least include training for practical skills as part of courses. The programme should also demonstrate how it encourages internships.
- The self-evaluation report should demonstrate to what extent students complete the programme in time, with the promised competencies.
- Quality monitoring and improvement: The self-evaluation report should demonstrate those mechanisms in place to improve the programme. These mechanism might include monitoring systems, external assessment, stakeholder involvement and external reviews.
- Faculty: an overview of sufficient capacity and quality such as the size of staff, academic qualifications, teaching qualifications, facilities.
- The self-evaluation report should demonstrate the diversity among staff and students and strategies to increase diversification.
- The self-evaluation report provides an overview on responsibility and autonomy of the programme management in decision making and administration, administrative structure of the institution.
- The self-evaluation report should provide an overview on the list of supportive services and facilities accessible for students and staff such as library, relevant journals, access to electronic data bases, IT facilities, services and equipment available to students and faculty, working spaces, teaching spaces, student services.
- Research basis of the program, describing the main themes of the research programme(s) staff are involved in.
- Description of internationalisation in research and in teaching.
- Description of joint programmes if it is relevant.

The accreditation process consists of several steps, starting with application, followed by eligibility check, preparation and submission of the self-evaluation report, the site visit and its report, and the processes concluded by the decision of the EAPAA's Accreditation Committee.

The PAQUALITY project partners and activities confirmed that the EAPAA criteria are applicable in the CEE region, but experiences clearly suggest that there

are some general and also context-specific features that should be considered. Particularly the following two dimensions should be considered as crucial in the CEE region:

1. the relation between the mission of the program, learning outcomes and the curricula, and
2. the faculty, especially from the point of its “quality”.

With regards to Point 1, a well formulated mission is needed, which would reflect on the programme environment and long-term strategy. There should be a clear link between the mission and learning outcomes/competences/graduate profile. Curriculum should be multidisciplinary, covering a broad list of different courses, well-related to the mission and learning outcomes (economics, law, research methods, public administration, public policy, social sciences, informatics etc.). The curriculum should preferably be delivered in a multidisciplinary approach, including cooperation with other departments, faculties. Joint projects for more courses should be promoted, and overlaps between courses prevented). It should also reflect on international state-of-art discipline and specialisation. Therefore, staff members are expected to participate in international research conferences and international research networks and involved in research projects within the discipline. They should also publish in international journals related to the discipline.

According to experiences presented and discussed during the workshop, the following major substantial areas can be identified, which an organization needs to focus on during the accreditation process: Stakeholder involvement, Communication, Data Collection, Curriculum Revision, Organizational management, Strategic Review, Communication and Technical elements.

In the Intellectual Output 6 we suggest a set of measures and recommendations that can be inspiring for programmes from new EU member states that would aim for the EAPAA accreditation. We have divided them into two main groups – the first is related to challenges concerning the content of EAPAA criteria we identified during the project; the second is related to EAPAA procedures. In the first group, we suggest measures and suggestions focusing on dealing with the following main questions, which are rather relevant for PA-oriented programmes from the region, and as such answered by the programme managements: 1. How to prove the PA domain of the program? 2. How to formulate acceptable curriculum contents? In the second group, we propose measures and recommendations related to the following questions: 1. How to assure that data necessary for the continuous evaluation of the programme are available? 2. What challenges can be faced in the preparation phase? 3. What challenges can be faced during the accreditation phase? As programmes are supposed to report fundamental changes to the EAPAA, there are also challenges that can be faced during the follow-up activities.

2.2 Case Studies on Selected Countries' Experiences with EAPAA Accreditation

This section focuses on summarizing experiences with EAPAA accreditation in three institutions. It is built on experiences gained through accreditation and re-accreditation of PA programmes. This section summarizes the three case studies developed under Intellectual Output 3.

2.2.1 Corvinus University of Budapest

Corvinus University of Budapest has experienced EAPAA's accreditation in two rounds: in 2012 the Hungarian program, Public Policy and Management (Közgazdálkodás és Közpolitika MSc/KGKP) and in 2019 both KGKP and the English language PUMA programme (MSc in Public Policy and Management/PUMA) underwent the evaluation process. Both KGKP and PUMA programmes are master level programmes. Graduates receive a degree with the title: "Economist in Public Policy and Management". The title reflects the fact that the programmes have multidisciplinary character and are officially classified within the academic field of Economic Sciences. Building on Economics, Management Sciences, Law, Political Science, Public Administration and Public Policy (Analysis), the programme offers a comprehensive, genuine multi- and interdisciplinary education for graduates who will hold high-level positions in government, public service, international organizations, NGOs or private companies in highly regulated industries.

The Hungarian version of KGKP was accredited in 2012 by the EAPAA. In 2019, this programme was re-accredited for a normal accreditation period of seven years. (Hajnal, Gy. 2019, p. 2.).

PUMA was accredited by EAPAA for the first time, for a normal period of seven years in 2019. There have been various positive learning effects during the self-evaluation process. The first one that is mentioned here is improved communication. While some of these were confined to the education unit providing the programme – in this case the Department of Public Policy and Management –; others appeared in a broader scope, reaching out to the entirety of the Institute of Economic and Public Policy (encompassing the Department) or even to other academic and

non-academic units taking part in the provision of the program. We made several written and personal rounds of communication in order to re-shape our strategic vision and mission. In recent years, the programme environment and key operational features have changed substantially (including, for example, the composition of student intake and intended learning outcomes, and to some extent the curricula of the English language program). The two programmes implied different and new strategic mission and vision elements. There were several meetings with the key faculty of other departments playing a role in the provision of the program. Such meetings and discussions did not happen in a structured or focused way in the past. Putting this communication on a structured basis helped the academic staff to gain new insights into their own as well as each others' activities, problems they faced, and views of the program. A key factor constraining the above positive effect was the lack of time. Key figures, especially senior ones, were difficult to involve in the process because of their tight working schedule.

As regards the level of communication with external stakeholders, the programme has already had an in-depth communication with many of its external constituencies at the outset of the self-evaluation. The very act of organising the site visit and the interviews with external stakeholders involved, by definition, a significant amount of communication.

The second positive effect was related to structural and procedural solutions supporting the improvements. Although most of the necessary structural and procedural elements had already been in place at the beginning of the self-evaluation, some new elements – most importantly, a systemic process of linking curriculum design and oversight to intended learning outcomes – were started to be implemented during the accreditation. These were not nevertheless attributable to the self-evaluation process per se; rather, a joint effect of the (preliminary) recommendations of the site visit team, and the ongoing university-wide reforms of the curriculum development process that took a decisive role here. Regarding the changes in the working process, the role of the administrative support staff became more visible and permanent, in some way thus gained additional importance. Links and interactions between administrative and academic aspects and actors became more expressed, accepted and permanent. It became clear during the self-evaluation process that the distribution of tasks related to administrative student services does not always follow a clear and recognisable logic. Students, in some cases, have to follow a “trial and error” logic in sorting out their administrative issues, thus generating an extra workload both on their own and the support services' side. Whereas this awareness has increased during the self-evaluation process, solutions to this problem could not be initiated because of the ongoing large-scale restructuring of the University's administrative as well as academic organisation and processes.

