



Co-funded by the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union

**PAQUALITY: Public Administration Education Quality Enhancement,**  
Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership KA203  
No 2018-1-SK01-KA203-046330

### **Multiplier Event for Slovakia - Virtual**

#### **Summary**

**Title: The quality of public administration study programs in Slovakia – perspectives and challenges within the European context**

**Term:** April 13th, 2021

**Platform:** MS TEAMS hosted by UPJŠ Košice

**Objectives of the event:** The main objective of the event was to discuss the current status of PA teaching in Slovakia and its quality, challenges within the European context and ways how to cope with them. Simultaneously, the event served for the presentation of the project intellectual outputs, promotion of the EAPAA accreditation and certification as a tool for the quality improvement and their comparison with the national accreditation requirements. Project partners in addition collected valuable feedback from the event participants which could be utilized for the finalization of last project outputs.

**Participants:** There were 46 participants of the event including 16 participants from the project partners' institutions and 3 from Matej Bel University, but working also as evaluators of the Slovak Accreditation Agency. Their views and feedback were especially useful for the project team. Other participants included mainly representatives of all other PA programmes in Slovakia, but also representatives from the practice, from central as well as local public administration institutions, a few relevant NGOs and alumni of PA programmes.

This composition of participants served very well to the purpose of the event. Programmes from HEIs learned about the project outputs and EAPAA opportunities which could serve them for their further quality enhancement to the European level. Other participants from the practice provided a valuable feedback to the presented outputs and pointed out the needs of the practice. Some of them stressed that alumni of PA programmes miss necessary skills for the practice as analytical, innovative and critical thinking and soft skills. Alumni of programmes confirmed they missed the connection to practice during the study. Representatives of programmes argued they promote the relation to practice, they organize internships but many times these are not utilized in a good way by employers who utilize

students for not qualified tasks. But all participants agreed that relationship to the practice is essential for a good quality of a programme and a quality of the alumni of programmes.

Evaluators of the Slovak Accreditation Agency argued for the new accreditation criteria adopted in Slovakia in 2020 and pointed out possible ways of their applicability for the PA programmes. They stressed the leading aspect of the education outcomes in the accreditation process and the necessity to settle a national framework within which it is necessary to operate. But programmes should utilize the devoted space for building such a curricula which would fulfill also requirements of an international quality level. An issue is the recent change in the structure of the study fields in the Slovak Republic, PA focused study field is cancelled as an autonomous study field. Study programmes in the field of PA can be currently offered within two existing study fields, Political Science and Economics and Management. Thus, the curriculum of the PA study programmes is affected with this change, in order to fulfil the curriculum related requirements of the specific study field.

**Programme:** The programme of the event included several core presentations and based on these it opened enough space for discussions and individual consultations to individual PA programmes. Presentations started by a short overview of the PAQUALITY project presented by L. Gajdošová, the Main Project Coordinator, followed by presentation of Nemeč - Klimovský on “EAPAA accreditation and certification in CEE countries and Slovakia”, presentation of Špaček on “Analyses of PA programmes in CEE countries and Slovakia” and finally sharing of experience with EAPAA accreditation criteria by project partners from Slovakia – M.B.University from Banská Bystrica presented by K. Vitálišová, UPJŠ Košice by M. Fečko and EU Bratislava by T. Jacko.

Afterwards L. Gajdošová led a moderated discussion on a theme:

*Challenges for the quality of PA teaching enhancement in Slovakia and opportunities for EAPAA accreditation/certification:*

- from PA programmes point of view,
- from practice point of view,
- from national evaluators point of view,
- from alumni point of view.

An extensive discussions on the above topics contributed to the project partners from Slovakia to finalize a background document on Slovakia for IO7 (*Methodological approach to the European public administration accreditation in the new EU member countries*) of the project after the event. The document titled “*Feasibility study on an acceptance of EAPAA accreditation on national levels - Slovakia*” see attached to this summary below.

The afternoon of the event was devoted to individual consultations and communications with PA programmes in Slovakia. The major questions discussed with the programmes were the following:

1. They views on EAPAA accreditation/certification criteria, relevance of the EAPAA evaluation in the Slovak national context and an interest in the EAPAA evaluation.
2. Strengths and weaknesses of programmes from the EAPAA evaluation criteria point of view.

