



Agency for
Quality Assurance
and Accreditation
Austria

Review Report of the Expert Panel – Joint Programme

EuroPS-Joint Master's Programme in Political Science – Integration and Governance (PoSIG)

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1 General information

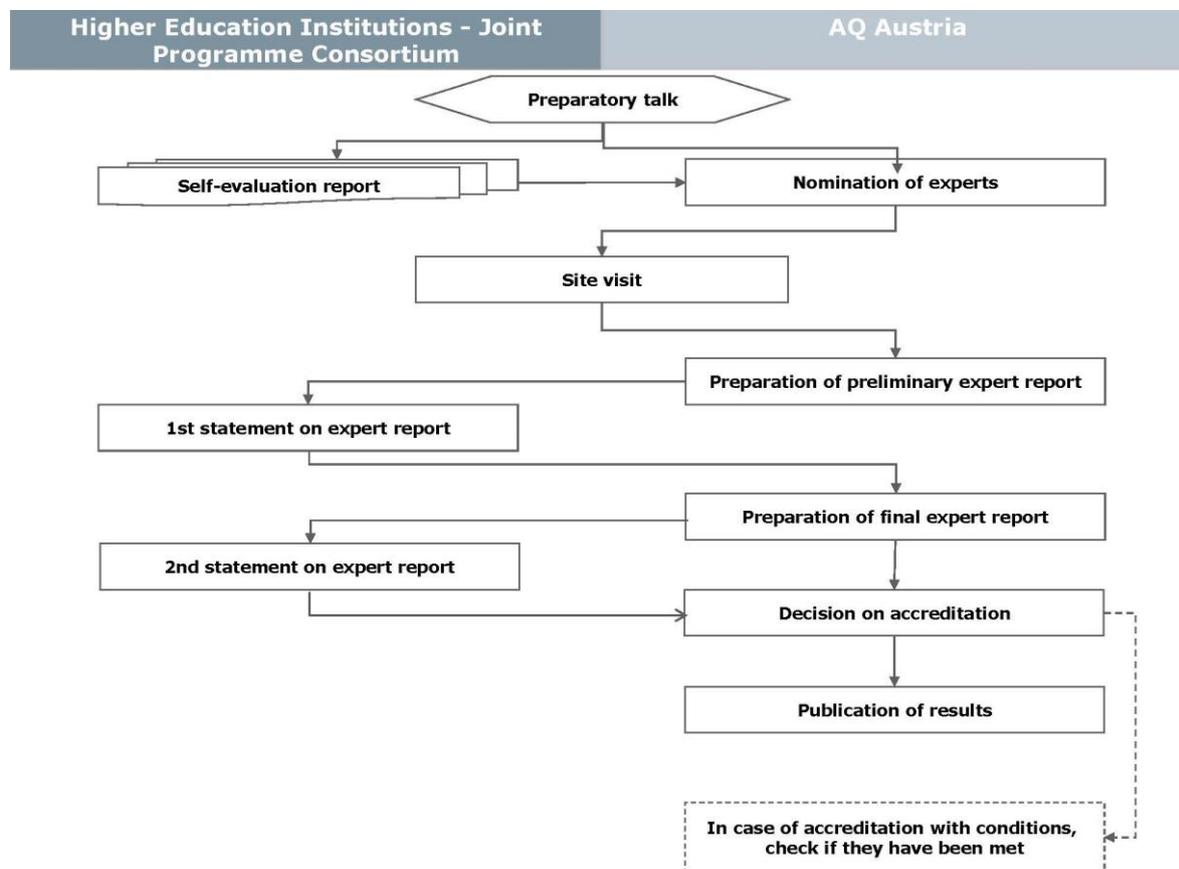
1.1 Basic principles of the procedure

AQ Austria is the Austrian agency for quality assurance and accreditation in higher education. The agency is operating in Austria and other countries of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). It is committed to serving the common good and is based on the values of the EHEA, in particular the autonomy and diversity of higher education institutions and independent quality assurance.

By granting accreditation to joint programmes, AQ Austria confirms the compliance of the joint study programme *with Standards for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes in the EHEA (European Approach)*.

1. Eligibility	1.1 Status 1.2 Joint design and delivery 1.3 Cooperation Agreement
2. Learning Outcomes	2.1 Level [ESG 1.2] 2.2 Disciplinary field 2.3 Achievement [ESG 1.2] 2.4 Regulated Professions
3. Study Programmes [ESG 1.2]	3.1 Curriculum 3.2 Credits 3.3 Workload
4. Admission and Recognition [ESG 1.4]	4.1 Admission 4.2 Recognition
5. Learning, Teaching and Assessment [ESG 1.3]	5.1 Learning and teaching 5.2 Assessment of students
6. Student Support [ESG 1.6]	
7. Resources [ESG 1.5 & 1.6]	7.1 Staff 7.2 Facilities
8. Transparency and Documentation [ESG 1.8]	
9. Quality Assurance [ESG 1.1 & part 1]	

The accreditation pursues the principles of peer review and follows the procedural steps:



The review report of the expert panel and the consortium's statement constitute the basis for the accreditation decision, which is taken by the 14-members-board of AQ Austria. There are three options for the decision:

Accreditation without conditions

The quality requirements are being met. Any recommendations given on the basis of expert opinion are supposed to help the higher education institution/project consortium to continuously develop the joint programme.

Accreditation with conditions

Accreditation with conditions will be granted if the joint programme shows an acceptable level across the standard's overall spectrum. However, standards have been assessed as "not met" because deficiencies have been detected which are likely to be corrected within nine months. Within nine months the higher education institution/project consortium proves that the conditions have been met, and this will be verified by AQ Austria. As a rule, at least one review panel member will be involved in examining whether the conditions are fulfilled.

Denial of accreditation

Accreditation will be denied when the joint programme shows serious identifiable shortcomings. This applies when standards have been assessed as "not met" and deficiencies detected are not likely to be corrected within nine months.

1.2 Accreditation procedure for the EuroPS-Joint Master's Programme in Political Science – Integration and Governance (PoSIG)

A Consortium of cooperating Universities, led by the University of Salzburg, asked the Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation Austria (AQ Austria) to conduct an external quality assurance of its Joint Degree Master's Programme in Political Science – Integration and Governance (PoSIG) in English, carrying 120 ECTS. The consortium of PoSIG has decided with regard to external quality assurance to follow the European Approach for Quality Assurance for Joint Programmes (European Approach) that has been approved by European Higher Education ministers in May 2015 in Yerevan. According to the European Approach cooperating institutions can select a suitable quality assurance agency from the list of EQAR-registered ones. AQ Austria is an EQAR-registered agency.

1.3 Members of the Expert Panel

The Board of AQ Austria has appointed a four-member Expert Panel:

Name	Institution	Role
Dr. Jovan Teokarević	University of Belgrade, Faculty of Political Sciences, Associate Professor, Serbia	Head of the expert panel Expert from academia
Prof. em. Dr. Dr. h. c. mult Reinhard Meyers	Professur Internationale Beziehungen, Institut für Politikwissenschaft, Westfälische Wilhelms- Universität Münster	Expert from academia
Mag. Ingrid Gössinger	Monitoring Officer, OSCE Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine	Expert from pertinent professional field
Katharina Hechl , BA	Master's degree in Political Science: European and International Relations, Master's degree in Sociology: Social and Political Theory, University of Innsbruck	Student Expert

Timetable of the accreditation procedure

Procedural step	Date
Delivery of self-evaluation report by consortium lead partner University Salzburg	18 October.2016 1 st revised version: 8 November 2016 2 nd revised version: 16 November 2016
Decision on expert panel members by the Board of AQ Austria	24 October 2016
Preparatory virtual conference of the expert panel	14 November 2016
Site visit to lead partner University of Salzburg by the expert panel	1 st and 2 nd December 2016
Draft review report of the expert panel	9 February 2017
Formal statement by Consortium	24 February 2017
Final report of the expert panel	24 February 2017
Accreditation decision by the Board of AQ Austria	14 and 15 March 2017

The expert panel members have jointly written this review report, based on a range of activities, including a thorough assessment of the Self-Evaluation Report (SER) compiled by the Consortium in November 2016, supplemented with various documents delivered before, after and during the site-visit. The site-visit took place at the University of Salzburg, has responsibility for the coordination of the Consortium. The expert panel had the chance to interview representatives from all Consortium partners. Throughout the whole process the Panel profited enormously from the expert guidance and help of AQ Austria. On behalf of AQ Austria the project was coordinated by Maria E. Weber and Notburga Damm.

