

HERAS

Higher Education, Research and Applied Science (Kosovo)

Guidelines for the Programmatic Partnership

1. General Information on the Project and Overall Objective

The project “HERAS – Higher Education, Research and Applied Science” contributes to the well-functioning of Higher Education and Research in Kosovo along the principles of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and the European Research Area (ERA) with the long-term objective to support the socio-economic development of the country.

The objective of this project is to effectively and sustainably improve the higher education and research system in Kosovo, enhance the quality of higher education and the employability of graduates, and improve human capacities and increase internationalisation of research.

The project is funded by the Austrian Development Agency (ADA) with funds of Austrian Development Cooperation, and co-financed by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology of Republic of Kosovo (MEST). HERAS is implemented by a highly experienced Austrian consortium represented by World University Service Austria (WUS Austria) as the lead partner, and including the Center for Social Innovation (ZSI) and the Austrian Agency for International Mobility and Cooperation in Education, Science and Research (OeAD).

The three-year project “HERAS – Higher Education, Research and Applied Science” is being implemented from 2017 – 2019 and intends to reach 10 Outputs, one of those being the following:

Output 6 of HERAS: Five programmatic partnerships (PPs) are established between Kosovan and Austrian HEIs and support modernization and internationalization of HE in Kosovo.

2. Programmatic Partnerships

The development and implementation of Programmatic Partnerships supports partnerships between Kosovan and Austrian Higher Education institutions in five priority fields (Environment; Energy and Natural Resources; Agricultural Production and Food Safety; Medical Research, Social and Economic Sciences; Linguistics; Historic and Cultural Studies) and can encompass a variety of jointly implemented activities.

Within HERAS, a total of five programmatic partnerships will be supported at Kosovan public universities. All partnerships have to include at least one Austrian partner higher education institution.

Kosovan Public Universities are invited to address Austrian Higher Education Institutions to jointly apply for a Programmatic Partnership. Detailed project applications are prepared by the project partners (Austrian and Kosovan higher education institutions). WUS Austria checks the formal eligibility of the applications. All eligible applications will be reviewed by two independent experts. Based on the results of the scores, the Selection Board will bring the final decision for financing the Programmatic Partnership projects.

2.1 Priority field

Only projects dealing with NRC (National Research Council) priority areas can be supported¹: All proposed activities should be related to the NRC priority areas listed below

- (1) Environment, Energy and Natural Resources,
- (2) Agricultural Production and Food Safety
- (3) Medical Research
- (4) Social and Economic Sciences
- (5) Linguistics, Historic and Cultural Studies

Furthermore, in order to increase the employability of university graduates, applied study program approaches (e.g. labour market relevance of curricula, practice orientation, cooperation with the industry and similar) will be supported in order to improve the link with the world of work and increase employability of graduates, as well as to promote a more practice orientation of higher education throughout Kosovo.

In addition, the field of ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) is considered as cross-horizontal priority that may occur in any of the abovementioned fields.

Each applicant will be requested to outline how the proposed programmatic partnership will contribute to promote gender equality and equal opportunities. In this regard, a gender and vulnerability perspective needs to be incorporated into each application, addressing the following key questions:

- **Composition of the project team:** Please describe the composition of the project team and outline to what extent men/women, young academics and other persons from vulnerable groups (e.g. from minorities, PWDs etc.) will be represented in the team.

¹ The National Research Program of the Republic of Kosovo (NRC, 2010). Available from: http://www.masht.gov.net/advCms/documents/NRP_FINAL_%20English.pdf.

- **Use of disaggregated data:** Please outline how the proposed programmatic partnership plans to incorporate data disaggregated according to sex and other vulnerable groups.
- **Specific needs of women and persons from vulnerable/underrepresented groups (e.g. PWDs, minority groups, young researchers etc.):** Please briefly outline specific needs of women and persons from vulnerable/underrepresented groups in the thematic area the proposed programmatic partnership seeks to address and ways in which the programmatic partnership will respond to these needs.

Possible areas of cooperation: The projects can encompass one or more of the activities listed below. Other activities in line with the basic principles of the project HERAS and the programmatic partnerships can be proposed by the partners.

- Curriculum development;
- Enhancing of research conditions and capacities on an institutional level (please note: for research projects as such there is separate Research Call²);
- Issues related to the Bologna Process (including also aspects related to the Social Dimension of Higher Education);
- Linking Higher Education and economy; issues related to the employability of graduates
- Quality assurance including equal opportunities;
- Workshops on specific topics for students and staff;
- Handling of examinations and staff exchange;
- Other topics in line with basic principles of the partnership idea (see below).