All core programmes from Slovakia were involved in this communication. In summary all of them agreed there would be a major challenge of programmes to build the PA curricula according to the definition of PA domain by EAPAA standards under the new accreditation structure adopted in Slovakia in 2020. The programmes have stated they would need some

time to adapt to the prescribed national rules and they suggested EAPAA could be more sensitive to the specifics of the national rules and requirements. Programmes also agreed the EAPAA accreditation could be a very valuable tool for further development of their programmes, but they could be interested in it only if it would be compatible with the national accreditation, or could be recognized by the national accreditation bodies. Only one programme of a private university has confirmed an ambitious to apply for the EAPAA accreditation under the present conditions.

**ANEX:**

**Feasibility study on an acceptance of EAPAA accreditation on national levels**

**(input for the IO7, Component 3)**

**Input 3 – Upgrade on the short report and collection of additional data**

**Slovakia**

Projected statement

This feasibility study would like to reveal current status and steps needed to achieve acceptance of EAPAA accreditation at national level. We focus on studying legal, operational and time components of feasibility.

Steps of activities

1. First step aims at investigating the compatibility of accreditations. Methodology will consist on the comparison of EAPAA standards with national accreditation standards. Comparison should portray major differences between the standards of the two, including the content of the standards as well as the procedures of the accreditations, the second including also variations in time dimension. If national accreditation involves both institutional as well as programme accreditations, the two should be meaningfully incorporated. Legal, operational, time components, but also other relevant components of variations accreditation standards and procedures should be considered.

<b>Country:</b>		
<b>Differences in accreditations/standards</b>	<b>EAPAA</b>	<b>National</b>
<b>Content</b>	Programme focus of accreditations	The university applies for the accreditation. If it is successful, for the accreditation of the study programme the approval of the university and faculty board of quality is enough.

	<p>5 eligibility criteria; 13 standards (domain, mission, level, practice, curriculum, quality improvement, student assessment, jurisdiction, faculty, students' admission, supportive services, student services, public relations)</p>	<p>More focus on aims not mission. The internship is obligatory only in professionally oriented study programs. There are on special prerequisites on students' for entry to the programme in social sciences beside the standard ones. No special focus on didactical concept and teaching methods.</p>
	<p>Precisely defined Public Administration domain (criteria 5.1) and Curriculum (criteria 5.5)</p>	<p>Due to the recent change in the structure of the study fields in the Slovak Republic, PA focused study field is cancelled as an autonomous study field. Study programmes in the field of PA can be currently offered within two existing study fields, Political Science and Economics and Management. Thus, the curriculum of the PA study programmes is affected with this change, in order to fulfil the curriculum related requirements of the specific study field.</p>
	<p>External assessment prevails through site visits and report assessment.</p>	<p>The site visit is linked with the accreditation of the university/faculty, not with the specific study programme. The study programme is evaluated externally by the selected stakeholders (employers, experts from academia, etc.)</p>
	<p>General assessment of the staff involved in the study programme (size, teaching and academic qualification, etc.)</p>	<p>Specific requirements for 5g guarantors of each level of study programme (bachelor – national quality, master – international quality, PhD – excellent international</p>

		quality presented by the research outputs and publications)
	Focus on internationalization in each study programme	It is not required at the bachelor level of study programmes
	Analysis of the diversity (gender, age, ethnicity) among staff and students	Not special focus on this issue in each programme. Some information is provided at the university/faculty level.
	Quality monitoring systems with stakeholders, external reviewers	Obligatory evaluation of study programmes by stakeholders and external reviewers only in accreditation process. Requirement of only one annual periodical evaluation by students.
<b>Procedures</b>	The self-evaluation report in English	The study programme report in Slovak, eventually Slovak/English, only pure English programme in English
	7 years validity	6 years validity of accreditation of the university, with the monitoring at least each 2 years.
	Voluntary involvement, non-administrative procedure with no appeal	Obligatory involvement, administrative procedure with appeal
	The decisive body is the EAPAA board	The decisive body is a university quality board if the university is successfully accredited
<b>Similarities (summary)</b>	<p>To evaluate the similarities and differences is more theoretical issue in Slovakia, because the new system of accreditation is going to be implemented during next months.</p> <p>By the comparison of the both accreditation processes and their content there is a overlap in some standards (mainly domain, level, student assessment, jurisdiction, faculty, students' admission, supportive services, student services, public relations and evaluation process (mainly involving the same groups of stakeholders).</p>	
<b>Main differences (summary) and</b>	The process of the study program accreditation is different from the EAPAA accreditation – if the university and faculty is accredited as a	