2 Description of the joint programme

2.1 Consortium partner of the joint programme

Consortium
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University of Salzburg (PLUS), Austria • University of Ljubljana (ULJU), Slovenia, • Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje (UKIM), FYROM Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia • European University of Tirana (UET), Albania • University of Tirana (UTIR), Albania • FAMA College (FAMA) – Prishtina, Kosovo • University of Business and Technology (UBT) – Prishtina, Kosovo • University of Sarajevo (UNSA), Bosnia and Herzegovina • Sarajevo School of Science and Technology (SSST), Bosnia and Herzegovina

2.2 Profiles of the joint study programme subject to accreditation

Name of the programme	European Political Science
Academic degree(s) awarded	University of Ljubljana - Master of Science (MSc) ¹ University of Salzburg - Master of Arts (MA) Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje - Master of Science in Political science University of Tirana – Master of Arts (MA) European University of Tirana - Master of Science (MSc) FAMA College – Master of Arts (MA) University of Business and Technology – Master of Science (MSc) University of Sarajevo – Master of Arts (MA) Sarajevo School for Science and Technology - Master of Arts (MA)
Date of introduction	1 October 2017
Regular study period	2 Years
Number of ECTS credits	120 ECTS
Full time/Part time	Full time
Tuition fees	Individual participation cost policy of the participating universities from €256,50,- up to €1.600,- per term. Public universities such as PLUS, ULju, UKIM, UTir and UNSA acting within their given legal frame for participation costs. These participation costs (tuition fee where applicable) will be charged in the active study terms by the attended university within the study track the curriculum allows and a student has decided for. Other fees are charged for registration, services and insurance purposes.
University of Salzburg (PLUS)	€745,20,- €18,70,- (student union fee incl. insurance and services)
University of Ljubljana (ULJU)	€1.250,00,-
Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje (UKIM)	€600,00,- €650,00,- (degree fee)
European University of Tirana (UET)	€1.250,00,-
University of Tirana (UTIR)	€500,00,-
FAMA College	€1.200,00,-

¹ Magister politologije

(FAMA)	
University of Business and Technology (UBT)	€750,00,-
University of Sarajevo (UNSA)	€256,50,-
Sarajevo School of Science Technology (SSST)	€1.600,00,- €400,00,- (thesis fee)

According to the information provided by the Consortium, the EuroPS Joint Master's programme PoSIG and all accompanying measures have been developed as part of the Erasmus+ KA2 Capacity Building Project 561485 - 2015-2017 "*Curriculum Development Joint European Political Science MA (EuroPS)*". The Project results from continuous academic exchange of staff and students within several Erasmus Mundus projects and Erasmus+ Credit Mobility.

The Consortium intends to apply for an additional Erasmus+ joint degree grant project following the accreditation process to support the first student cohorts; further support for students will already be available from 2017 onward with Erasmus+ Credit Mobility grants.

The Consortium, coordinated by the University of Salzburg (Department of Political Science and Sociology), is aiming to implement a multilateral Joint Degree (JD) for Political Science at the Master's level (120 ECTS credits) with diploma supplements for all participating project partners. According to the Consortium the joint programme, PoSiG, is based on international standards and benchmarks of teaching political science in accordance to level 7 of the European Qualification Framework and to second cycle qualification of the FQ-EHEA. Each Project Partner (EuroPS Project Partners, EUP) contributes with their specific academic profiles in

- Comparative Politics, European Integration, International Relations, Public Administration and Policy, Political Theory and Methodology.

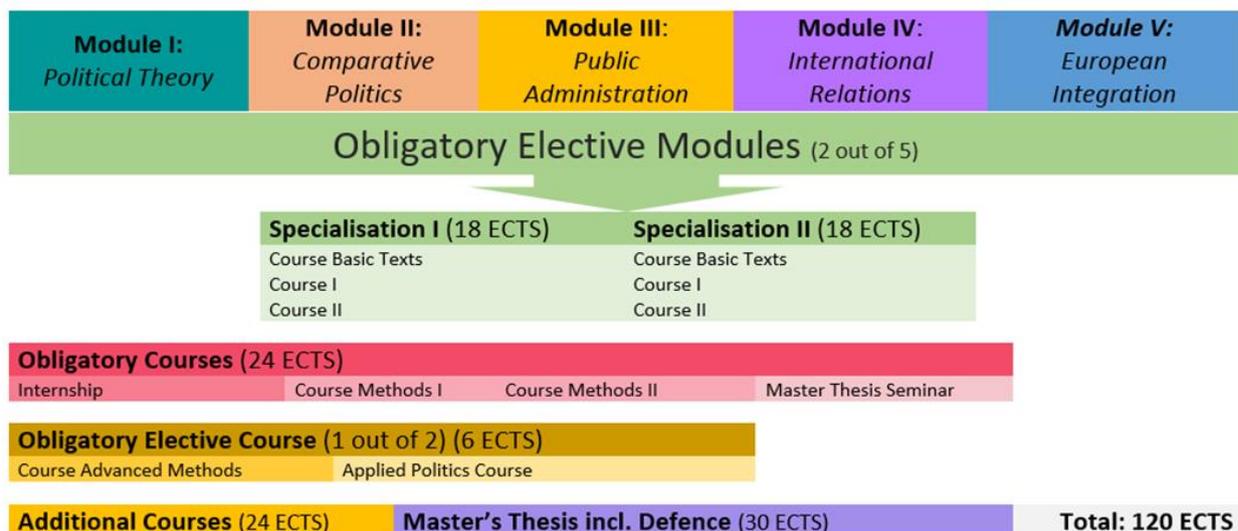
The Consortium intends that the Western Balkan EuroPS Project Partners (WB EUP) additionally deliver the specific academic competencies regarding political developments in the region within these subjects. The Consortium underlines that PoSIG is highly student centred with a consistent orientation on learning outcomes and competences and requires a high motivation of students for autonomous decisions about the academic profile they want to develop within the curriculum. Students have to decide about their individual study tracks in two fields of specialization out of all fields of political science and the EUP offering these subjects during the two years of study. Within their Master's thesis project students have to prove their competences in an independent research project supervised by one teacher from Austria or Slovenia and a second supervisor from a Western Balkan EUP.

All students have to study during their first year in Austria or Slovenia to attend the theory guided Master courses in the two modules selected (out of five) as well as in methodology. In their second year they will attend a Western Balkan partner to complete their courses and

their Master's thesis. The implementation of the curriculum is regulated in a Cooperation (Partnership) Agreement which will be signed by all EUP. This agreement includes regulations for the governance of the programme and its quality management to guarantee an integrated character of the programme.

The Consortium underlines that the PoSIG curriculum is also meant to be an opportunity to discuss the further development of the teaching standards in Political Science in Europe. The ambition of the Consortium is to invite also partners from Montenegro and Serbia to join the shared idea of an integrated programme and cooperation platform after the first cycle of the PoSIG programme has started.

Based on EQF level 7 the learning outcomes prepare PoSIG graduates for qualified jobs in different fields and levels of the political systems and international relations. Following a student centred approach PoSIG-participants can decide about their individual qualification track, taking benefit from the fact that PoSIG is providing excellent education in all fields of political science and research. The key elements of this curriculum are as follows:



- Out of five two "**Obligatory Elective Modules**" (each with 18 ECTS credits) have to be selected by each student. The five modules available are:
 - Comparative Politics
 - European Integration
 - International Relations
 - Public Administration and Policy
 - Political Theory
- Besides these modules students have to take:
 - **Obligatory Courses** (incl. methods courses, the Master's seminar, internship; 24 credits)
 - **Obligatory Elective Courses** (6 credits)
 - **Additional Courses** (24 credits)
- Finally, they have to submit a **Master's thesis** incl. **Master's thesis defence** (30 credits).
- Students have to study at least one term at the Universities of Salzburg or Ljubljana and at least one term at the WB Universities.

- All students have to study during their **first year** in Austria or Slovenia to attend the theory guided Master's courses in the two selected modules as well as in methodology. In their **second year** they will attend one or two Western Balkan EUP to complete their courses and their Master's thesis. Students therefore have to visit at least two EUP and a maximum of four EUP.
- Every EUP has the possibility to **suggest courses for the actual implementation** of the curriculum. Whether courses are accepted or not is decided by the *Coordinators Board* based on quality checks by the module coordinators and the EuroPS coordinator (with a specific focus on whether a course **contributes to the appropriate modules' learning outcomes**).
- Exams have to be taken based on local regulations. The conversion of grades is based on a EuroPS-grading table EUPs have agreed upon.
- The **Master's thesis** has to be written within the framework of one of the two elected modules. For each Master's thesis there will be a team of two supervisors, one from Salzburg or Ljubljana, one from a Western Balkan EUP.
- The **final exam** has the form of a Master's thesis defence. Its commission consists of examiners from all EUPs a student has attended during his/her PoSIG-studies. Examiners must also represent the two modules the student has elected.

3 Introductory remarks by the review panel

The expert panel wishes to express its satisfaction with the fruitful cooperation it has had during this process with the Consortium and particularly with the representatives of the University of Salzburg which hosted the site visit and organized it in a very efficient and productive way. The expert panel was glad to learn from the documentation given by the Consortium, as well as from the interviews conducted during the site visit, that the preparation of this Joint Master Programme was very thorough and that it included many different types of activities, which were made possible due to the Erasmus+ KA2 Capacity Building Project 561485 - 2015-2017 "Curriculum Development Joint European Political Science MA (EuroPS)". The expert panel finds it important to emphasise that PoSIG's ambition is to further develop international standards and benchmarks of teaching political science in accordance with the level 7 of the European Qualification Framework and to second cycle qualification of the FQ-EHEA. As stated above PoSIG intends to include partners from Serbia and Montenegro in the following years.

During the site visit the expert panel concluded that the application for accreditation in line with the European Approach was premature at least for two reasons despite of the serious approach and preparatory activities of the Consortium. (Reasons explicitly outlined under standard 1.3).

(1) The expert panel was informed only during the site visit that one of the partners namely the University of Pavia (Italy) – cannot be a Consortium member in the future. This needs to be considered as an important change affecting some elements of the Joint Programme.

(2) Some important parts relevant for the application were not in place as expected. The expert panel needed to ask the Consortium for additional information mainly concerning eligibility proofs, demonstrating that all partners were registered as higher education institutions in their respective countries and that they are eligible to participate in joint programmes and if possible entitled to award a joint degree.

The expert panel experienced that in case of several partners the necessary eligibility proofs, which the expert panel deemed crucial for accreditation, were still missing in a comprehensible way at the time of the site-visit, and the same was true for a sustainable financial plan of the Joint programme. Therefore the expert panel found it necessary to request additional information on the issues addressed. The expert panel would like to thank the Consortium for the provision of the information requested.

However, the expert panel needs to emphasize that some issues remained still unclear. Even though the expert panel supported by the AQ Austria coordinator conducted additional research, checking national legislation in the countries of the participating partners and contacting national accreditation agencies and ministries prior to and after the site-visit trying to establish whether an accreditation procedure following the European Approach would be applicable in each country. As the European Approach demands for only one single accreditation of the entire joint programme needs to be carried out by an EQAR listed agency, the result should be accepted in all partner countries.

