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Intellectual Output 3:

Methodological framework for quality improvement of project partners

EVALUATION REPORT

Programmes under the evaluation within the project are evaluated by selected project partners based on review of their self-evaluation studies against the EAPAA accreditation criteria. Site visits were not included into the project activities; therefore the evaluation statements are limited to the available written information and discussion among project partners during the Project Transnational Meeting held in Ljubljana on November 15, 2019.

Name of the programme: Territorial Studies

Level: Master

Name of the Institution: Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica, Faculty of Economics,
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Note: The report expresses an opinion of the the authors. The EC doesn't have responsibility for any utilization of included information.

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Part 1: Accreditation Criteria

1. Preamble	
1.1 National educational system	<p>Slovakian Public universities have an educational system compatible with the systems of the member states of the European Union. This system is based on three levels of higher education. Level one, Bachelor study lasts for 3-4 years and graduates obtain a Bachelor title (abbr. Bc.). Level two usually lasts 2 years and graduates obtain the following titles: Master (abbr. Mgr.), Engineer (abbr. Ing.) or Doctor in the studied branch (MUDr., MVDr., and MDDr.). The third level is Doctoral study, which lasts for 3 – 5 years, depending on the type of doctoral study – internal or external form. The graduates of doctoral studies are granted a title „Ph.D.“.</p> <p>The university titles are obtained after writing a Bachelor/diploma thesis and passing a state exam. Universities can provide education only in those programmes that are accredited by the Slovak Accreditation Commission.</p>
1.2 National evaluation system	<p>In Slovakia, a special accreditation commission carries out accreditation. The Accreditation Commission was established by the government of the Slovak Republic in the year 1990 as its advisory body. The essential tasks of the Commission are to monitor and independently evaluate the quality of education, research, development, artistic and other creative activity of universities. The Commission comprehensively reviews the conditions under which these activities take place at individual universities and carries out a comprehensive accreditation of universities' activities every six years. Within the comprehensive accreditation the Commission also evaluates the level of research, development and other creative activities of the university and evaluates the standards of the particular university compared with other universities</p>
1.3 Formal exams for entrance to civil service	<p>Formal exams for entrance to the civil service are not a part of the Slovak legislation system. Students of the programme are prepared in terms of general requirements of the public administration and civil service system. Special competences are not required for activities related to economic education.</p>
2. Applicability/Eligibility	
2.1 Domain	<p>Territorial Studies is an economically oriented multidisciplinary Master study programme aimed at management of the territory and processes of changes taking place in a particular space. It prepares a new generation of professionals, managers and leaders in local and regional development in domestic and international environments. The programme has been accredited in Slovakia as a part of the study field Public Administration and Regional Development.</p>

2.2 Geography	The program is organized by the Faculty of Economics, (Department of Public Economics and Regional Development) of Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica, Slovakia. Being a member of EU and of the Council of Europe, the program falls within the jurisdiction of EAPAA.
2.3 Programme longevity	<p>The self-evaluation report does not contain information on Territorial Studies master program longevity.</p> <p>There is information about Undergraduate program Territorial Studies which had been accredited nationally in 2015, and is a continuation of Regional Development and Public Administration program initiated in 2005.</p>
2.4 Programme variants and locations	<p>Banská Bystrica is the only location where the Master program is provided, at the Faculty of Economics, Matej Bel University.</p> <p>The program is offered both on a full-time and part-time version.</p>
4 Category of accreditation	The programme Territorial Studies applies for a second cycle graduate/master level public administration programmes accreditation. The character of the program is in line with the application.
5. Standards	
5.1 Domain of public administration	The program seems to be strong in public economics (covering topics like macroeconomics, financial management, public budgets, local government finance) – also being located in the Faculty of Economics, but the public administration elements in the program is apparent - it is clear that the master program is interdisciplinary – research methods, marketing, management, regional policies. The structure of elective blocks of courses strengthens the PA approach. However, for the future it will be a challenge that the number of courses in the economic discipline would not be increased.
5.2 Mission of the programme	<p>The mission of Territorial Studies programme is to ‘prepare students for a variety of public administration and regional development roles and positions, including leadership, management, and administration in government and non-profit organizations; to instill in students public service values and professional ethics; and to promote a commitment to improvement of government and other public sector institutions in the changing public environment’.</p> <p>The mission is in line with the mission of Matej Bel University, and of the Faculty of Economics. The mission is clear and sustained by cross-sectoral competencies supplied by the program. However, we believe that university or programme level decision makers could refine and nuance this mission (or at least the phrasing) as it appears to be a rather generic one, or at least one which could be (at least partially) applied to any other PA master or even undergraduate programme.</p>