Thirdly we need to mention the changes in the curricula. In the process of curriculum review, we identified some gaps as well as some overlaps between certain

curricular components. For example, ethical elements were better located, and this was the case with components dealing with or related to behaviour public policy and behavioural economics (Hajnal, Gy. 2019, pp. 3–5.).

2.2.2 Masaryk University

Masaryk University has experiences with two rounds of EAPAA's accreditation. The first round was initiated by the application of the accreditation submitted in November 2010. The main aim was to obtain international feedback on the full-time program, Public Economy and its slightly modified version – the program, Public Economy and Administration was being delivered in a combined form of study. Another motive was to be the first programme in Czechia that is, potentially, accredited by the EAPAA. It was also anticipated that during the process experiences of one of the faculty members who was involved in EAPAA accreditation (as a member of EAPAA as well as a member of the faculty core of another programme that underwent the EAPAA accreditation) would be used. Based on the self-evaluation report, the site visit, additional information and the second Site Visit, the Accreditation Committee eventually granted unconditional accreditation of the two programmes in 2014 until 2019. The second round of the EAPAA accreditation was initiated by the application for accreditation of the two MA programmes – PEaA and MFTAP – submitted to the EAPAA in December 2018. It was decided that the PEaA programme would undergo reaccreditation and the MFTAP would strive for the first accreditation. The motive was to use a possibility that two programmes may be accredited for the same fee. Also, the feedback received during the first time was considered as rather valuable and facilitating also for internal discussions about developments of the programmes within the faculty and the university. During the second round, experiences from the first round were utilized related to preparation of the self-evaluation report and organization of the site visit. The EAPAA Accreditation Committee decided in September 2019 that the PEaA programme can be re-accredited (the programme received accreditation till 2025) and the MFTAP programme can be conditionally accredited for three years (until 2022) (Špaček 2019c, pp. 4–9.).

Based on the two rounds of the EAPAA accreditation of the MU's programmes, valuable experiences were gained. Thanks to the accreditation, the programmes taught the following lessons:

The aim of the accreditation should be clearly communicated together with tasks required from the people in the program. Although the core team should consist only of several employees from the program, cooperation with others is necessary, not only because of the content required in the self-evaluation report (on individual components of the curricula and teachers involved), but also because of the site visit (meetings with teachers are expected) and a general princi-

ple that the programme should be developing on a continuous basis. Considering the EAPAA accreditation, it is very important to work intensively with the staff involved in the programme during the preparation of the self-evaluation report, prior to the site-visit and after the site visit, when main findings should be discussed within the program.

The programmes have been building external stakeholder relationships since their beginnings. Thus, it was not a problem to invite representatives from cooperating organizations for the site visit. The site visit improved relationships with some contacts, because it was perceived as a rather important experience by the participating external stakeholders. This also facilitates post-site-visit cooperation with the programmes – e.g. involvement of practitioners in lecturing, cooperation on final theses, in research activities of the department that delivers the programme etc.

The two rounds of the accreditation brought important changes to the structure and content of the programmes. The mission of the programmes was revised and the curricula was amended respectively, including the introduction of new courses on governance and public policy, improving the content related to research methods, making some courses compulsory (Public Management, Public Administration II, or Internships). The management of the programme strived to improve the composition of the faculty and its publication and the research profile (also by adjusting the motivation schemes used).

During the second round, experiences from the first round were utilized related to the preparation of the self-evaluation report and organization of the site visit. The core team remained more or less the same and again its core was from the faculty staff directly involved in the programme (teaching, coordination and management). More critiques were raised concerning the second programme that was being accredited as the Czech-French PA program, which was newly evaluated by the EAPAA. The main critiques related to the cooperation between the Czech and French side were the following: insufficient attention to research methods, literature used, no electives, small number of students and disbalanced composition of the faculty. The following changes have been discussed or started to be implemented: reduction of the amount of economics, improving the content related to research methods, making some space for electives (a structure of compulsory and elective courses have been initiated and for this reason a more intensive communication between departments participating in the programme have also been started).

On the other hand, there are still several challenges that the programmes are facing:

- Collaboration between (competing) faculties in the time when there is even a rather high interdepartmental competition within the faculty.
- Employment of recognized professors and post-docs, because salaries may not be attractive enough for them.

It is hard to attract students to PA programmes when PA is rather discredited and not attractive in Czechia. Also, the French language is not as attractive as in the past which may pose difficulties for the MFTAP program (Špaček 2019c, pp. 9–11.).

2.2.3 Matej Bel University

A case study summarizes an experience of the Faculty of Economics Matej Bel University in Slovakia with EAPAA certification. It is built on experience gained from the certification of two programmes – a bachelor study program, Territorial Management and a master study program, Territorial Studies.

The bachelor study programme **Territorial Management** is a multidisciplinary oriented study program. The study programme is delivered as a full-time programme (3 years). It is aimed at the acquisition of specialist knowledge, competencies and skills necessary for posts in the middle levels of management in the public sector, public administration and regional development bodies. The master study program, **Territorial Studies** is a multidisciplinary oriented study programme aimed at the management of the territory and processes of changes taking place in a particular space. The study programme Territorial Studies deepens and extends the knowledge, skills and experience gained in the first stage of study and ensures the continuity of the Bachelor study program, Territorial Management. The study programme is delivered as a full-time programme (2 years).

Both programmes have a long history. Originally, they formed one 5-year program, but after the implementation of the Bologna agreement, separate bachelor and master programmes were established. Study programmes are the result of more than 30 years of continuous scientific research, publication and pedagogical activities. It should be mentioned that a previous programme (Public Economics and Public Administration, also at Bachelor and Master levels) at the same faculty was accredited by EAPAA in 2005 (Vitálišová 2019, pp. 2–3.).

In October 2017, a final decision was taken to apply for the certification of the bachelor and master study programmes. Since then, collecting information, data and supporting materials necessary for the development of Self-evaluation report have started. The application form for EAPAA certification for bachelor and master study programmes and lists of the courses in these programmes were sent to EAPAA Secretariat on 16th February, 2018. After a few days, we received a response informing us that our programmes were eligible for certification and the Self-Evaluation Report should be sent to us no later than 1st August 2018. The process of preparing all the necessary documents for the EAPAA and for the site visit was very rich in content, but also the process of data collection and processing was time-consuming. That could be influenced also by the fact that there were very small differences between the self-evaluation report for international certification and accreditation that time (even some parts that were not compulsory by the manual of

self-evaluation report for certification, but were evaluated). By the end of July 2018, the report was completed and sent to EAPAA Secretariat and we expected the site-visit team in the autumn. The site visit took place from the evening of 19th November, 2018 to the afternoon of 21st November 21, 2018. During the site visit, the panel had the opportunity to meet members of the programme and the broader academic and public administration community in which the programme was implemented. Intensive and goal-oriented discussions were organised with key faculty members, representatives of students and university officials. The discussions provided a comprehensive overview of the programmes. After drafting the site visit report, it was sent to the programme managers to react to the evaluations and recommendations by the site visit team through additional information or clarifications in the middle of January 2019. The comments and reactions to the report had been prepared and sent to EAPAA secretariat at the beginning of February 2019. Eight months later, the programme manager received the EAPAA Accreditation Committee Evaluation Report and official information that it was decided to grant conditional certification to the programmes, Bachelor of Territorial Management and Master of Territorial Studies for three years until 30th September, 2022.