However, the expert panel learned that dependent on the national legal framework, the accreditation decision would not easily come into force or would be recognised in all countries where the programme would be offered.

The expert panel learned that e.g. as far as the partner from **FYROM Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia**, the Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje is concerned, a national accreditation procedure, following the national rules needs to take place irrespective of the single accreditation procedure conducted according to the European Approach

With regard to the partners from Kosovo, Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina various scenarios became evident.

In the case of the two participating universities from **Albania** the expert panel learned that once a programme is opened and starts running, it is mandatory to undergo an accreditation procedure; in this context the institutions may evaluate the programme by a Quality Assurance Agency which is a member of ENQA or listed in EQAR. In such a procedure the higher education institution from Albania would need to ask for prior approval from the National Accreditation Board on the basis of the information gathered. The expert panel concludes that the law on higher education does not provide an ex-ante evaluation from an international agency, but at the same time it does also not impede that.

In case of the partners from **Kosovo**, it became evident that the National Quality Assurance Agency would be in the position to recognize and validate an accreditation of study programmes, which are accredited by a foreign agency that is a full member of ENQA or listed in EQAR. In such case the Agency from Kosovo would recognize that accreditation for the period of accreditation issued by the foreign agency. In addition the expert panel learned that in order to provide certificates of accreditation from foreign agencies, higher education institutions from Kosovo would need to submit a self-evaluation report to the national agency. The national agency would need to organize a site-visit with international experts. Thus, the curriculum of the study programme would not be evaluated by the appointed international experts, but the higher education institution would need to demonstrate that the quality level available locally is comparable to the one that led to the accreditation at its home campus, including with respect to staff qualification, academic services (e.g. libraries or ICT),

administrative support (e.g. international relations, student services) and physical facilities. According to the applicable law, the agency from Kosovo would be obliged to carry out the accreditation/validation of study programmes within one year; however, the process of validation usually does not last more than 6 months. Thus, following the procedure in place, there are no clear regulations dealing with the accreditation of Joint Programmes but more with the accreditation of transnational study programmes.

With regard to the **Slovenian** partner it remained unclear for the expert panel how the regulations regarding the accreditation of Joint Programmes laid down in the national legislation would affect the local partner. In November 2016 an amendment to the law on higher education in Slovenia entered into force. The national agency is currently in the process to prepare the implementation of the new law. The expert panel understood that if a Joint Programme Consortium has partners which are not accredited by an EQAR listed agency it would require the (first) accreditation procedure (of the joint programme) to be undertaken done by the Slovenian national accreditation agency.

In case of **Bosnia and Herzegovina** (BiH) the ministry is in principle responsible for licensing of new study programmes. According to the applicable legal framework it can be concluded, that both partners from BiH (UNSA and SSST, therefore referring to the regulations applying in the Canton Sarajevo) are in the position to start the Joint Programme without an additional national accreditation process in the first place. However, it remained unclear whether the Joint Programme would have to undergo an additional national accreditation procedure at a later stage; without a national accreditation procedure the study programme will not be included in the State register of accredited higher education institutions and study programmes in BiH.

Since the **Austrian** partner is a public university the European Approach is employable. Public Universities in Austria are in the position to self-accredit their study programmes. Following their internal procedures the University of Salzburg is currently preparing all necessary steps to self-accredit the Joint Programme.

The expert panel concluded that all these remaining uncertainties would not necessarily have a direct impact on the European Approach as such – since it can be applied also voluntarily, by using it as a methodology in setting up and monitoring core processes and procedures of a joint programme.

However, in this particular case the unclear national requirements with regard to accreditation being mandatory for approval of a study programme may have an impact on the path of implementation of the programme as such. Therefore the expert panel has taken this aspect in consideration when assessing the programme against standard 1.3.

4 Statements and Assessments

Standard 1: Eligibility

1.1 Status: The institutions that offer a joint programme should be recognised as higher education institutions by the relevant authorities of their countries. Their respective national legal frameworks should enable them to participate in the joint programme and, if applicable, to award a joint degree. The institutions awarding the degree(s) should ensure that the degree(s) belong to the higher education degree systems of the countries in which they are based.

Review Panel assessment: The standard is met.

Statement

The SER itself did not provide sufficient information with regard to this standard. The expert panel received all the necessary information concerning this standard upon additional request to the Consortium supported by AQ Austria. As a result the problem of lacking proofs of eligibility from the appropriate national authorities in the Consortium's SER was overcome in the end. The expert panel was provided with information prior to and after the site visit addressing legal sources relevant to assess the standard referring to the status. The expert panel is thus able to conclude that all participating institutions meet three basic prerequisites that allow them to participate in this Joint Programme PoSiG:

- they are all officially recognized and registered as higher education institutions by the relevant authorities of their countries;
- they are all entitled, according to their respective national legal frameworks, to participate in master programmes leading to a joint degree;
- and they are all also entitled to issue a joint degree, while this degree belongs to the higher education degree systems of the respective countries.

1.2 Joint design and delivery: The joint programme should be offered jointly, involving all cooperating institutions in the design and delivery of the programme.

Review Panel assessment: The standard is met.

Statement

The expert panel learned in the project's SER and in interviews with representatives of the participating universities about many ways in which PoSiG is a joint endeavor of all the participating institutions.

PoSiG has been developed as part of the Erasmus+ project EuroPS that gathered all the project's participants, or as they call themselves EuroPS project partners (EUPs). They *jointly planned* PoSiG from the very beginning, including through a series of events (a kick-off meeting, two meetings of the Coordinators Board, two Train-the teacher workshops, a meeting of the Quality Board, and meetings with accreditation agencies). These meetings were used for the detailed planning and capacity building for and of all necessary elements of PoSiG, with the emphasis on the curriculum and the Cooperation Agreement (CA), and on quality assurance, as well. The expert panel also learned from the SER and interviews during

the site visit about the valuable collaborative work of the Consortium members on module and course descriptions, mostly during the Train-the-teachers workshops.

All this has led, in the opinion of the expert panel, to the genuine *joint offer* of the PoSIG as a Joint Programme. The programme is offered to students as one coordinated and complete "package", the elements of which are united in a harmonious way. This is so, the expert panel concludes, despite a fairly complicated structure of the programme that begins for students either at the University of Ljubljana or at the University of Salzburg in the first year and then continues in one or two universities – out of seven - in the Western Balkans during the second year.

As for the third aspect of this standard, the *joint delivery* of the programme, the expert panel finds that it has been met, too. Although students are changing the universities during their two-year long studies, each part of their programme is an essential element of one and the same programme, run according to the same academic standards. Students have to choose their own "study track" at the very beginning, throughout all four semesters, during which two "Western" universities are in charge of the basic theoretical and methodological courses, while the Western Balkan partners are in charge of different types of courses. During the site visit the expert panel learned that all partners are satisfied with this division of duties, and all partners, in addition, consider themselves equal.

However, the joint coordination of the programme has its shortcomings which will be discussed in the following standard 1.3 Cooperation Agreement.

1.3 Cooperation Agreement: The terms and conditions of the joint programme should be laid down in a cooperation agreement. The agreement should in particular cover the following issues:

- Denomination of the degree(s) awarded in the programme;
- Coordination and responsibilities of the partners involved regarding management and financial organisation (including funding, sharing of costs and income etc.);
- Admission and selection procedures for students;
- Mobility of students and teachers;
- Examination regulations, student assessment methods, recognition of credits and
- degree awarding procedures in the consortium.

Review Panel assessment: The standard is not met.

Statement

The expert panel found a comprehensive *Cooperation Agreement* document, consisting of various separate sections and different appendices. Its *sections* include:

- objectives
- admission of students
- PoSIG courses and teaching Staff
- exams, Master's theses and Master's thesis defenses
- awarding the Joint Degree
- multilateral programme coordination
- information, documentation and transparency
- participation costs and business plan

- duration, amendment, review and termination of the Agreement
- application of the law
- conflict resolution

The Cooperation Agreement has the following *appendices*:

- PoSIG curriculum
- criteria and procedure for student selection
- convention for the conversion of grades
- Quality Management Handbook
- documentation of the Joint Degree Management System
- - Teaching Handbook (including forms for course and module descriptions)
- - student services and student elections
- - Example of a Joint Degree Certificate, all information for all type of Diploma Supplements.

The expert panel has first reviewed the so-called **multilateral programme coordination**, as regulated in the Partner Agreement (PA) and concluded that PoSIG has an original and very developed system of programme coordination. It includes several bodies.

The *Coordinators Board (CB)* consists of coordinators appointed by all partners and is in charge of academic and strategic coordination of the programme, including the recognition of courses, decision on the annual course programme, selection of students, financial management, etc. The elected Head of the CB is the "Executive Director of PoSIG".

The *Quality Assurance Board (QAB)*, having one quality manager from each partner, performs the following duties: it supervises the CB regarding the coordination of the PoSIG programme and sets the criteria for the selection of students and instructors; reviews the design and management of tools supporting high quality teaching practices and learning, evaluates the courses as well as the master's thesis supervision and all examination practices.

The *Student Board* consists of students' representatives from each partner institution and it represents students' rights and interests.

In several cases the expert panel detected *the possibility of internal contradictions* between **rules and regulations** established in the PA by the Consortium itself on the one hand, and inconsistencies regarding the ones established for all Master programs the partners might already have implemented, on the other. The expert panel is of the opinion that in its PA PoSiG has not provided clear solutions for possible situations in which its own rules and regulations (PoSiG) might not be in harmony with the general EUP rules for the management of all of their respective MA programmes.