5.3 Level	<p>The program is aligned with the Bologna system (the ECTS credit system was introduced in 2002). The average number of credits in recommended syllabuses is 30 credits per term and 60 credits per academic year. Enrolment for the next year of study at the same level of study is contingent upon gaining at least 40 credits in the previous year of study.</p> <p>A special emphasis is put on corresponding final qualification to the Dublin descriptors (knowledge and understanding; applying knowledge and understanding; making judgements; communication and lifelong learning skills) for Bachelor and Master awards. The Master deepens and expands the subject matter knowledge and related methods acquired during Bachelor study and makes it possible to focus on specialized subjects in the discipline in which studies have already commenced</p>
5.4 Practice and internships	<p>The orientation on practice is embodied in individual courses as well as in a specific obligatory course called Practice. This course is scheduled in the summer semester of the 2nd year of the Master study programme and evaluated by two ECTS credits. In the course, the student uses a suitable apparatus of scientific methods in solving research tasks from practice, the course being associated with the creation of the final qualification thesis of the student.</p> <p>Student are required to pass the course Diploma Thesis with Defence (20 ECTS, summer semester of the 2nd year of Master study), in which they have to prove their ability to apply the acquired methods and procedures in practice in solving a research task within the final thesis.</p> <p>From the self-evaluation report it can be seen that internships are voluntary, not mandatory, or offered through Erasmus programme (internship abroad).</p> <p>The development of practical skills is included also in other courses of the study programme, mainly in the form of seminar works that solve the specific problems assigned by the local and regional self-governments, state administration offices, etc. Interconnection with practice is also declared by a broad series of lectures and discussions for students and lecturers with representatives of public administration</p>
5.5.1 Curriculum Content	
5.5.1.1 Core components	<p>The curriculum of the master program is adequate. The programme was developed based on the National Strategy for Global Education 2012 - 2016 approved by the Government of the Slovak Republic and are also linked up to the Strategy of Decentralization and Modernization of Public Administration.</p> <p>The study program core courses comprise of compulsory and compulsory selective courses. Through the compulsory selective courses professionalization of PA programs is made. The courses are oriented on the methodology, practice and history of public administration, public</p>

	<p>finance, information systems in territorial management and development, developing knowledge from the first level of study especially in relation to the management of processes in public administration. There is a clear Public Economics orientation (5 out of 12 compulsory courses), doubled by a specific approach of 4 different tracks/blocks of the program (compulsory selective). Ethics is approached in the case of only one of the tracks (Public Administration), but the distribution of courses in term of specialization is fair, and in line with the mission.</p>
<p>5.5.1.2 Other Components</p>	<p>Each student chooses the selective courses absolutely by individual interests and selected specialization. For every selected and successfully finished course the student obtains 3 credits in the first study level and 4 credits in the second study level. By selective courses, every student forms his/her own professional profile.</p> <p>The official catalogue of selective courses includes 42 courses from the areas of microeconomics, macroeconomics, informatics, finance and taxes, social and political science, management. Most of the elective courses are private sector oriented, but public – specific optionals can be found.</p> <p>Several of these courses are offered and taught in foreign languages. Most of the selective courses are delivered directly by the Faculty of Economics. The distribution of courses into compulsory / selective compulsory / selective is adequate.</p>
<p>5.5.1.3 Structure and didactics of the programme</p>	<p>The Master level takes typically two years. To complete this degree, the student must achieve a minimum of 120 credits of which 74 credits are compulsory courses, 30 credits for compulsory selective courses and 16 credits for selective courses. The programme is completed by a state exam, part of which is Master thesis defense. In general, in the first academic year of the study, the average number of credits is 60, the maximum which can be taken by a student is 90. To proceed to a next year of the study, the student needs to achieve no less than 40.</p> <p>The master programme builds on the competences of students that have been acquired in BSc. providing entry to the master. The Report mentions that the emphasis is on the activity of the student, in terms of: preparing a literature review, paper project, thesis, article, or position paper, or delivering a public presentation; research assignment, tests and experiments, practical exercises, skills practice; work placement, fieldwork or excursions; participation in other required learning activities aimed at achieving the desired skills.</p> <p>Students work individually, and mainly independently, on master thesis in a particular domain. In the master thesis, they apply their advanced knowledge and understanding of public administration, in combination with their problem-solving and design competences</p>