What belongs to the lessons learned that influence the further development of study programmes were mainly the improved communication within the education unit providing the program. The preparations of the self-evaluation report as well as the site visit within the process of certification were time and information consuming. The section of department involved in the preparation met at a regular basis to develop the self-evaluation report. Processing the report helped to create a database of all relevant data (e. g. employers, list of graduates) that can be utilized also in the process of national accreditation of study programmes.

The second great benefit is improved communication with external stakeholders (employers, alumni, or others). During the site visit in 2018, there were meetings with employers and alumni. These meetings were repeated because of the PAQUALITY project activities. All participants from the alumni as well as employers appreciated these activities in order to improve the quality of the study programmes and were valuable sources of inspirational ideas how to improve the curricula and strengthen the relationship to practice. They are willing to participate in the formation of the new version of study programmes in the new accreditation period.

The processes of the self-evaluation of the study programmes as well as the external evaluation by EAPAA provide the program's managers with a very constructive view on them. The evaluation report offers a lot of recommendations and inspirations how to develop the study programmes and to make them more interdisciplinary as well as internationally recognized in the future (Vitálišová 2019, pp. 3–5.).

2.3 Experiences of the Internal Evaluation of Programmes

This section should focus on summing up and concluding the findings of the activity delivered under Intellectual Output 4.

2.3.1 Description of PAQUALITY O4

During the working package focusing on Output 4 – ‘Qualitative and Quantitative Analyses of Interactions of the Created Network’ of the PAQUALITY project all Public Administration (PA) related educational programmes included in the project database were invited for an external evaluation of their quality. Programmes interested in this opportunity were first asked to complete an initial questionnaire developed by the project partners. The purpose of the survey campaign was to collect applications from various public administration programmes for external evaluation provided by project partners. The completed questionnaires served for the selection of programmes that comply with the basic eligibility criteria of the EAPAA accreditation process and had potential for the external evaluation, which could be a first step in applying for full official EAPAA accreditation or certification in the long run. At least eight programmes were supposed to be selected and evaluated by two partners each during the project.

The main objective of this activity was to foster international quality assurance of PA programmes—especially towards European standards—and increase cooperation between PA programmes in CEE. This form of quality check offered the study programmes the opportunity to receive an independent evaluation of the overall quality of their curriculum, faculty composition, teaching methodologies and methods, research and learning facilities, and so on, by reviewing them against a generally accepted set of quality criteria relevant at the European level.

The responsibilities regarding this activity were set as follows:

- All project partners cooperated on the development of the questionnaire.

- NISPAcee performed the survey campaign; and all partners were responsible for communication with representatives of the programmes in case of follow-up questions and clarifications.
- Babes-Bolyai University was responsible for the survey evaluation and selection of eight programmes for evaluation —either pre-evaluation or comprehensive evaluation based on EAPAA criteria. In some countries (e.g. in Czechia) partners were also involved in regular communication with selected programmes in order to attract them. This was also coordinated by NISPAcee.
- Each of the project partners participated in evaluations; each evaluation was led by a partner experienced in EAPAA accreditation.

The present analysis provides a general review on the summary of the self-evaluation reports and the evaluations conducted by the PAQUALITY project partners, without disclosing any specific information about individual programmes. The analysis highlights trends and tendencies which were observed in the case of multiple master's and bachelor's degree programmes in Public Administration in Central and Eastern Europe.

The analysis summarizes the main findings, conclusions and the general recommendations that can be provided based on the aforementioned documents.

2.3.2 Evaluated programmes

The following programmes submitted their self-evaluation reports and were evaluated based on PAQUALITY by project partners.

In total, 21 programmes indicated their interest in the evaluation, but finally only the above listed eight managed to pass the evaluation procedure within the PAQUALITY project (in some cases for more than one programme —mostly bachelor's and master's combinations). The rest of the programmes have decided to withdraw from this activity due to changing circumstances (Covid-19 pandemic) and general workload or timing issues (University of Bucharest – six program; Iasi University – one program; Lazarski University – two programmes; University of Latvia – one program; Tallinn University of Technology – one program; Paisii Hilendarski University of Plovdiv – two programmes).

Some of the self-evaluation reports and evaluation studies are published in full on the PAQUALITY website (under Intellectual Output 4 – https://www.nispa.org/paquality.php?proj_id=16&sid=1899), but other programmes and evaluators requested that their work and the respective documents remain confidential as they included sensitive or personal data.

Table 7

The list of evaluated programmes in the frame of the project

	Countries	Institutions	Name of the Evaluated Programmes
1.	Czech Republic	University of Pardubice, Faculty of Economics and Administration	Economic Policy and Public Administration, Specialization Public Sector Economics', MA level
2.			Economic Policy and Public Administration, Specialization Public Economics and Administration', BA level
3.		PRIGO University	Economic Policy and Public Administration', BA level
4.	Latvia	University of Latvia, Faculty of Social Sciences, Department of Political Sciences	'Political Science (Public Administration specialization)', BA level
5.	Lithuania	Mykolas Romeris University (former Lithuanian University of Law), Faculty of Public Governance and Business, Institute of Public Administration	Public Administration', MA level
6.			'Public Administration', BA level
7.		Klaipėda University, Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities, Department of Public Administration and Political Sciences	'Regional Governance', MA level
8.	Romania	"Ștefan cel Mare" University of Suceava, Faculty of Law and Administrative Sciences, Law and Administrative Sciences Department	Management and European Administration', MA level

2.3.3 Main findings

The main findings part is structured around two components: the quality of the reports submitted by volunteer institutions and the quality of programmes evaluated. The analyses based on the content of Self-Evaluation Studies (for further details see Mykolas Romeris University 2020, Prigo University 2020, Kleipeda University 2021, University of Latvia 2021) and Evaluation Reports (for further details Moldovan, B. A. et al. 2020a, Moldovan, B. A. et al. 2020b, Hajnal – Fečko – Ručinská 2021, Nemeč et al. 2021, Kovač, P – Jacko, T. 2021) delivered under Intellectual Output 4.

The quality of self-evaluation studies towards the EAPAA Guidelines

Writing EAPAA self-evaluation reports (SER's) is a consistent challenge; therefore, the elaboration required a sustained and important institutional effort from the organizations that volunteered to participate in this activity. This is why we want to

emphasize and praise the efforts of the teams that developed the reports, especially considering the high quality of the work submitted.