The selection and registration of students is the first case in point. The PA rightly states that "Joint degree candidates shall be subject to the standard rules, regulations and enrolment procedures of the host institutions. They shall register with the host institution only for those parts of the PoSIG programme which will be carried out under the responsibility of that host institution." Yet, PoSIG has its own admittance criteria for students that the expert panel finds very well elaborated and indeed demanding. The point here is whether they comply with the ones of all EUPs, and whether – for example - some body of the participating universities will have to agree with PoSIG's selection of students, and to formally approve it.

The enrolled students should also be formally registered in each EUP, regardless of the registration in PoSIG's own database (JDMS). It is not certain at all that EUPs will accept

PoSIG's solution from the PA according to which PoSIG's registration "substitutes the need for records of the general as well as the special university entrance qualifications and the legalization". Some participating universities might, for instance, demand the formal recognition (notification) of students' BA degrees in their countries as a condition for enrolment.

The expert panel thus concludes that PoSIG takes for granted that – because of its own set high standards – EUPs will by definition comply with PoSIG's rules when it comes to the selection and registration of students. This is why the expert panel recommends the Consortium to further clarify whether PoSIG's own rules for selection and registration of students are in harmony with those of EUPs and what would the Consortium do if this is not the case.

The expert panel found out that similar situations of different rules and regulations between PoSIG and EUPs *might* emerge in several other cases. *The appointment of students' MA theses advisers and the defense of master theses* are cases in point, as well. First of all, the Consortium has not provided evidence that the rules of all EUPs allow that advisors of students' Master theses can be appointed *only* by Master programme bodies. Many universities, including perhaps at least some of EUPs, demand that this is on the contrary done by the bodies of the universities themselves. Eventual suggestions of the MA programmes bodies – PoSIG's Coordinators Board included – about the supervisors cannot change this rule. So, it's far from certain that the decision of the PoSIG Board in this matter will be enough, at least in some EUPs.

Secondly, some universities – perhaps some EUPs as well – have rather strict regulations on the appointment of supervisors: for instance, they might not be eligible if they come from another university or from another country. This is why it should be important to know whether all participating universities will allow for external supervision and whether – another element of the unknown here – two supervisors are allowed instead of one, or not. It should be clear that the expert panel doesn't question the validity of PoSIG's proposed way of the appointment of supervisors; the expert panel only wants to pay attention to the legal aspect of the issue: i.e. whether the solution provided by PoSIG is *legally possible* at all EUPs.

Thirdly, the same type of strict regulations exists at universities – possibly at some EUPs, too – when it comes to the *Examination Board for the defense of the Master thesis*. Again, the Consortium seems not to have paid enough attention to the fact that its own rules might not be in harmony with the rules of the respective universities and some of them might have already regulated that the Board members have to be appointed by a specified body of the University, rather than by the Master Programmes body (PoSIG's Coordinators Board, in this case).

The expert panel detects possible problems of the same type (whether PoSIG's rules match those of individual partners) when it comes to the issuing of diplomas and the denomination of degrees, too. According to the PA, the issuing and the design of diplomas and the award of either a joint or a double/multiple degree depends on students' study tracks, i.e. on where students decide to study during the two-year programme, and especially on where they complete their studies. The diploma will be issued by the EUP a student has attended in his/her last term (including the diploma supplement, showing the student's study track with all EUP attended; the expert panel was provided with an example shown as Appendix to the Partner Agreement).

The expert panel finds that this solution – like the previous ones presented above – may be acceptable and in line with rules on this issue in those partners' countries that allow universities themselves to regulate the content of diplomas, including the ones from joint degree programmes. Other countries, like Slovenia, Albania and Kosovo, in contrast, insist in their legislation on the fact that diplomas are public documents, the contents of which have to be determined by the relevant authorities, usually in by-laws issued by the relevant ministries. The expert panel concludes that this is one more case of possible conflicts between PoSIG's own rules, established in its PA, and the rules that the participating partners from some countries have to obey, in order to issue diplomas to PoSIG's students and to all other students of different master programmes for that matter.

The expert panel finds PoSIG's JDMS a very useful tool for keeping and sharing all sorts of data concerning the programme (courses, instructors), with an emphasis on data about the students' exams and grades. The expert panel, has, however, not found sufficient evidence concerning the *transfer and exchange of the data* between this internal PoSIG information system and the official registries and administrations of the participating universities. While the former may be useful, the latter remains the only official source of information on the advancement of students' through the programme.

All these instances of possible disharmony between PoSIG's rules and regulations and the ones of the participating universities do not lead to the conclusion that PoSIG and its partner universities cannot find solutions for potential conflicts. The expert panel merely wants to point out that the presented issues have not been thought out thoroughly during the preparation of PoSIG. That's why it is up to the Consortium now to get back to those issues and explain them.

The expert panel therefore recommends the Consortium to further clarify whether PoSIG's own rules that regulate the appointment of the Master theses supervisors and the members of the Examination Board for the defense of the theses, as well as the rules that regulate the content of the diplomas, comply with those of the participating universities and what would the Consortium do if they do not.

When it comes to the issue of **financial organization**, on demand of the expert panel during the site visit, the Consortium provided a multi-annual financial plan (in addition to the annual plan for the first cohort of students it had prepared before), with details concerning the financing of the Joint Programme from the academic year 2017/18 until the academic year 2021/22. The financing includes both tuition fees and the planned students' scholarships that the Consortium intends to apply, once PoSIG begins to function. The expert panel found the approach upon which each partner university is free to apply its own way of self-financing, i.e. its own level of tuition fees, realistic.

Moreover the expert panel found out that the **mobility of students and teachers** – as one issue that according to the European Approach has to be included in the PA – has been dealt with in the curriculum, but is absent from the PA. The expert panel learned that students of this programme have to do their studies at least at two, and at most at four partner universities. The international mobility of students has to cover at least academic studies at one or two universities in Ljubljana or Salzburg in the first academic year (60 ECTS), and one or two EUPs in Sarajevo, Tirana, Skopje or Pristina in the second academic year (60 ECTS). The duration of an international mobility is at least one academic term. Students have to deliver a plan for their international mobility when applying to the program. Each application

has to specify the selected fields of specialization (2 modules out of 5), and at which university/ies (Ljubljana or Salzburg) the student chooses to attend the first and the second semester. They should also declare at which institution they plan to spend the third and fourth semester; this choice can be changed before the end of the second semester.

The expert panel concludes that student mobility is well regulated in the curriculum, but recommends the Consortium to make it part of the PA, too, together with a more detailed regulation of the teachers' mobility, and possibly of administrative staff of the participating universities, as well.

The expert panel has identified **further problems** too.

A problem arises due to the fact that **not all participating universities have signed or ratified the PA**. The explicit acceptance of the PA is to be considered of crucial importance, not only for the smooth functioning of the Joint Programme but also as one of the main prerequisites for the implementation itself. The importance of the Agreement was confirmed by the Consortium itself, as expressed in the SER, in the following words: "This agreement includes regulations for the governance of the programme and its quality management to guarantee an integrated character of the programme".

The expert panel is of the opinion that because of the lacking signatures and ratification of the Agreement by all participating institutions, the Consortium should not have applied for accreditation.

Hence it is necessary to provide all signatures and finish the ratification process by all participating institutions in a very timely manner, at best until the beginning of May 2017.

The expert panel has identified another problem which is of equal concern. Since it remains unclear whether some consortium partners will in addition to the single accreditation process have to apply for national accreditation procedures – beyond processes aiming to recognize the decision taken by AQ Austria – a thorough start of implementation of the programme in the academic year 2017/18 might be impossible. As stated in the SER and underlined in interviews during the site-visit an eventual accreditation by AQ Austria will lead to different ways of national implementation of this accreditation. With regard to different ways of national implementation of the accreditation, as stated in the SER, the Consortium said in November 2016 that all partners "are currently engaged in clarifying the relevant national conditions and have delivered or will deliver in the near future the related documents on that".

On the basis of information provided by the Consortium and by separate expert panel's research, the expert panel concludes that additional national accreditations will be necessary in most countries in which the programme is going to operate.

Even if national legislation of some countries allows external accreditation procedures for study programmes to be conducted by a Quality Assurance Agency being a member of ENQA/EQAR, it remained unclear if and how such a possibility would be applicable for a study programme being a Joint Programme. The expert panel learned that various administrative procedures necessary for the completion of national accreditation (recognition procedures) in order to fulfill in concrete for national requirements before starting a Joint Programme will impact the scheduled start in the academic year 2017/18.

As the accreditation process for this Joint Programme might be finished only after the majority of participating institutions have undergone national procedures, and in view of the fact that signatures and ratification of the Cooperation Agreement by all participating institutions are still missing, the expert panel concludes that this standard has not been met.

The expert panel therefore concludes that it finds the Consortium application worthy of accreditation in all other aspects (with some recommendations). However, in order for this standard to be met and for this Joint Programme to be accredited and finally to be implemented, the following condition needs to be issued:

Conditions

The expert panel **conditions** the Consortium to complete the process of signing and ratification of the Partner Agreement by all partners, latest until the beginning of May 2017.

The expert panel **conditions** the Consortium to provide all relevant proofs for fulfillment of diverse national accreditation requirements, especially in those cases where full accreditation procedures are required latest until the start of the academic year 2017/18.

This is of utmost importance since the programme intends to start in the academic year 2017/18 at the University of Salzburg and at the University of Ljubljana and with the academic year 2018/19 in at least two countries of the Western Balkan partners: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and FYROM, where the programme will continue in the second year of its operation.

Beyond these conditions the expert panel likes to issue the following **recommendations**:

The expert panel recommends to the Consortium to further clarify whether PoSIG's own rules are in harmony with those of the participating universities in the following areas:

- selection and registration of students,
- the appointment of the Master theses supervisors and the members of the Examination Boards for the defense of the theses,
- the content of the diplomas.

The expert panel recommends to the Consortium to further clarify what it would do in case its own rules are not in harmony with the rules of the participating universities.