5.5.1.4 Intake	<p>The basic requirement for Master program intake is the completion of a Bachelor degree. The additional requirement for full-time study is to pass the entrance exam, which consists of a written test in major subjects of the Bachelor study programme in the particular field of study (Public Administration and Regional Development).</p> <p>The report does not mention any possibility of BSc. Graduates to take part in preparatory courses – this is an option only for bachelor program, and only valid for foreign language programs. The procedure could easily filter students in terms of their readiness to study specific PA master program, but could limit accession of other students which do not have economics or PA background.</p>
5.5.2 Length	<p>The report mentions a length of 2 years (and in some cases three years), in line with Bologna System and European regulations. Further details should be offered regarding the ‘special cases/conditions’ in which the programme can last for three years instead of two.</p>
5.5.3 Results	<p>The Territorial Studies programme is an economically oriented multidisciplinary study programme aimed at studying management of the territory and the processes of change that take place in a particular space. The graduates of this program will acquire knowledge needed to know and analyze the local and regional economy, use information systems, plan the social, economic and environmental development of territorial units in accordance with the principles of ethics and legal standards. The graduates have the necessary knowledge to apply the latest managerial approaches and tools in public administration institutions, to manage organizations of the private and non-profit sector participating in the development of the territory and public administration.</p> <p>The graduates acquire key skills including data analysis, employee motivation and management, ability to solve problems in the team, and collaborate with different industries and organizations.</p> <p>The graduates can use their knowledge and skills in managerial functions of central state administration, local state administration, territorial self-government and other bodies established by them. They can work in organizations involved in the development of the territory, in scientific and research institutions, development and advisory agencies, but also as consultants in specific areas. Their multidisciplinary education and flexibility allows them to work in a home and international environment (source: self-evaluation report).</p>
5.6 Quality Improvement and Innovation	
5.6.1 Programme accomplishment	<p>The department of the Faculty of economics has a system of quality in management of education put in place - the department has a system of periodic assessment of fulfilling the objectives and performing the duties, which come out of the marketing development strategy of the</p>

	<p>programmes. The content of study courses is reviewed every academic year, the structure of courses, especially compulsory selective and selective ones, is changed and replenished according to the requirements of the public administration practice.</p> <p>The performance in the reaching the tasks set in full-time study is assessed regularly (once per semester). Orientation of the programme is supervised internally on the faculty and department level.</p> <p>External supervision is done regularly through the Accreditation Commission of the Slovak Republic established at the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic, while another type of feedback comes from the cooperation with practice through exchange of experience and the successful posting of graduates into public administration bodies.</p> <p>Recommendation: An External Supervisory Board / Committee formed by practices and professors from abroad is a useful tool used by other universities, and it could be used in this case as well</p>
<p>5.6.2 Curriculum Development</p>	<p>The curriculum is innovated and improved regularly, which is guaranteed by a few measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - At the end of each semester there is a questionnaire survey made through the academic information system among students, identifying the quality, strengths, weaknesses and potential improvements of the selected courses. The results of the evaluation are discussed with the lecturer in order to improve the course quality. - After the final state exam each graduate evaluates the quality of the study programme through a questionnaire survey. The results of the survey belong to the main sources of ideas how to increase the study programme quality. If it is possible, the changes are made immediately; if not, they are included in the accreditation process. - The courses of modern teaching methods for the staff are organized at the university level (e.g. special pedagogical courses for the staff with PhD; course on service-learning; courses on development of PC skills etc.) - Discussion with experts from the professional field about the requirements of practice on students. <p>All progressive innovations of the study programmes are presented to the public through the webpage, mass media and through participation of the faculty and departmental representatives in public fairs of education, etc. (Source: self-Evaluation report)</p> <p>The program has evolved over time in line with the changes that took place in the surrounding environment related to PA teaching. To be more up-to-date and reflect the changes in the society, the study programme includes four blocks of obligatory optional courses – Management of Villages, Towns and Regions; Public Administration; Regional Development of Developing</p>