The reports transmitted for evaluations were of high quality, most of them reflecting the EAPAA accreditation standards at least at an adequate level. As a general feature, the self-evaluation reports provided sufficient information to evaluators, enabling them to conduct a thorough objective assessment, allowing for sound conclusions to be reached and for making relevant recommendations where needed.

From the information included in the reports, the evaluators could observe the good quality of the evaluated programmes and also their clear academic stature and high visibility at the national level and in multiple cases at the international level.

As a general note, based on previous experience and interactions in the NISPACEE network, the evaluators noticed that programmes have evolved over time in line with the changes that took place in the surrounding environment, and tried to maintain their curricula and teaching methods relevant and up to date with current trends in PA education.

Although, as stated before, the overall quality of the reports was good (in some cases exceptional), a number of self-evaluation reports included information that might be considered irrelevant for EAPAA accreditation. In some cases, formal mistakes could be identified: some SE reports were incomplete —missing out important sections or the required information missing —or just partially presented; while others included topics that had limited relevance to the evaluation criteria—that particular information was not required by EAPAA standards nor useful for evaluators. This is understandable if the whole activity was done on a voluntary basis and presumed extra work hours for programme representatives and university stakeholders. In other cases, the descriptions provided were too abstract referring to general issues such as the PA structure or the education system in the country and not to the programme itself and its specificities.

The quality of programmes

We assessed the overall quality of programmes based on the most important EAPAA criteria, which are outlined in detail in the self-evaluation report guide. Several common patterns and tendencies can be identified based on the individual evaluation reports of PA education programmes operated in the CEE region.

Mission (EAPAA evaluation is mainly mission-based)

In most cases, the mission was explicitly and clearly presented in the SER. Going further, in some cases, the learning outcomes were explicit, and a clear connection was made between general competences and programme learning outcomes. Moreover, the intended learning outcomes of some programmes correspond to general, internationally accepted descriptions of the qualifications of an academic bachelor's

or master's degree and the programmes follow the internationally recognized standards equivalent to their level.

On the other hand, there were multiple cases of BA and MA programmes that had issues regarding the formulation of their mission statements, such as:

- mission statements were unclear or not specified enough;
- overlaps between the mission statements of MA and BA (or even PhD) programmes;
- mission statements not formulated at all, only the aims and goals of the program;
- mission statements which could be refined and better nuanced;
- mission statements focused on the social impact of the programme instead of the educational process.

It has to be mentioned that some of the aforementioned aspects were clarified to some extent after the initial evaluation, in communication with the programmes.

Curriculum

All self-evaluations offer sufficient information in this respect, including a full list of courses and syllabuses. Analyzing the list of courses and core courses showed that some of the programmes are clearly multidisciplinary, covering all the important topics of public administration education and aiming at the acquisition and the application of scientific knowledge of governance.

The curriculum of most of the programmes was considered adequate by the evaluators. In the case of the programmes that received positive evaluation, the distribution of mandatory and elective courses in terms of specialization was considered to be fair, and in line with the mission. At the same time, it was clear that the structure of the study programmes creates favorable conditions for achieving the mission and goals of the program. On the other hand, several constructive observations were made:

- In some cases, the structure of the curriculum might be better justified with reference to the programme mission, objectives and expected competences/learning outcomes, as it was unclear how these elements are connected;
- An imbalance was observed regarding core PA topics and subjects that have to be included in a PA programme and courses from other fields which are required in order to provide an interdisciplinary or transdisciplinary character;
- Soft and non-technical skills such as public communication and conflict management are, in some cases, not taken into consideration in the curriculum development of PA programmes, even if these have proved to be important in practice;

- Some core PA topics are not covered by the curriculum in interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary programmes, or in programmes in which the majority of courses originates from only one field of study (economics or law). This seems to be a common issue in Central and Eastern Europe, in countries that do not have a historical legacy of PA education (due to their communist background) and who have developed these types of studies recently, derived from other domains;
- Elective courses are provided in most cases, but they should be selected more carefully, as they might be too much outside of the field of study (students cannot relate to them) and consequently might not appeal to students. Being too similar to core courses, or not being provided on a continuous basis might also discourage students.

Teaching methods

In this respect, the SERs offered sufficient information on the structure and didactics of the programmes evaluated. Most of the programmes were considered coherent in their contents and the general didactic concept has been assessed to be in line with the mission, aims and objectives of the programmes.

However, in some cases, only general statements were made regarding the didactics and teaching methods, without any elaborated description thereof and no assessment of their usage, efficiency or effectiveness being provided. One potential pitfall is that, in a few cases, the way how the programmes' practical and applied skills are transmitted to students is not sufficiently explained in the self-evaluation reports, although these standards and practices are in fact implemented in practice.

Assessment

Most of the reports show that the programmes' procedures, principles and criteria for the assessment of learning outcomes are in place, and that balanced and well-structured assessment processes are implemented. The presentation of the assessment methods is clear, with discernible performance criteria in most cases. Assessment methods are clearly identified and described in most cases (including final exams and continuous evaluation), but some reports did not include sufficiently clear information on issues like the weight of individual components of the student assessment. In some other cases, the differentiation between the methods presented was unclear (different types of evaluations were referenced but only the name was given).

Best practices observed show that the quality of evaluation is monitored through questionnaires completed by students at the end of each semester and at the time of the final exam. At the other end, statistics on grading are missing, as well as description of thesis evaluation.

Practice/Links with practice

The information provided in the reports confirmed, in most of the cases, that the development of practical skills is one of the main priorities of the evaluated programmes, and that decision makers and stakeholders have this element in mind when designing and improving the curricula, didactics or even the assessment methods or internal control and self-monitoring procedures and mechanisms.

In most cases, the focus on practice is embodied in individual courses as well as in a specific mandatory course (often called ‘Internship’), especially at the BA level. However, this is not a unitary approach at all master’s programmes.

Overall, the Public Administration programmes provide adequate training of practical skills, abilities and competencies in correspondence with their mission and objectives. In self-evaluation reports that offered detailed information, the internship seems to be carefully planned and conducted in multiple local and national public institutions, non-governmental organizations and even public or private companies that provide public utilities and services.

In the same vein, links to practice are observable in most cases via guest lecturers, practitioners involved in classes, and in the decision-making process regarding curriculum development. In other cases, the link is unclear as SER did not provide clear information on how and if practitioners are involved in courses, conferences, public lectures, final examinations, etc.

Student performance

Best practices observed show that self-evaluation reports provide information on drop-out and employability rates (often without distinguishing between employment in the public sector, private domain or NGOs); however, more detailed and qualitative information on students’ performance could be helpful to ensure a correct assessment of this criteria.

Self-monitoring

Best practices observed in the evaluated programmes show regular feedback surveys conducted in order to monitor and improve the quality of programmes. Institutional mechanisms and structures are in place at university level (e.g. Career Centres, Students Counselling Centres, Student Organizations), but departments often make important efforts in receiving and processing feedback from students, employers and alumni in order to address issues, problems and shortcomings and permanently improve the quality of their programmes.