The expert panel recommends to the Consortium to make the regulation of student mobility part of the Partner Agreement, together with the more detailed regulation of the mobility of teachers, and possibly of administrative staff of the participating universities, as well.

Standard 2: Learning Outcomes

2.1 Level [ESG 1.2] The intended learning outcomes should align with the corresponding level in the Framework for Qualifications in the European Higher Education Area (FQ-EHEA), as well as the applicable national qualifications framework(s).

Review Panel assessment: The standard is met.

Statement

The SER demonstrated the thorough and meticulous preparation of the application by the Consortium following widely internationally recognized benchmarks for establishing a consecutive Master in Political Science. The striven for competences in the field of study on the curriculum level, particularly those referring to comprehensive knowledge, understanding, and analysis, furthermore to sound reasoning and judgment, finally to responsive action aim at a standard very much in the forefront of the field. In contrast, methodological competences are confined to a thorough grounding in empirical-analytical political science. If it is indeed the intention of the Consortium "to offer the whole dimension of the field", as expressed in the SER the Consortium should provide students with a larger choice of methodological options from traditional normative via historical-hermeneutic to critical-constructivist ones. On the basis of the evidence provided, especially also during the interviews, the expert panel has no doubt that the POSIG programme on a general level corresponds to EQF level 7. The expert panel assumes by implication that the learning outcomes are in line with the respective national qualification frameworks of the respective partner countries.

Recommendation

The expert panel recommends that the Consortium should take responsibility to further demonstrate that Learning Outcomes align with the corresponding levels according to the respective individual national qualification frameworks.

2.2 Disciplinary field: The intended learning outcomes should comprise knowledge, skills, and competencies in the respective disciplinary field(s).

Review Panel assessment: The standard is met.

Statement

On the curriculum level, learning outcomes follow a differentiation into knowledge, skills, and competencies implicitly, while on the module level all definitions of outcomes for the over 60 courses of the Joint Programme follow this distinction in an explicit way. This is helped by a consortium-wide benchmarking process as a result of numerous train-the-teacher-workshops. Again, the result of this exercise meets the requirements of EQF-level 7, thus being internationally comparable.

Students having passed the Master examinations of the program are furthermore eligible for PhD programs according to EQF-level 8; there is a firm agreement among project partners to accept applicants with these qualifications for their individual national PhD programs.

2.3 Achievement [ESG 1.2]: The programme should be able to demonstrate that the intended learning outcomes are achieved

Review Panel assessment: The standard is met.

Statement

The achievement of the intended learning outcomes is based on a substantial *EuroPS Teaching Handbook*, ascertaining a close fit between the learning outcomes of individual courses and the modules which they belong to, as well as a constructive alignment, a close coherence between teaching strategies, assessment, and learning outcomes. In this, the Consortium is supported by a Quality Management System (on which cf. further below) in developing project-wide teaching benchmarks, an e-learning platform meeting both students' and teachers' needs, an anti-plagiarism platform, an e-portfolio in which students can collect and share their work amongst colleagues, and last, but certainly not least, an e-Library making electronically accessible the holdings of the Salzburg university library on top of the offers of a number of commercial portals.

Electronic services are reliably run from Prishtina by UBT – in the view of the Consortium its member with the longest-term IT engineering experience. Part of the electronic infrastructure is also the above mentioned JDMS accomplishing students-, course-, and records administration, enabling the Consortium also to further develop common assessment criteria.

Another item helping to achieve the intended *learning outcome is the joint supervision of Master theses* (shared between a "Western" and a "Western Balkan" supervisor), contributing in the medium term towards an equalization of assessment criteria; ideally, this would be further enhanced if the Master thesis seminars could also be taught by both supervisors rather than by only the local Western Balkan one.

Finally, all project partners have already been involved in local teaching programmes in the relevant fields; they should thus know the requirements of the local and the Western Balkan labour markets, and be able, with the project, to offer their students some promising future career prospects not only on the national, but also on the transnational and international level.

2.4 Regulated Professions: If relevant for the specific joint programme, the minimum agreed training conditions specified in the European Union Directive 2005/36/EC, or relevant common trainings frameworks established under the Directive, should be taken into account.

Section not applicable

Standard 3: Study Programmes [ESG 1.2]

3.1 Curriculum: The structure and content of the curriculum should be fit to enable the students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

Review Panel assessment: The standard is met.

Statement

The Joint Programme is not just a collection of prior locally existing modules, but a highly integrated construct with a special focus on the context of the Western Balkans and their integration in (Western) European structures, based on a shared curriculum of inclusive and collaborative character. In its original form three, after the drop-out of Pavia for financial reasons now only two "Western" universities (Salzburg, Ljubljana) provide the first year of studies with a wide, basic compass of theory-guided subjects, and a thorough grounding in mainly empirical-analytical methods, while during the second year students have to attain one or two of the Western Balkan EUPs to complete their courses of a more analytical-practical orientation dealing mainly with more local content. Students have to choose two out of five obligatory modules (value 18 ECTS each) – i.e. Political Theory, Comparative Politics, Public Administration and Politics, International Relations, and European Integration on top of the methods courses, the internships, and the Master thesis seminars obligatory for everybody (24 ECTS), and an obligatory elective course either in advanced methods or applied politics (value 6 ECTS); but they are also free to choose additional courses to the value of 24 ECTS following the various local offers made by the individual EUPs. Together with the Master thesis and its defense (30 ECTS) the complete program totals 120 ECTS. The language of instruction is English throughout.

The attraction of the Joint Programme is its border overarching cooperative character: students have to attend at least two EUPs, and can do so with the maximum of four; this should ensure the analytical knowledge, practical experience, and emphatic faculties particularly necessary for future employment in a regional, transnational, or international context. With that in mind, the panel particularly discussed the languages problem: while an excellent knowledge of English is a common entrance requirement for all, instruction in at least one of the Balkan languages (for "Western" entrants) and one of the Western languages (for "Balkan" entrants) should gain a more prominent [6 ECTS obligatory elective courses] position than the project accords it in its present form. Multilingual entrants should of course be offered the option to replace instruction in a language they know already well by an extra additional course in one of the field subjects.

A thorough in-depth examination of the 60+ courses of the curriculum reveals a preponderance of courses dealing with the analysis of political processes [or, to use political science jargon, *politics*, in contrast to institutional and normative aspects (*polity*), and content and outcome (*policy*)] – which, incidentally, squares with the methodological preference for empirical-analytical approaches already mentioned above. All this falls well in line with the praxis-orientation of the overall project outcomes – to empower, as it is stated in the SER "alumni for qualified jobs in different fields and levels of the political systems and international relations". However, we have to concede that political processes cannot proceed outside firm structures and frameworks based on and informed by philosophical tenets and ethical norms – or at least, as the empiricists would have it, by the regular repetition or pattern of observable behavior instances solidified over time. Thus, the Consortium, in its professed endeavor to offer the whole dimension of the field might want to strengthen the

number of courses dealing with problems of structure (polity) – perhaps by using the slots vacated by the unfortunate withdrawal of Pavia from the project.

As some paradigmatic examples: in the Module Comparative Politics “Comparative electoral systems” might be paralleled by a course offer on “Comparative Governmental Systems” or “Comparative Constitutions”; in the Module Public Policy and Administration the curriculum should be augmented by a course on “Public and Administrative Law”, and, for good measure, by a course on “Public Finance and Auditing” in order to become that much better comparable with similar Western European study offers.

Recommendations

The expert panel would recommend to the Consortium, in the interest of broadening the transdisciplinary approach of the project, to investigate and realize teaching cooperation(s) with the local Law Departments, particularly in the fields/modules of Comparative Politics (Constitutional Law, Public Law), and Public Administration (Public Law, Administrative Law).

Where there are two EUPs in the same place [Tirana, Sarajevo, Pristina], the expert panel recommends to the Consortium to investigate and realize possibilities of local cooperation and joint teaching of courses in the search for efficient utilization of pooled resources and the reaching of the minimum number of course participants. The expert panel has been informed in the course of the site visit that such cooperation is arranged for verbally on the local level; however, it is of the opinion that written agreements should be preferred on the local and/or the Consortium level.

3.2 Credits: The European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) should be applied properly and the distribution of credits should be clear.

Review Panel assessment: The standard is met.

Statement

Within the Erasmus+ project preparing for the PoSIG application, substantial effort was dedicated not only to grasp and put into practice the ECTS 2015 guide, but a lot of training went into the use of ECTS credits as a tool for the didactic planning of individual courses. In the outcome, 18 ECTS credits were assigned to each module, 6 ECTS credits to each course, and 25 hours of workload to each credit point.

While the Consortium’s oral explanation for this during the site visit had a certain charm - the crediting of all courses with the same ECTS was to express the equal importance of the course contents delivered by the various teachers in the consortium – the panel stressed that this was not in line with the standard ECTS procedure, which makes the number of credits allocated to a particular course dependent on the course’s workload. It was regarded as rather inconceivable that over 60 courses all have the same workload [this applies in particular to the first-year basic text courses and conceivably also to the advanced methodology ones, which seem to be much more demanding than a standard fields subject course].

Recommendation

The expert panel recommends to the consortium to allocate ECTS credit points to courses according to their actual workload. If this means that the ECTS value of a course drops below

six points, the ECTS value of other courses in the same module should be examined with a view to a corresponding increase if so justified by their workload. If needs be, the number of courses in a module should be increased [e.g. 3+3+4+8 or 4+4+4+6 etc.]. The Consortium will have to insure proper student representation in this process.

3.3 Workload: A joint master programme will typically amount to 90-120 ECTS-credits and should not be less than 60 ECTS-credits at second cycle level (credit ranges according to the FQ-EHEA). The workload and the average time to complete the programme should be monitored.

Review Panel assessment: The standard is met.