	<p>Countries and Regional Development (in English).</p> <p>Recommendation: involvement of external bodies' representatives in future development of curriculum.</p>
5.6.3 External Reviews	<p>The program has successfully received national accreditation evaluation, based on an evaluation process that took place in 2014-2015, but it has not been reviewed since by any other international body.</p>
5.7 Student Assessment	<p>The Faculty of Economics Study offers sufficient information in the Assessment Guide (Study Guide). The assessment method presented is clear and is a tool for eliminating subjectivity in evaluation. Quality of evaluation is monitored through questionnaires at the end of each semester, and at the time of final exam.</p>
5.8 Programme Jurisdiction	<p>The Faculty as a self-governing educational body is fully formally and informally responsible for the programme provisions, the whole programme "Territorial studies" being fully within its jurisdiction.</p> <p>The Department of Public Economics and Regional Development is responsible for the administration, organization and provision of the programme.</p> <p>This department creates, evaluates and guarantees the programme, its curricula, individual courses, their organization, time schedule and creates partnerships with other major and supportive departments for courses within their competence.</p> <p>The department has scientific and research freedom in the programme but is tied to the faculty in the area of programme organization, financing, quality review and strategy accepted by the university and faculty management. (source: self-evaluation report)</p> <p>According to the SE report, The department can receive advice from the committee of external experts created by the head of department who are invited to the department meetings or professional meetings or other forms of cooperation with the department, but no further information is offered vis-à-vis this procedure and how often it is used.</p>
5.9.1 Faculty nucleus	<p>Core staff involved in Territorial Studies Master Program includes 21 people (20 fulltime and one part-time). There are no gender issues regarding the teaching staff; in fact most teaching staff seems to be female.</p>
5.9.2 Faculty qualifications	<p>The qualifications of the core faculty are adequate for the program. Teachers are involved in other projects/organizations in connection with PA environment, also 28 practitioners have been involved in teaching starting since 2016. The number of practitioners is important, and the courses that benefit from their experience is be diversified.</p>

	<p>Quality of instruction is measured through three tools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - assessment of the performance of all students attending the course - processed through the Academic Information System - feedback by students to the teaching methods used, based on subjective perception of students on teacher's performance in a particular course - "inspection of classes" is used to assess the pedagogical methods of individual teachers in certain courses and the effectiveness of those methods during lesson. <p>The faculty seems to be present in the international scientific arena, attending international conferences and participating in multiple international projects (EU HORIZON 2020, COST, Visegrad Fund, TEMPUS, and ERASMUS+) as well as national ones. The core faculty also has a consistent academic research output, with 127 publications (books and articles in journals) in foreign languages between 2015 and 2019 and 43 scientific publications (books and articles in journals) in the home language of core faculty published from 2016 to 2019</p>
5.9.3 Diversity: gender and minorities	<p>The core staff consist of 15 (71 %) women and 6 (29 %) men, the predominance of women in core staff being connected with the historical background and culture of the country. During last years, the Department hosted representatives/ experts of various nationalities.</p> <p>There is no mentioning of a formal gender policy at university level.</p>
5.10 Admission of Students	<p>The basic requirement is the completion of a Bachelor degree. The additional requirement for full-time study is to pass the entrance exam.</p> <p>The entrance exam consists of a written test in major subjects of the Bachelor study programme in the particular field of study (Public Administration and Regional Development)</p> <p>Procedure already discussed at - 5.5.1.4 Intake</p>
5.11 Supportive Services and Facilities	<p>Education is primarily financed through subsidies from the State budget. In order to cover expenses necessary for its activities, the University also uses financial resources like tuition and study-related fees. The students benefit from library support. The library provides access to the Internet, electronic information resources and subscribed foreign databases which are inaccessible to other internet users.</p> <p>The study programmes at the Faculty of Economics are administered and managed by means of information systems. The main system for supporting the educational process is AIS 2 – Academic Information System. This system enables students and teachers to plan the schedule of lectures and seminars, to book lecturing rooms, to sign up to selected courses, to record partial and final grades of students from the courses. This system is also used as a tool form measuring satisfaction of students concerning quality of</p>