Albeit formal mechanisms exist in this regard—including the possibility for students to make anonymous petitions and signal problems—it seems that informal activities (such as open discussions with students, employers or graduates, round tables and conferences) yield more information than the formal channels.

Measures seem to be taken to address problems and issues signaled via both formal and informal communication channels.

Staff quality

The faculty staff of some of the analyzed programmes is engaged in multiple research and development activities and is visible in the national or international arena; however, in the case of some programmes, their research is not always connected to core topics or the disciplines taught.

All programmes included information regarding staff diversity in terms of gender, age, ethnicity or nationality. Information about the diversity of students and how diversity is supported and encouraged by the study programmes might be helpful for the evaluators of such reports.

As previously mentioned, all programmes have a certain level of focus on research, which is visible at the national or international level, but the challenge is to permanently ensure on-time knowledge transfer to pedagogy, as the cutting-edge research often conducted by professors is not always reflected in the syllabus, even if it could be. Another important challenge is connecting the faculty nucleus to the international academic community.

2.3.4 Conclusions

Based on the main findings and common patterns which emerged from the evaluation reports we can highlight the following main conclusions:

Regarding the quality of self-evaluation studies to comply with EAPAA guidelines

- Most of the analyzed programmes seem to meet the accreditation or certification criteria and standards of EAPAA or can reach them in the near future, with rather minor costs for implementing some improvements. These programmes might have a high potential for successfully applying to EAPAA certification or accreditation, but they need to be more consistent and focused when covering core PA disciplines, regarding the research projects and international exchange (especially research dimensions seem to be underestimated in CEE);
- The self-evaluation reports submitted by universities reflected the good work conducted in their preparation and were in general at the level required by EAPAA for the formal and official evaluations. Minor deficiencies (incomplete sections and information, redundant information included in the report, etc.) were identified in the reports, but these can be easily addressed and resolved for a potential formal evaluation (accreditation or certification).

Regarding the quality of programmes to comply with EAPAA standards

- Multiple programmes involve representatives from external bodies in the development of the curriculum, utilizing the strong national and international networks created around the programme and thus managing to improve their standing at the international level;
- Some programmes are mainly orientated into public policy making from a predominantly political science standpoint while not covering core PA tasks and competences, thus limiting the performance and managerial nature of PA practice;
- Supportive services and facilities seem to be present in CEE, but more information needs to be provided regarding their actual functioning and the impact they have on the students, especially on ensuring continuous education and reducing attrition rates;
- Internships in foreign countries are rarely organized or not organized at all for the students, which could have a significant impact on using their acquired knowledge;
- Although most analyzed programmes are engaged in international mobilities, these types of activities tend to be short term and often addressed to teachers – more emphasis should be made on international student mobility, especially if universities have access to Erasmus+.

2.3.5 Recommendations

On the bases of the main aforementioned conclusions, we can formulate a series of recommendations for the PA education programmes' management who are seriously considering developing their programmes in line with EAPAA criteria and EU standards and who are planning to apply for EAPAA accreditation or certification in the near future:

For improvement of the quality of self-evaluation studies to comply with EAPAA guidelines

- Since several self-evaluation reports failed to provide vital information on curriculum design and mission process, CVs and syllabuses, faculty nucleus and their qualifications, and several other areas, we advise those applying for certification or accreditation to follow the guidelines provided by EAPAA (or in general by evaluation or accreditation agencies) more closely. Albeit collecting this information can be a time consuming task, the data is required so that evaluations teams can adequately gauge the stature of a program. It is often the case that some criteria are apparently not attained by programmes following the

evaluation due to a lack of precise and clear information in SERs, and not due to the fact that these standards are not reached in practice;

- The SWOT analyses presented at the end of the self-evaluation reports by the programmes can be improved by adding more emphasis on the threats and opportunities sections. The SWOT analyses were not always connected with the reports, as some information previously presented in the document, relevant to one of the four sections of the analysis, was not adequately referenced in this section, or the analysis included positive or negative elements which were not previously discussed in the self-evaluation report or further detailed in this section;
- Although this is not explicitly requested in the guidelines, we believe that it would be in the favour of the programmes to address how they can minimize the weaknesses and threats in the future (if there are any plans) and how they maximize the strengths and opportunities as competitive advantages in order to increase the quality of their PA programmes;
- University decision makers who are in the process of preparing their Self-Evaluation Reports for EAPAA evaluation or certification should always be in close communication with EAPAA and discuss or ask for further clarification and details regarding the requirements of the SER and what information is expected for each criterion. In some cases, it seemed that the programme managers did not fully understand what was expected in each section of the SER and thus they only provided partial and incomplete information, based on which evaluators were not able to provide a completely accurate assessment.

For improvement of the quality of programmes to comply with EAPAA standards

- Study programmes are expected to design adequate mission statements and relevant aims, which should also be reflected in the curriculum and the didactics of the program. The mission of the bachelor programme should be different from the mission of the master program, although both of them could be in-line with the general mission of the faculty/institute or with that of the host university. Having two different missions (for the BA and MA programmes) would also help better clarify the rationality behind their curricula and how one levels builds upon the previous one;
- Decision makers can emphasize the applied education approach more, by focusing on internships (which should be mandatory, included in the core curricula and assigned grades and credits), inviting or cooperating with practitioners during classes, organizing guest lectures and approaching problems faced by the local community during the educational process;

- Decision makers can ensure that, even if the curriculum is interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary, the core PA courses (topics, subjects, skills or competences relevant in a particular country or context and which reflect the intentional standards and practices) are covered by the curriculum and that there is no one field or domain (for example law, economics, sociology) which monopolizes the entire program;
- Programme decision makers need to ensure that the entire faculty included in the educational process (including practitioners or short-term educators) possess pedagogic/teaching qualification/skills in line with the program;
- The faculty staff should be encouraged (at least by internal norms and a motivation system) to publish in leading and internationally recognized Public Administration journals (or similar, regarding their interdisciplinary research topics) and to participate in recognized international Public Administration/Public Management focused conferences in order to increase/foster participation in international networks;
- Public administration programmes from CEE can design specific policies and services/facilities in order to address the following student related issues:
 - Drop-out rates;
 - The employability of graduates in the field of studies (as PA graduates are often employed in the private sector or NGOs);
 - The continuation of studies in the field/domain and the achievement of new educational levels after graduation (from BA to MA and from MA to PhD);
- Programme decision makers can emphasize and encourage the academic research activities conducted by students (especially at the MA level) more and focus on involving them in research activities which can result in national or international publications;
- Internal quality assurance procedures need to move beyond the formal stage (in which they exist mostly in documents but are not put into practice) and actually act and be utilized as resources to increase the quality of PA study programmes. Furthermore, practitioners, employers and students need to be included in these commissions, bodies, systems and procedures and they need to be provided with means to exert change;
- Master students who do not have pre-graduate public administration degrees or experience in the field should be provided specific catch-up courses or materials during the first semester or prior to it, in order to ensure that all students are at the same or similar levels of understanding core Public Administration concepts.