Statement

The Joint Programme has an amount of 120 ECTS. As stated in the SER, monitoring of the effective student workload as well as the time necessary for the completion of the programme (in terms of semesters needed) will be part of single course evaluations as well as of the planned student survey. As part of the **course evaluation** students will be asked to approximate the number of (real time) hours they needed (or in the end will have needed) to complete a specific course. The outcomes will be available to the individual teacher (as a personal feedback) as well as to the board of coordinators (to take action if needed). In the planned **student survey** students will generally be asked about the appropriateness of the workload calculated for courses, modules and the whole curriculum. This information will be available to the Coordinators Board (to take action if needed).

Standard 4: Admission and Recognition [ESG 1.4]

4.1 Admission: The admission requirements and selection procedures should be appropriate in light of the programme's level and discipline.

Review Panel assessment: The standard is met

Statement

As stated in the SER and thoroughly explained during the site visit the PoSiG is open for graduates from political science bachelor programmes (FQ-EHEA 1st circle/EQF Level six). Accepted students must hold a BA degree in political science from a EUP or in a related field from an accredited higher education institution. BA graduates having followed curricula with less than 15 ECTS in methodology and scientific work have to compensate this with relevant courses in the field.

The final decision on admission is made by the Coordinators Board of PoSiG on the basis of 1) prior academic performance (final and exam grades); 2) number of ECTS obtained at the BA level; 3) candidate's score obtained during a personal interview; 4) English language proficiency (minimum B2 level and proven by a recognized language certificate eg. FCE, TOEFL iBT etc); and 5) candidate's application form, cv, two letters of reference (at least one by an academic).

The expert panel has missed to a certain extent explicit procedures in place on how the various local admission administrators are provided with information on the PoSiG

programme. A link to the local procedures concerning administration of admissions after the Coordinators Board decision is not explicitly developed.

Recommendation

The expert panel recommends the Consortium to ensure that the respective local administrations in charge of student admissions are well informed about the admission procedures and enrollment policy in place for the Joint Programme.

4.2 Recognition: Recognition of qualifications and of periods of studies (including recognition of prior learning) should be applied in line with the Lisbon Recognition Convention and subsidiary documents.

Review Panel assessment: The standard is met

Statement

According to the SER the necessary entrance admission level defines the recognition of prior learning within the admission process. The expert panel learned that the PoSIG decides and recognizes prior academic performance on an individual basis. The general recognition mechanism is based on international credit mobility and described in the Partner Agreement. In case candidates have a methodology background below the defined requirements they are accepted under conditions determined by the Coordinators Board.

Recommendation

The expert panel recommends the Consortium to clearly outline the recognition process, in particular with regard to possible compensation courses available at the two respective EUP (at the University of Salzburg and the University of Ljubljana) and by not later than the students have to provide proof of compensation and the necessary earned ECTS.

Standard 5: Learning, Teaching and Assessment [ESG 1.3]

5.1 Learning and teaching: The programme should be designed to correspond with the intended learning outcomes, and the learning and teaching approaches applied should be adequate to achieve those. The diversity of students and their needs should be respected and attended to, especially in view of potential different cultural backgrounds of the students.

Review Panel assessment: The standard is met.

Statement

The Consortium pointed out during the site visit that it is following an approach where courses and teaching are embedded in the context of each individual EUP. The Consortium has put a lot of efforts into coherent teaching methods via a series of capacity building elements. The Teaching Handbook already mentioned above is an outcome of these efforts; it will set in train a benchmarking process which should ensure a continuous improvement of teaching and assessment standards. Revisions of this approach are envisaged as a subject of coordinators' board planning meetings each spring.

As assessment regulations are based first and foremost on local EUP regulatory standards and practice, cases may arise of a discrepancy between local and overall PoSIG assessment rules. To the expert panel's knowledge, there is no adjudication or conflict resolution mechanism for such cases.

The Consortium will have to make up their mind whether they want to stick to the subsidiarity-type present situation [which might be more favorable in their relationships to local education authorities] or whether they want to centralize rule-making and rule-application on the Consortium level.

Recommendation

The expert panel recommends the Consortium to carefully analyze the impact of individual local EUP examination regulations and rules on the overall rules defined through the Partner Agreement.

5.2 Assessment of students: The examination regulations and the assessment of the achieved learning outcomes should correspond with the intended learning outcomes. They should be applied consistently among partner institutions.

Review Panel assessment: The standard is met.

Statement

In the Partner Agreement and supplementing documents student selection and grading are meticulously regulated. The Consortium has set up, as mentioned before a JDMS aiming to support administration of the Joint Programme on a central Consortium level.

However, the same problem may arise as described under 5.1 above [local regulations/central regulations conflict]. Again, the Consortium will have to make up their mind whether they want to stick to the subsidiarity-type situation favoring local decision-making, or whether they want to centralize rule-making and rule-application on the Consortium level.

Recommendation

The expert panel recommends the Consortium to carefully analyze whether PoSiG's rules and regulations will not cause any possible conflict with local rules and regulations of participating universities.

Standard 6: Student Support [ESG 1.6]

The student support services should contribute to the achievement of the intended learning outcomes. They should take into account specific challenges of mobile students.

Review Panel assessment: The standard is met.

Statement

The expert panel has learned, as it was put forward in the SER that the Consortium has agreed to give the students of the Joint Programme all rights of regular enrolled students and additionally all privileges of exchange students. In essence this means that local EUPs are responsible for providing student support, in particular the respective programme coordinators and local International Offices. However, some general guidelines applying to all EUPs are stated in the Cooperation/Partner Agreement. These guidelines determine two basic duties for EUPs, namely the aforementioned provision of student support and the organisation of student representation elections.

Regarding student support, all EUPs commit to welcome policies (information via email, duty checklist, welcome groups), assistance concerning accommodation, language courses, internship and obtainment of visa as well as the establishment of an Alumni- and Buddy-Network. Concerning student representation, the EUPs will organise a ballot for all PoSIG students to elect their student representatives. The elected representatives together form the students' board, which represents students' rights and interests in front of QA and the Coordinators' Board. As the panel was told during the site visit, student representatives will receive travel grants by the consortium so that they are able to cooperate across borders. The achievement of learning outcomes is measured through various QA processes, such as student surveys and course evaluation, which also take into account the general opinions of students on the programme itself. The students' study tracks will be monitored by the Consortium in order to gain additional data, as the panel was informed during the site visit.

The expert panel had the opportunity to speak to three students with mobility experience during the site visit. Recalling their own experiences, the students told the panel that they faced some difficulties applying for visa and finding accommodation in Salzburg.

The expert panel found that the Cooperation/Partner Agreement does not elaborate on the precise duties of the EUP regarding visa obtainment and accommodation. The expert panel appreciates the inclusion of student support guidelines into the Cooperation Agreement. However – as the expert panel perceived during the site visit – many commitments to supporting students are of an informal rather than formal nature.

Recommendation

The expert panel recommends the Consortium to actively assist students with visa and accommodation issues, given the difficulties mobility students are facing in this regard.

The expert panel recommends the Consortium to issue a sort of a "student handbook", specifying the rights, rules and duties of students regarding the local context of their respecting host university, in order to provide greater clarity for future students.

Standard 7: Resources [ESG 1.5 & 1.6]

7.1 Staff: The staff should be sufficient and adequate (qualifications, professional and international experience) to implement the study programme.

Review Panel assessment: The standard is met.

Statement

According to the SER and as established during the site visit the EuroPS coordinators nominate teaching staff. The module coordinators review the alignment of course descriptions with the overall PoSIG curriculum and objectives and decide on every individual course. Finally the Coordinators Board decides on the list of accepted courses and on a sufficient and competent number of teaching staff with professional international experience.

Master programmes are demanding in terms of teaching and supervision; they require expertise and research experience in core areas of Political Science. In order to develop staff competences, the programme offers train-the-trainer workshops (first one held in spring 2016), a Teaching Handbook as well as seminars of excellence. The latter are intended to be

funded for EuroPS instructors for the period of around two weeks to discuss co-teaching and co-authoring of research papers as well as methodology approaches.

Recommendation

The review panel recommends making a specific and transparent allocation of budget for staff development activities and scheduled valuable academic and collaborative work amongst PoSIG teaching staff, such as the train-the-trainer workshops and seminars of excellence.

7.2 Facilities: The facilities provided should be sufficient and adequate in view of the intended learning outcomes.

Review Panel assessment: The standard is met.

Statement

During the site visit the expert panel had the opportunity to look at the facilities of Salzburg University such as the library, seminar rooms, the lecture hall and offices for resident and guest lecturers. The Salzburg campus provides adequate infrastructure for teaching and learning purposes. Seminar rooms are spacious and equipped with projectors.

The expert panel also received a visual tour to the eLibrary with its focus on political science and a demonstration of the so-called Joint Degree Management System (JDMS) which aims to support the administration of courses, teachers, students, grades across all PoSIG stakeholders.

The Consortium has committed itself to libraries with adequate access to scholarly literature including online resources (via EBSCO, SAGE and JStore), eLearning and ePortfolio platforms (Moodle, Mahara) and administrative online services (including Turnitin software for anti-plagiarism). In case of deficiencies the expert panel learned that Western Balkan Universities, with the exception of the Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje, have the opportunity to buy IT equipment and software tools in the framework of the Erasmus+ project.

Recommendation

The expert panel recommends making sure that remote access to JDMS, Moodle, Mahara and in particular the eLibrary is given to all PoSIG stakeholders. This will vastly facilitate good quality of learning, research as well as communication between teaching staff and students.

Standard 8: Transparency and Documentation [ESG 1.8]

Relevant information about the programme like admission requirements and procedures, course catalogue, examination and assessment procedures etc. should be well documented and published by taking into account specific needs of mobile students.

Review Panel assessment: The standard is met.