<p>implications for the EAPAA accreditation feasibility</p>	<p>whole, about the study programme accreditation can be decided at the university level.</p> <p>In Slovakia, there are the main requirements on the guarantors of each level of study programme (bachelor – national quality, master – international quality, PhD – excellent international quality presented by the research outputs and publications), within the EAPAA the general assessment of the staff involved in the study programme (size, teaching and academic qualification, etc.) is done and focus is given to the internationalism (at the bachelor level in not in Slovakia).</p> <p><b>Implications:</b></p> <p>Even there were submitted some remarks to the Slovak Accreditation Agency during 2020 on acceptance of international accreditation, they were not included in the accreditation standards.</p> <p>Maybe in the next years when the system will be tested and formed, there could be a possibility, at the level of universities to accept the internationally accredited study programme as a full equivalent of accredited study programme and this programme does not have to be evaluated by the university quality board.</p> <p>The inspiration for the Slovak Accreditation Agency could be also focus on internationalization in staff issues in each level of study presented by research outputs, international projects, participation at the international conferences etc. Current definition of quality in the standards is quite vague and not specific.</p>
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2. Second step builds on the previous one, where ranking is performed. This ranking starts with identifying the differences; the elaboration starts with those differences that are of minor or modest nature, and thus compatibility could be potentially easy to achieve. Following, the outline continues with the ones, where the differences between the two are increasing.

<b>Country: Slovakia</b>			
<b>Standard ranking</b>	<b>Difference description</b>	<b>Potential solution to difference accommodation</b>	
		<b>EAPAA perspective</b>	<b>National perspective</b>
1.	Programme focus of accreditation		Define the role of international accreditation in the accreditation process. Possible solution at the university level to accept the internationally accredited study programme as a full equivalent of accredited study programme
2.	Requirement on the staff of the study programme	Special requirements on each level of study	More precise definition of various levels of quality asked
3.	Quality monitoring		More focus on periodical quality

			monitoring with various groups of stakeholders
4.	Evaluation reports in national language (same parts in English)	English	Evaluation reports in Slovak and English obligatory
5.	Focus on didactical concept and methods		Foster the explanation used teaching methods with the self-evaluation report.
6.	Special prerequisites on the students for entry the programme	Be more sensitive to the national rules.	General prerequisites defined by the law, no specific prerequisites in case of social sciences.
7.	Mission and aims of the study programmes		Focus more on the strategical development of the study programme, not only on output - graduate
8.	PA domain and curricula	Be more sensitive to the specifics of the national rules and requirements.	New study fields settled in 2020 and there is no perspective for a change in this matter.

3. Third step builds on the solutions' development, and represents a core of the feasibility study. Thus, the output here reflects the potential to streamline the two accreditations, and the perspective here is national one.

The evidence from the step 2 should be discussed with the representatives of the agency (potentially also university), and how they perceive the fit for potential recognition, also taking in the consideration potential evaluations (e.g., irregular, sample evaluations etc.). Alternative is to have focus groups based discussions with vice-rectors/vice-deans, programme directors and agency representatives on the issue.

The output should focus on measures that both national level as well as EAPAA should take to bridge the gaps/differences.

The issues listed under item 1st and 2<sup>nd</sup> were discussed with representatives of PA programmes and also evaluators of the Slovak Accreditation Agency on a Slovak PAQUALITY Multiplier Event which was held virtually on April 13, 2021.

<b>Country:</b>	<b>Slovakia</b>	
<b>Recommendations for bridging the gaps</b>	<b>What national level should do?</b>	<b>What EAPAA should do?</b>
Programme focus of accreditation	The shift towards institutional accreditation in the Slovak Republic leads to the development of internal quality assessment criteria.	

	At this stage of development, it is difficult to predict, what the possibilities of international accreditation acceptance are.	
Mission and aims of the study programmes	Add the mission definition to the criteria of accreditation	
PA domain and curricula	PA programmes have to follow the national rules, but they should do their best to follow international standards and the EAPAA requirements and accommodate these into their programmes' content and curricula.	Be more sensitive to the specifics of the national rules and requirements.
Requirement on the staff of the study programme	New national standards are currently applying specific requirements on the staff, based on the level of the study programme, where the staff is teaching. The institutional internal quality assessment standards will take these requirements also into consideration.	To define the special requirements on each level of study
Quality monitoring	Support the periodical monitoring of study programmes by different groups of stakeholders	
Evaluation reports in national language (same parts in English)	English and Slovak	
Focus on didactical concept and methods	Add this item to the criteria of accreditation	
Special prerequisites on the students for entry the programme	A change of the law, but it doesn't seem feasible.	Accept the different conditions in countries