Due to the evaluation experience that PA programme managements underwent in the frame of the PAQUALITY project, we believe that they gained consistent beneficial insights and knowledge on quality assurance and identified the strength and risks of their programmes. Many lessons have been learnt that can be utilized in order to develop or fine-tune the programmes more consciously and in a more structured way while also encouraging them to apply for international accreditation in the future.

2.4 Feasibility of EAPAA Accreditation in Selected Countries

This sub-section summarizes findings on the feasibility of EAPAA accreditation in the selected countries, which are presented in more detail in the Intellectual Output 7.

The research and analyses conducted within the PAQUALITY indicate a high level of compatibility of requirements specified within the national accreditation systems with requirements of EAPAA accreditation in almost all countries with partners in the PAQUALITY project. On the other hand, various differences in the focus, content and procedures of national accreditations compared to those applied by EAPAA were identified and discussed.

2.4.1 Compatibility of national accreditation systems with EAPAA accreditation criteria and procedures

The contents of this part are based on both the contents of the Intellectual Output 7 and the conclusions of individual multiplier events that were organized by the project partners in 2021.

Specific features of national accreditation systems in the Central and Eastern European region

As we described in details in the previous section, the EAPAA accreditation is not any rare ‘accreditation award’ in the field of public administration in Western European countries. However, a closer look at countries of the Central and Eastern European region brings a different result. Only a few HEIs offering some study programmes in the field of public administration have successfully passed the EAPAA accreditation procedure and are awarded by the EAPAA accreditation nowadays. This state is influenced, inter alia, by uncertain relations between the national accreditation systems and international accreditation opportunities, including the EAPAA accreditation. In the next section, we offer a brief overview of relations between the national accreditation systems of selected countries of the Central and Eastern European region and the EAPAA accreditation:

Bulgaria

Public administration has been classified as a professional management-oriented sub-field (“Administration and Management”) under the field of Social, Economic and Legal Sciences in Bulgaria. A dominant and exclusive role in national accreditation is played by the National Agency for Assessment and Accreditation. This institution is responsible for all the nostrification procedures in the country, too.

The national accreditation system does not recognize the EAPAA accreditation. Since the national accreditation awarded by the National Agency is recognized not only Europe-wide but also world-wide, there is neither pressure nor motivation to accept the EAPAA accreditation as an alternative way of accreditation at national level in Bulgaria (Špaček et al 2021, pp. 21–23.).

The Czech Republic

Public administration has not been classified as an independent study field that can be directly accredited in the Czech Republic. On the contrary, public administration can be accredited either in the field of law or economics. According to representatives of the Czech National Accreditation Bureau for Higher Education, this inclusion of public administration under the other fields offers undergraduates as well as graduates of those field more options for further specialization.

As for the EAPAA potential, according to the rules in the Czech Republic, it is impossible to replace national accreditation rules by any international accreditation. But a new legislation also anticipates a possibility that a university can opt for the external evaluation by “the generally recognized evaluation agency” and it may establish a space where the EAPAA accreditation/certification may be relevant (Špaček et al 2021, pp. 23–25.).

Hungary

From a comparative perspective, the EAPAA accreditation is similar to the national accreditation, especially if one compares the technical side of the accreditation procedures. However, a comparison focused on contents shows us a clear difference: the national accreditation is especially rooted in various qualification criteria, infrastructure, contents of offered courses as well as teaching materials; and the EAPAA accreditation is rather aimed at a broader context.

Both accreditations, i.e. the national one and the EAPAA accreditation co-exist next to each other but the Hungarian Accreditation Committee has not accepted the EAPAA accreditation as a fully fledged equivalent or even a substitute of the national accreditation yet (Špaček et al 2021, pp. 25–26.).

Romania

The national accreditation does not strictly limit universities or other HEIs, and public administration is connected to a few fields. The main tasks in the national accreditation are performed by the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education. Similarly to the Hungarian system, both the national and the EAPAA accreditations are used; however, while the national accreditation is more based on institutional criteria, the EAPAA accreditation is rather more mission- and program-focused.

Unlike in the other countries compared, an external evaluation can be done by any other organization and it is recognized as a valid accreditation if the providing organization is registered in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (Špaček et al 2021, pp. 26–29.).

Slovakia

A reform of the national accreditation system in Slovakia is ongoing nowadays, and therefore it is necessary to take this fact into account whenever one wants to evaluate or describe the national accreditation system, its criteria or procedures. Under the conditions of the previous system, public administration was connected to two study fields, namely Public Administration and Public Policy, and Public Administration and Regional Development. However, these programmes could be adjusted by the HEIs, and the study programmes offered varied a lot. A new system has subordinated the study field of public administration to broader Political Science and Economics and Management-oriented study fields; at the same time, it has limited its inclusion into other study fields.

Slovak Accreditation Agency for Higher Education replaced Accreditation Committee of the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic in the beginning of 2020. The new agency wants to address the problem of low quality education provided by the HEIs in Slovakia, and within this context, it has already announced new criteria for national accreditation. The criteria have been tightened in comparison with the previous set of accreditation criteria, but, from the perspective of international accreditation, there is no room for a substitution of the national accreditation by means of any international accreditation (Špaček et al 2021, pp. 29–33.).

Barriers of compatibility of national accreditation systems with the EAPAA accreditation

The EAPAA accreditation has not been accepted by the national accreditation authorities in the Central and Eastern European region yet. In addition, pressure from the HEIs located in this region has not been massive, and they preferred to run for national accreditation certificates to any international accreditation ones. One can identify seven fundamental reasons of the above-mentioned absence of acceptance:

- 1) The EAPAA was established outside the Central and Eastern European region and the role of this international accreditation institution is still considered either redundant or based on circumstances that are not typical for the Central and Eastern European region.
- 2) Public administration, similarly to some other social sciences, is a relatively recently developed study field in the Central and Eastern European region where it had replaced various studies aimed at courses rooted in Marxist-Leninist ideology. Unsurprisingly, both teaching and research in the Central and Eastern European region in the field of public administration lags in comparison with some other regions, including the Western European one.
- 3) Due to specific developments of public administration (as an academic/study field) in countries of the Central and Eastern European region, there is no unified or universally recognized approach towards this study field. Before the 1990s, the field of public administration was traditionally subordinated to the field of legal studies, and this approach remained very strong, for instance, in Croatia or in Poland. However, approaches rooted in political science, public policy, management, economics or even geography have come into light almost in all countries of the Central and Eastern European region since the beginning of the 1990s. Very recent developments in some countries, for instance, in Hungary or Slovakia, have shown that this study field has not been standardized there, and faces some upcoming changes of significant nature. This is valid for Bachelor, Master and PhD level.
- 4) Taking into account the previous points, the EAPAA criteria/standards that are common in Western Europe are difficult to achieve for a clear majority of the HEIs in the Central and Eastern European region nowadays. Therefore, there are just few HEIs located in the Central and Eastern European region, which have already successfully passed the EAPAA accreditation.
- 5) The national accreditation authorities usually assess quantitative criteria, e.g., number of teaching staff, qualification criteria, infrastructure, offered courses as well as teaching materials, but qualitative assessment is very important for the EAPAA accreditation. As for this qualitative assessment, it is aimed especially at coherence between the mission of the programme and the contents of included courses.
- 6) As for the Central and Eastern European region, while some of the national accreditation systems do not allow the replacement of national accreditation certificates by any externally awarded accreditation/certificates; in some other national accreditation systems it is not legally forbidden but legal provisions focused on such an option are rather vague.
- 7) Experience of those HEIs located in the Central and Eastern European region, which have already been awarded by the EAPAA accreditation, confirms only

marginal advantage in terms of promotion of the accredited study programmes. More precisely, the EAPAA accreditation itself has not increased attractiveness of relevant study programmes at national level in any significant way. On the other hand, it has supported awareness among prospective international applicants for study at least (Špaček et al 2021, pp. 34–36).