Statement

General information about the Joint Programme can be gained by browsing the Consortium's website ("www.euro-ps.org"). Future and enrolled students will find relevant information on

the students' board, financial support and mobility grants, programme of recognised courses, as well as links to all the EUPs and their services.

Enrolled students as well as EUP-staff will have access to the programme's eLearning platform "Moodle", which, inter alia, serves for internal communication between the EUPs, with and among students, instructors and administrators, as the SER outlines.

In order to document student progress, EUPs will be using the above mentioned JD Management System. The expert panel learned during the site-visit that the JDMS allows the EUPs to administer courses and staff, provide procedures and forms and to collect information at a formal level. Plus, as found in the SER, the JDMS contains the examination book to document student progress by listing students' grades and completed courses. As the expert panel was informed, students' grades will also be registered by each EUP attended. This is due to administrative reasons, the panel learned.

Besides Moodle and JDMS, a third product was mentioned and as stated above presented to the expert panel during the interviews, named "Mahara". Mahara is an ePortfolio software, designed for students to document their progress, experiences and achievement of learning outcomes throughout their studies.

With regard to the conduct of course evaluations, the review panel was told during the site visit that results will not be made public to students. In the Panel's view, these results need to be made public in order to support an environment based on trust, equality and cooperation.

Recommendation

The expert panel recommends providing additional information regarding visa requirements and accommodation issues relevant for each EUPs' local contexts to students via the consortium's website or Moodle.

The expert panel recommends the Consortium to make course evaluation results transparent to students (e.g. via Moodle).

Standard 9: Quality Assurance [ESG 1.1 & part 1]

The cooperating institutions should apply joint internal quality assurance processes in accordance with part one of the ESG.

Review Panel assessment: The standard is met.

Statement

The expert panel learned that the Joint programme's quality management system follows the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) and has jointly developed a *Quality Management Handbook* describing relevant processes and procedures. The expert panel learned that the overall aim of the QM system is to foster a quality culture that is created and applied jointly. On that account, the expert panel was told that a quality tour to every EUP will be undertaken in Spring 2017.

The expert panel learned that in order to ensure a joint understanding and application of Quality Management, each EUP needs to appoint a quality manager to the Quality Assurance Board (QAB) of the Joint Programme. The QAB meets at least once a year. As specified in the

Partner Agreement, the Quality Assurance Board has various duties, mainly supervising the Coordinators Board regarding programme coordination and selection criteria for students and teachers, applying QA tools and evaluating courses. Apart from quality managers, two representatives of the student board plus the programme's Executive Director will be present at the QA Board's meetings. Furthermore the QA Board will make suggestions to the CB based on evaluation data and will merge those results in annual QA reports.

The quality managers present during the site visit informed the expert panel that they envisage several strategies to promote quality culture within the programme, such as course evaluation, student surveys (achievement of Learning Outcomes and general opinion on the programme) and teacher surveys and in future alumni surveys too. Monitoring student workload and JDMS data will provide further insights on the quality of the programme, e.g. number of courses held, attendants per course, time taken to achieve diploma etc. (*Quality Management Handbook, "Tools/Measures for QA"*).

Teachers will be provided with the mentioned above Teaching Handbook that offers information on the usage of the shared software, regulations, requirements and they will find module forms for writing course and module descriptions.

Recommendation

The expert panel recommends specifying on how each of the EUPs will actively contribute quality processes following the PDCA quality cycle.

5 Summary and Final Assessment

Summary

The expert panel highly appreciated the open and constructive atmosphere experienced during the whole process with the Consortium of the EuroPS Joint Master's Programme PoSiG. The expert panel was glad to learn from the documentation given by the Consortium, as well as from the interviews conducted during the site visit, and finally from the additional information provided. The expert panel experienced a Consortium highly spirited and committed to their mission.

Despite of the seriousness of the Consortium's approach and a lot of its preparatory activities the expert panel concluded that the application for accreditation in line with the European Approach was premature for a number of reasons, which led to the expert panel's assessment of standard 1.3 as not met. The expert panel has issued two conditions aiming to safeguard the implementation of the Joint Master's Programme.

For the final assessment, the expert panel sought consensus in all areas of assessment, and in the decision concerning recommendations and conditions.

Final Assessment

The review panel recommends the accreditation of the Joint programme with conditions.

Standard	Assessment	Recommendations	Conditions
Standard 1 Eligibility			
1.1 Status	"met"		
1.2 Joint design and delivery	"met"		
1.3 Cooperation Agreement	"not met under the following conditions"	The expert panel recommends the Consortium to further clarify whether PoSIG's own rules are in harmony with those of the participating universities in the following areas:	The expert panel conditions the Consortium to complete the process of signing and ratification of the Partner Agreement by all partners, latest until the beginning of May 2017.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • selection and registration of students, • the appointment of the Master theses supervisors and the members of the Examination Boards for the defense of the theses, • the content of the diplomas. <p>The expert panel recommends the Consortium to further clarify what it would do in case its own rules are not in harmony with the rules of the participating universities.</p> <p>The expert panel recommends the Consortium to make the regulation of students mobility part of the Partner Agreement, together with more detailed regulation of the mobility of teachers, and possibly of administrative</p>	<p>The expert panel conditions the Consortium to provide all relevant proofs for fulfillment of diverse national accreditation requirements, especially in those cases where full accreditation procedures are required latest until the start of the academic year 2017/18.</p>
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		staff of the participating universities, as well.	
Standard 2 Learning Outcomes			
2.1 Level	"met"	The expert panel recommends that the Consortium should take responsibility to further demonstrate that Learning Outcomes align with the corresponding levels according to the respective individual national qualification frameworks.	
2.2 Disciplinary Field	"met"		
2.3 Achievement	"met"		
2.4 Regulated Professions	Not applicable		
Standard 3 Study Programmes			
3.1 Curriculum	"met"	The expert panel would recommend to the Consortium, in the interest of broadening the transdisciplinary approach of the project, to investigate and realize teaching cooperation(s) with the local Law Departments, particularly in the fields/modules of Comparative Politics (Constitutional Law, Public Law), and Public	

		<p>Administration (Public Law, Administrative Law).</p> <p>Where there are two EUPs in the same place [Tirana, Sarajevo, Pristina], the expert panel recommends to the Consortium to investigate and realize possibilities of local cooperation and joint teaching of courses in the search for efficient utilization of pooled resources and the reaching of the minimum number of course participants. The expert panel has been informed in the course of the site visit that such cooperation is arranged for verbally on the local level; however, it is of the opinion that written agreements should be preferred on the local and/or the Consortium level.</p>	
3.2 Credits	"met"	The expert panel recommends the consortium to allocate ECTS credit points to	

		<p>courses according to their actual workload. If this means that the ECTS value of a course drops below six points, the ECTS value of other courses in the same module should be examined with a view to a corresponding increase if so justified by their workload. If needs be, the number of courses in a module should be increased [e.g. 3+3+4+8 or 4+4+4+6 etc.]. The Consortium will have to insure proper student representation in this process.</p>	
3.3 Workload	"met"		
Standard 4 Admission and Recognition			
4.1 Admission	"met"	<p>The expert panel recommends the Consortium to ensure that the respective local administrations in charge of student admissions are well informed about the admission procedures and enrollment policy in place for the Joint Programme.</p>	

4.2 Recognition	"met"	The expert panel recommends the Consortium to clearly outline the recognition process, in particular with regard to possible compensation courses available at the two respective EUP (at the University of Salzburg and the University of Ljubljana) and by not later than the students have to provide proof of compensation and the necessary earned ECTS.	
Standard 5 Learning, Teaching and Assessment			
5.1 Learning and Teaching	"met"	The expert panel recommends the Consortium to carefully analyze the impact of individual local EUP examination regulations and rules on the overall rules defined through the Partner Agreement.	
5.2 Assessment of students:	"met"	The expert panel recommends the Consortium to carefully analyze whether PoSIG's rules and regulations will	

		not cause any possible conflict with local rules and regulations of participating universities.	
Standard 6 Student Support	"met"	<p>The expert panel recommends the Consortium to actively assist students with visa and accommodation issues, given the difficulties mobility students are facing in this regard.</p> <p>The expert panel recommends the Consortium to issue a sort of a "student handbook", specifying the rights, rules and duties of students regarding the local context of their respecting host university, in order to provide greater clarity for future students.</p>	
Standard 7 Resources			
7.1 Staff	"met"	The review panel recommends making a specific and transparent allocation of budget for	

		staff development activities and scheduled valuable academic and collaborative work amongst PoSIG teaching staff, such as the train-the-trainer workshops and seminars of excellence.	
7.2 Facilities	"met"	The expert panel recommends making sure that remote access to JDMS, Moodle, Mahara and in particular the eLibrary is given to all PoSIG stakeholders. This will vastly facilitate good quality of learning, research as well as communication between teaching staff and students.	
Standard 8 Transparency and Documentation	"met"	The expert panel recommends providing additional information regarding visa requirements and accommodation issues relevant for each EUPs' local contexts to students via the consortium's website or Moodle.	

		The expert panel recommends the Consortium to make course evaluation results transparent to students (e.g. via Moodle).	
Standard 9 Quality Assurance	"met"	The expert panel recommends specifying on how each of the EUPs will actively contribute quality processes following the PDCA quality cycle.	