	<p>teaching.</p> <p>The Faculty of Economics runs the pedagogical and research activities in two buildings which are in the ownership of Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica. All classrooms at the Faculty of Economics are equipped with a desktop PC with the internet access, a multimedia projector, a projection screen and a set of loud speakers. The lecturing rooms with the capacity of 90 and more seats are also equipped with a wireless microphone. All rooms are furnished with stable or variable furniture that allows their accommodation for different types of programmes' courses and various teaching purposes.</p> <p>Six seminar rooms and specialized PC laboratories, equipped in total with 126 computers or terminal clients, are used for teaching. All the rooms are equipped with interactive boards and other multimedia devices. One of the rooms (111) is specialized for the teaching of selected courses in the study programme Territorial Studies being equipped with 10 high-quality PCs that allow students to use GIS and other graphical software packages.</p> <p>In the faculty buildings, students have a free access to 27 PC workstations located in two rooms that are opened daily for self-study, and to 11 PCs located in the hall ways. The employees and PhD students have at their disposal more than 320 desktop PCs and 125 notebooks in the offices.</p> <p>The infrastructure is adequate.</p>
5.12 Student Services	<p>Student services such as programme advising, study progress appraisal and career guidance are provided at both university and faculty levels.</p> <p>The advising system is based on communication with students, which is provided by the Study Department, by the ECTS coordinator, by the coordinator for students with specific needs, and by study advisors at the departments responsible for particular study programmes.</p> <p>The Study Department provides in particular information and advisory services related to the organization of study during the academic year, rules for course selection, administration of study, control of study results, and processing students' complaints and applications.</p> <p>The feedback from students with regard to social welfare (dormitory, catering facilities, leisure time activities, sports and recreational facilities, library) is regularly monitored (mainly by questionnaire).</p> <p>Career guidance and job placement services are provided by the Career Centre of Matej Bel University,</p>
5.13 Public Relations	<p>PR activities are realized mainly through personal presentations at the partner institutions in Slovakia and abroad, participation in education fairs, and open days (spring, autumn) organized on the premises of the faculty.</p> <p>Up-to-date information on the study programmes Territorial Management</p>

	and Territorial Studies is provided on the faculty website. It includes general information on the admission procedure (electronic application form, important dates, fees, admission requirements, content of entrance examination and recommended literature, information for applicants with specific needs) and on individual study programmes (mission, objectives, target groups, educational philosophy, main topics of education, possibilities for further study and employment after graduation)
6 Additional Criteria	NA

Part 2: Conclusions and recommendations

From the information included in the SE report, the program quality is good and the programme has a clear academic stature. All accreditation standards are reflected at least on the adequate level. However, a few recommendations can be formulated:

- An External Supervisory Board / Committee formed by practitioners and professors from abroad is a useful tool used by other universities to ensure a high level of quality of educational programmes and it could be used in this case as well.
- We believe that university or programme level decision makers / stakeholders could refine and nuance the mission of the programme (or at least its phrasing) as it appears to be a rather generic one, or at least one which could be (at least partially) applied to any other PA master or even undergraduate programme.
- Since some of the articles included in the list from page 80 are published in top tier journals, we believe that it would be in the best interest of the programme/department to also include the ranking (Q1 to Q4) of these journals.