Measures to support compatibility of national accreditation systems with the EAPAA accreditation

Due to fact that the EAPAA accreditation is connected with both the mission and real outcomes of the evaluated study programmes, it is important to keep this fact in mind if one wants to apply some measures to support compatibility of the national accreditation systems with the EAPAA accreditation. At this point, it is possible to propose a few measures that could be helpful.

First of all, it seems that international awareness of activities is important for both the HEI itself, and also for evaluators in case of international accreditation. Activities of teaching staff as well as study activities must be properly promoted, if one wants to attract some relevant attention abroad. One of the most effective as well as efficient ways is active engagement of teaching staff and researchers in international research networks, active participation in relevant international conferences or congresses, publication of research results in internationally recognized journals, and active involvement in meaningful academic mobilities.

The HEIs offering study programmes in the field of public administration should follow not only the national standards/criteria of accreditation but also international ones. This approach will allow them to collaborate at both national and international levels. Obviously, it is not any easy goal, and requires additional efforts. However, these efforts could be considered an in-kind academic investment.

Representatives of relevant HEIs could initiate open discussions on the importance as well as usefulness of the EAPAA accreditation at national levels and invite national accreditation authorities to take part in these discussions. Even if the discussions do not lead to official acceptance of the EAPAA accreditation, they would increase awareness of the EAPAA accreditation, its criteria and procedures at least.

2.4.2 Challenges and recommendations related to the content of the EAPAA criteria for New Member States

In the previous section, we provided a country specific overview of the compatibility of national accreditation systems with the EAPAA accreditation in NMS. In the following one, we summarize a more general overview of the accreditation processes in NMS and emphasise some common patterns in the region.

Considering the content, accreditations in some countries are mainly or solely institutionally focused. This is especially the case in Bulgaria and Slovenia. In other countries involved in the PAQUALITY project (Slovakia, Romania, Hungary and Czechia) mixed systems were identified which deviate from the solely program-focus of EAPAA accreditation. Here, higher education institutions (especially public universities) that obtain institutional accreditation from the central (national) accreditation body may accredit their studying programmes themselves. The national agency may intervene on ad hoc basis, for instance, when issues of a programme are reported in the media. In some of these countries, PA programmes may obtain the institutional accreditation in fields specified by legislation. For instance, in Slovakia study programmes in the field of PA can be currently offered within two existing study fields, Political Science and Economics and Management. In Czechia, PA-related programmes are usually accredited within two areas of education – economics or law and due to this, some programmes may be too oriented or courses on economics law may lack the interdisciplinarity required by the EAPAA accreditation criteria.

The analyses indicate that national accreditation frameworks of all countries with partners in the PAQUALITY project work with various criteria which usually combine requirements on institutions and study programmes. The countries may differ in the level of specification and formalization/rigidity. An extreme can be found in Bulgaria where the national accreditation system is based on very rigid calculations. The evaluation criteria are very formalized and rigid in Hungary. They do not provide much flexibility in judgment and mainly focus on formal and quantifiable criteria (Nemec – Špaček – Klimovský 2021, pp.32–35.).

2.4.3 Challenges and recommendations related to EAPAA procedures

Our analyses indicated that country and EAPAA requirements may be similar and different also in the case of accreditation procedures.

Similarities can be observed regarding the entire process in many of the countries with partners in the PAQUALITY project – initial self-evaluation report, followed by expert site visit and formal report. On the other hand, it may be concluded that the role of external international accreditation of programmes is actually only additional/supplementary to the national accreditation process, sometimes not even recognized in legislation and in internal quality frameworks of HEIs. The national accreditation systems in the countries involved in the PAQUALITY project mostly do not directly (explicitly) encourage existing (PA) programmes to apply for international accreditations, and programmes are motivated by other factors outlined elsewhere in this summary Intellectual Output 8 report (e.g. efforts for their quality improvement, to make PA programmes more competitive internally

and externally). Although the PAQUALITY project activities indicated that some PA programmes would be willing to be accredited/evaluated by the international agency, various barriers were pointed out by their programme managers and representatives – the lack of resources and internationalization were emphasized by them, in particular.

Similarly to EAPAA procedures, in all countries with partners in the PAQUALITY project, some periodical monitoring is required and countries may differ in the length of this period and in requirements imposed on the frequency of internal accreditations.

Specifics were found especially in Romania, Slovenia and Bulgaria. In Romania, the accreditation process has two stages: (1) a provisional temporary operating authorization which offers the higher education service providers (Universities) to start a new program; and secondly (2) final or permanent accreditation which offers the possibility to issue the educational diploma which is recognized by the Ministry of National Education and assures specific qualification of the students; 5 years later, this initial temporary authorization may be followed by accreditation and periodical evaluation every 5 years. In Slovenia, institutional accreditation is valid for 5 years and the programme holds permanent accreditation once granted, unless revoked through an irregular national evaluation procedure. In Bulgaria, the period depends also on the score the studying programme received during the evaluation (and the accreditation may be valid for three or even six years – three years are applied to programmes that received the least points.

In most of the countries with partners in the PAQUALITY project, accreditation is subject to administrative procedure law with a possibility of appeal. This possibility is not incorporated into procedures used by EAPAA (Nemec – Špaček – Klimovský 2021, pp. 32–35.).

2.4.4 Summary of implications

Two core issues were put forward by the Intellectual Output 7:

- One issue relates to the willingness and motivation of national accreditation bodies to start accommodating to and even considering the existence of international accreditation bodies, and to make some efforts to streamline, at least partially, the two approaches (Špaček et al. 2021, p. 40.).
- Next, the national accreditation bodies should be encouraged also to implement more extensively qualitative assessments of the programmes, where not just contents, but also missions are considered, which represents a core of EAPAA accreditation. Thus, there should be impetus for merging both screening and signalling dimensions of accreditations (Špaček et al. 2021, p. 40.).

But the proactive role of EAPAA should also be considered. EAPAA might become more sensitive to national specifics in performing their accreditation and evaluation processes and EAPAA may also be more involved in lobbying activities with national agencies, as well as with exchanging relevant information and expertise with them. Also, in case of countries where institutional accreditation is awarded to HEIs and they themselves can then accredit their programmes, the awareness of the potential of international accreditation should be built and discussed.