6 Annex: Documents to support the review report

- Self-Documentation (Self-Evaluation Report) including annexes as of 26.11.2016 (pdf version, provided as hard copy during site visit)
- Eligibility proof for PLUS (22 September 2016)
- Eligibility proof for UKIM issued by Ministry of Education and Science FYROM (5 October 2016)
- Eligibility proof for FAMA and UBT college issued by KAA – Kosovo Accreditation Agency (10 October 2016)
- Legal information concerning Consortium partner from Albania (29 November 2016)
- Information regarding the degree award concerning award of joint/double degree. In case that the academic degree to be awarded reads equally in countries concerned, the partner institutions can award it jointly in this wording (“Joint degree”). Otherwise (“Double degree”) the HE institutions concerned should lay down in a detailed way the manner of the award. (1 December 2016)
- EuroPS Business Plan, (9 December 2016)
- Information concerning evidence relevant for eligibility proof (Standard 1.1) (12 December 2016)
- Updated overview regarding financial plan and budget outline (12 December 2016)
- Confirmation letters for both partners from Albania (19 December 2016)
- First draft of fact sheet regarding additional relevant information (higher education system, short overview on universities represented in Consortium) (19 December 2016)
- Confirmation letters from cantonal ministry Sarajevo and assisting letter from Agency for Development of Higher Education and Quality Assurance BiH for UNSA (22 December 2016). Various documents for proving evidence on eligibility have been submitted prior to this date (24 October 2016ff).
- Amended version Diploma Supplement overview document (22 December 2016)
- Example for joint awarding document which will have only a declaratory effect “bridging document” (supporting the intended “multilateral joint degree award”) (22 December 2016)
- “Joint Master’s Programme in Political Science – Integration and Governance” (PoSIG) Fact Sheet – overview on higher education system Consortium Partner, compiling information regard to eligibility proof (Standard 1.1) (9 January 2017)
- Official Translation record for eligibility proof document for University Tirana (30 January 2017)

During the site visit information was provided (hard copy) regarding other Master programmes conducted at PLUS. This information was not taken further into consideration by the expert panel.

7 Annex: Glossary

AQ Austria	Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation Austria
BiH	Bosnia and Herzegovina
CA	Cooperation Agreement
CB	Coordinators Board

DD	Double Degree
EA	European Approach
ECTS	European Credit Transfer System
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
ENQA	European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
EQAR	European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education
EQF	European Qualification Framework
ESG	Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area
EuroPS	European Political Science Joint Master's Programme
EUP	EuroPS Project Partners
FAMA	FAMA College
FQ-EHEA	Framework for Qualifications in the European Higher Education Area
FYROM	Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
HE	Higher Education
HEI	Higher Education Institution
JP	Joint Programme
JD	Joint Degree
JDMS	Joint Degree Management System
KAA –	Kosovo Accreditation Agency
MA	Master of Arts
MSc	Master of Science
PA	Partner Agreement
PDCA	Plan-Do-Check-Act (Deming Cycle)
PoSiG	Political Science – Integration and Governance
PLUS	University of Salzburg
QA	Quality Assurance
QAB	Quality Assurance Board
SD	Self-documentation
SER	Self-evaluation report
SB	Student Board
SSST	Sarajevo School of Science Technology
TOEFEL	Test of English as a Foreign Language
UBT	University of Business and Technology
UET	European University of Tirana
ULJU	University of Ljubljana
UKIM	Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje
UNSA	University of Sarajevo
UTIR	University of Tirana
WB	Western Balkan

8 Agenda of the site visit

Agenda

European Approach – Accreditation

Joint Master Programme

Political Science – Integration and Governance (PoSIG)

Site Visit

Date: 01. - 03. December 2016

Location preparatory meeting: Department of Politics and Sociology, Rudolfskai 42, 5020 Salzburg, Room 115A

Location site visit: same

Thursday, 1st December 2016 University of Salzburg, Seminar room 115A

Preparatory Meeting for the expert panel

Top	Time	Topic(s) inter alia	Participants
0	11.30	Meeting in Hotel Lobby	Expert panel AQ Austria coordinator
1	11.45-13.00	Welcome Lunch Gasthaus Zwettler's	
2	13:30-18:45	Preparatory meeting	
3	19:00-20:30	Dinner at "AO ZAI"	

Friday, 2nd December 2016 University of Salzburg, Seminar room 115A

Site Visit

Top	Time	Topic(s) inter alia	Participants / Interview partner(s)
1	08:30 – 08:45	Arrival – internal meeting	Expert panel / AQ Austria coordinator
2	08:45 – 09:00	Welcome by University of Salzburg representing the consortium lead partner	Peter Mayr, Andreas Dür, Franz Kok

3	09.00 – 10.00	<p>Executive Management</p> <p>Standard European Approach (EA) to be discussed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> EA 1. Eligibility EA 7. Resources 	<p>Executive Director / Management Board of the Joint Programme</p> <p>Franz Kok</p> <p>Edmond Hajirzi</p> <p>Maja Savic-Bojanic</p> <p>Mario Wintersteiger</p>
4	10.00 – 10.15	Break / Internal Discussion	Expert panel / AQ Austria coordinator
5	10.15 – 11.15	<p>Quality management in the context of the Joint Programme</p> <p>Standard European Approach (EA) to be discussed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> EA 4. Admission and Recognition EA 6. Student support EA 8. Transparency and Documentation EA 9. Quality Assurance 	<p>Quality Assurance Board and Representatives of Study and Teaching</p> <p>Günter Wageneder</p> <p>Salvatore Giglio</p> <p>Bujar Gallopeni</p> <p>Aneta Cekik</p>
6	11.15 – 11.30	Break / Internal Discussion	Expert panel / AQ Austria coordinator
7	11.30 – 12.15	<p>Study Programme Management</p> <p>Standard European Approach (EA) to be discussed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> EA 3. Study Programme 	<p>Study Programme Development / Lectures in the Consortium</p> <p>Franz Kok</p> <p>Miro Hacek</p> <p>Maria Antonietta Confalonieri</p> <p>Blerjana Bino</p>
8	12.15 – 13.00	Lunch (Room 115A)	Expert panel / AQ Austria coordinator
9	13.00 – 13.30	Internal Discussion	Expert panel / AQ Austria coordinator
10	13.30 – 14.30	<p>Learning, Teaching and Assessment</p> <p>Standard European Approach (EA) to be discussed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> EA 2. Learning Outcomes EA 5. Learning, Teaching and Assessment 	<p>Study Programme Development / Lectures in the Consortium</p> <p>Günter Wageneder</p> <p>Salvatore Giglio</p> <p>Maja Savic-Bojanic</p> <p>Aneta Cekik</p>
11	14.30 – 14.45	Break / Reflexion	Expert panel / AQ Austria coordinator
12	14.45 – 15.45	<p>Work field</p> <p>Standard European Approach (EA) to be discussed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> EA 2.2 Disciplinary field 	<p>Head of Study programmes, representatives for (course) evaluation, alumni network</p> <p>Blerjana Bino</p> <p>Orinda Malltezi</p> <p>Avdi Smajljaj</p> <p>Nedžma Džananović</p>
13	15.45 – 16.15	Visitation of premises of PLUS and presentation of premises at other	Executive Director / Management Board of the Joint Programme

		locations	Franz Kok Mario Wintersteiger
14	16.15 - 16.45	Interview with students Standard European Approach (EA) to be discussed <i>Joint Programme Management (Student perspective –EA 3. / EA 4. EA 6.)</i>	Representatives of the Consortium Student Board Ferdiana Hoti Besart Zhuja
15	16.45- 17.00	Break / Reflexion	Expert panel / AQ Austria coordinator
16	17.00- 17.30	Final meeting with Executive management of the Joint Programme	Executive Director / Management Board of the Joint Programme Franz Kok Edmond Hajirzi Maja Savic-Bojanic Mario Wintersteiger
16	17.30- 18.30	Wrap-Up of the day	Expert panel / AQ Austria coordinator
16	19.00	Dinner at "Bärenwirt"	

Saturday, 3 December 2016

Working meeting of the expert panel can be held at Hotel, breakfast-room

Top	Time	Topic(s) inter alia	Participants
1	08:30 - 10:00	Drafting of the report	Expert panel / AQ Austria coordinator

Departure of Experts

Participants Consortium (alphabetical list)

Name	Role	University
Blerjana Bino	Coordinator/Teacher	Director/ Office for Project Development and Partnership European University of Tirana (UET)
Maria Antonietta Confalonieri	Coordinator/Teacher	Ass. Professor of European Politics, Coordinator for Intern. Student Mobility Coordinator PhD Programme in Political Science University of Pavia (UPAV)
Aneta Cekik	Coordinator/Teacher	Ass. Professor of Political Science/Institute for sociological, political and juridical research University of Skopje (UKIM)
Nedžma Džananović	Coordinator/Teacher	Ass. Professor and researcher/Faculty of Political Science University of Sarajevo (UNSA)
Andreas Dür	Teacher	Professor International Politics/Department Political Science and Sociology University of Salzburg (PLUS)

Salvatore Giglio	Quality Manager	Erasmus VicePresident, Teaching Manager /Department of Political Science University of Pavia (UPAV)
Miro Hacek	Coordinator/Teacher	Head, Department of Political Science University of Ljubljana (ULJU)
Edmond Hajirzi		Representing the UPT in the consortium, director of UPT
Franz Kok	Coordinator	Lecturer, Erasmus Coordinator/Department Political Science University of Salzburg (PLUS)
Orinda Malltezi	Coordinator/Teacher	Vice Dean, Lecturer/Department of Political Science University of Tirana (UTIR)
Maja Savic-Bojanic	Coordinator/Teacher	Lecturer/Department of Political Science and International Relations Sarajevo School for Science and Technology (SSST)
Avdi Smajljaj	Coordinator/Teacher	Lecturer Fama College Pristina (FAMA)
Günter Wageneder	Quality Manager	Head/Office for Quality Management University of Salzburg (PLUS)
Mario Wintersteiger	Teacher	Lecturer /Department Political Science and Sociology University of Salzburg (PLUS)
Peter Mayr	International Office	Head of international office University of Salzburg (PLUS)
Ferdiana Hoti	Student	Representative of the Consortium Student Board
Blerta Begisholli	Student	Representative of the Consortium Student Board
Besart Zhuja	Student	Representative of the Consortium Student Board