2.5 Implications for (National) Policy and Practice (Programme Management)

2.5.1 Recommendation for national accreditation systems

This section develops the recommendations on the programmes' screening and evaluation from the perspective of national accreditation and quality assurance systems, in particular from the perspective of their alignment with the international accreditation and quality assurance system. For the latter, the recommendations take the perspective of international EAPAA accreditation for PA-related programmes.

Although the analyses performed under the Intellectual Output 7 of the project (see Špaček et al. 2021) have revealed a certain level of compatibility of national accreditation systems with EAPAA accreditation in almost all included countries (there are still some exceptions and special cases, though), there is still no national accreditation system in CEE directly encouraging existing PA programmes to apply for EAPAA accreditations. The barriers are various, e.g. different focus of accreditations, no need for re-accreditations, or simply, international accreditation is not acknowledged in any matter.

Although the systems of accreditations are diverse, there is a handful of activities to be performed both at the national as well as at the EAPAA level to start bridging the gaps. Two core issues can be identified. The first one relates to the willingness and motivation of national accreditation bodies to start accommodating to and even considering the existence of international accreditation bodies, and to make some efforts to streamline, at least partially, the two approaches. The second one relates to the accreditation contents, where the national accreditation bodies should also be encouraged to implement qualitative assessments of the programmes more extensively, where not just contents, but also missions are considered, which represents a core of EAPAA accreditation. Thus, there should be impetus for merging both screening and signalling the dimensions of accreditations.

Still, the proactive role of EAPAA in this endeavour should also be considered and is particularly recommended, a suggestion being that EAPAA might become more sensitive to national specifics in performing their accreditation and evalu-

ation processes. This delivers from the iterations that EAPAA has with different programmes in different countries, which are subjected to apply obligatory national accreditation procedures, too, but all these programmes then correspond to EAPAA and its rules. This involves in particular issues related to procedures, but also the accreditation focus should be considered. A recommendation might be for the EAPAA that it becomes more involved in lobbying activities with national agencies, as well as with exchanging relevant information and expertise with them (Špaček et al. 2021, p. 40.).

2.5.2 Recommendations for PA educational programmes

Next, we focus on providing the experience and forming the recommendation for PA programmes that are or would like to be involved in EAPAA evaluations or accreditations. The evidence provided namely shows that international accreditations are important because they enable to obtain an in-depth feedback from internationally recognized experts to improve the programmes, they enable to increase the prestige of the programmes, both internally and externally, and, finally, this increases the competitiveness of the programmes.

Nonetheless, it is worth noting that getting involved into EAPAA accreditation procedures is a demanding job, which requires an active and substantial institutional involvement. The experience shows that the accreditation procedure serves as an important tool for constructive suggestions and for obtaining relevant feedback, it needs to be stressed that accreditation procedures involve preparing a detailed self-evaluation report, which is followed by intensive site visit meetings.

It is important that applicants acknowledge the comments and questions from evaluators, and also, that due to the diversity of the systems, they explain the background in which the programme operates (legislative, cultural, political, etc.). The experience provided by the programme managers already involved into the EAPAA accreditation procedures can deliver the following main recommendations. First, it is very important to focus on the mission and learning outcomes of the program. It is also recommended for the programme managers that the programme focuses on PA, and that it is regularly monitored and improved with the consultation of relevant stakeholders, where demand-based orientation is warranted. In addition, programme managers should be aware of the importance of the internationalization and international dimensions of the program, of the quality and sufficient number of instructors involved in the programme (i.e., sufficient core faculty nucleus), and that they are committed to the students.

2.5.3 Final points, main conclusions

Based on the evidences and lessons draw from Intellectual Outputs we can conclude the following key conclusions:

- Comparing the countries based on diversity and structure of the PA education market we can differentiate on the scale of rather monopolistic market to the perfectly competitive, diverse market in which many organisations operate PA education programmes including public and private institutions as well. The PA education market can be considered very diverse and competitive in Bulgaria, in Czech Republic, in Romania and also in Slovakia, while in Hungary and in Slovenia the PA education market seems to be rather centralized and rather dominated by one or few providers. Highly centralized, rather monopolised system struggle from the lack of diversity of supply and limited/restricted academic autonomy of HEI. Highly diverse systems tackle with fragmentation and with the lack of coordination and standardised quality control and quality assurance. The lack of national standardization on the field of PA education may be overcome by recognizing the role of accreditation made by international associations.
- Although there have been an ongoing efforts to standardize PA education programmes and create better coordination between them, there is still no single model for it. Thus, there continues to be a variety of PA courses and programmes across countries.
- Another general phenomena in NMS that many PA programmes are still mainly legal-oriented, especially those provided by faculties of law. These programmes may be lacking multi-disciplinarity (in education and in research that support their content) that is necessary in approaching of public administration. PA programmes should combine legal, economic, managerial, e-gov and public policy topics and reflect developments in these fields as published on the international level. This necessarily means that the education is supported by research activities of the faculty nucleus that reflects the available international literature.
- Linking to the previous point public administration encompass very different tasks and professions and the critical competencies vary depending on the profile of the public organizations, the specific position and the particular responsibilities and activities of individuals in the position. When developing a training program, it is important to determine to what type of professional the university wants to train and which specific position and then identify the competencies are most essential for that position.
- On the basis of the limited evidence available an important lesson to be drawn is that – much more as in the case of public administration organisations – it is very difficult to change Public Administration academic practices. Another lesson to be drawn that scientific evolution, and in particular the evolution and creation of new disciplinary fields, is a bottom-up and organic process. It can hap-

pen through the long-term interaction between highly engaged academics, and top-down directives are of limited effect only. One of the key point for HEIs to better identify their target groups and be more aware to which field or position they aim to educate their student and tailor the education programme, course curricula and teaching method to meet the necessary competency requirements.

- Concerning the recommendations on EAPAA accreditations, a note should be delivered on findings that suggest improvements related to EAPAA procedures. As the surveys performed within the Intellectual Output 7 have revealed that there is potential to improve accreditation procedures in particular through better clarification of the scope and the content of the requirements in the guides to the self-evaluation reports and more detailed explanation and clarification of the accreditation criteria in the EAPAA guidelines. Nonetheless, there is a clear indication that EAPAA accreditation and certification is positively perceived, and, as indicated, a consideration should only be given to the improvements in guidelines, both for the preparation of self-assessment reports, as well as for site visits. For these, there are suggestions to clarify the scope and content of the requirements more in detail, to reduce overlaps in the content required in the self-evaluation report, and to pinpoint criteria for the selection of external members for the site visit teams. Finally, a consideration should be given on the duration and organization of site visits, as in some cases more detailed discussions and screening might be needed to capture the proper findings on the programme under consideration.

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NISPAcee Press
Polianky 5
841 01 Bratislava 42
Slovak Republic
phone/fax: +421 2 6428 5357
e-mail: nispa@nispa.org
<http://www.nispa.org>



ISBN 978-80-99939-06-7