Advanced Partnerships: Programmatic Partnerships implemented in Higher KOS³ can apply for an Advanced Programmatic Partnership. To ensure quality, applications for advanced PP require a well-grounded justification on how the continuation builds upon the success of the Higher KOS partnership with focus on new and innovative aspects (and not more of the same).

2.2. Basic Principles

The strengthening of capacities in higher education, research and management supports poverty reduction and contributes to the achievement of development goals according to the national/regional strategies of Kosovo and the overall objectives of the ADC. Programmatic partnerships funds well-

² <http://www.heraskosovo.org/research-grants/>

³ The Project “Higher KOS – Promoting Institutional Development in Higher Education and Research in Kosovo” was implemented from December 2011 to September 2015.

designed collaborative and innovative projects, and applied study program approaches responding to the identified needs and demands in Kosovo and its higher education institutions. Emphasis will be also put on specific needs of students from underrepresented and vulnerable groups (e.g. from minority groups, PWDs, women etc.) in line with the Social Dimension of Higher Education in the Bologna Process.

The participatory approach of programmatic partnerships means that project proposals should be planned and worked out jointly by the cooperating institutions, based on a multi-stakeholder approach. At least two institutions – one from Kosovo and one from Austria – must be involved in the partnership. The coordinating institution must be an Austrian partner institution. The coordinating institution will sign the contract and be responsible for reporting and accounting.

If the proposed activities require the involvement of more than two partners in order to be implemented and realized successfully, this is possible, too. This has to be well stipulated and described in the project proposal. Programmatic partnerships follow an open-minded concept of knowledge, science and empirical research. Programmatic partnerships are not interested in one-sided “knowledge transfer” but should be based on mutual learning of all partners from both countries. Programmatic partnerships strictly follow a demand-driven approach through which the demand has to be defined by the partners from Kosovo, and a participatory approach in education and research. Respect of different methodological and empirical approaches, of different epistemological and cultural systems, of different modes of interaction and interpretation of results – regarding the impact on the addressed target groups/countries in particular – should be seen as preconditions for the aimed participatory and demand-driven partnerships to be realized on an equal basis.

In order to realize the overall objective, programmatic partnerships follow **five basic principles**:

- Participatory approach
- A concept of culturally open-minded knowledge
- Practically- and empirically-oriented approach
- Promotion of equal opportunities and the Social Dimension of higher education⁴
- “Bottom-up” and demand-driven approach

Furthermore, the following **requirements** regarding the content are seen as relevant for approving the programmatic partnerships:

⁴ The concept of the Social Dimension of higher education was first developed within the Bologna Process in the Prague Communiqué of 2001 and, broadly speaking, refers to the goal of removing inequalities in access to higher education in the EAHEA: The student body entering, participating in and completing higher education at all levels should reflect the diversity of our populations.

- Demand-driven approach: The proposed activities are based on institutional and societal needs in Kosovo and also take into account specific needs of vulnerable and underrepresented groups.
- Relevance of the partnership for development in Kosovo, specifically in relation to the thematic focus of the partnership project.
- Cross cutting topics – social dimension in particular gender equality, support to the students from marginalized groups, human rights based approach are systematically integrated in the project plan.
- Professional expertise and stated interest in relation to the thematic focus and sufficient resources of the partners to implement the proposed partnership actions.
- Well-balanced ownership between the partners.
- Result orientation and sustainability.

2.3. Expected results

The programmatic partnership shall strengthen the capacities of the partner institutions in higher education, research and management. In order to unite scientific questions with specific needs of Kosovo, the partners have to embed a developmental approach in the theoretical, methodological and empirical design of the proposed activities. Development issues and important development-oriented academic questions related to the thematic focus of the program will be brought together with educational and institutional demands to improve academic capacities as well as skills in management. Additionally, there is a focus on applied and practice-oriented study program approaches and Programmatic Partnerships implemented in Higher KOS can apply for an Advanced Academic Partnership. Ownership must be well balanced between the concerned partners, and the above outlined cross-cutting topics must be systematically integrated in the project design. Preference will be given to projects directly or indirectly addressing aspects of the Social Dimension of higher education (i.e. promotion of equal opportunities and support to underrepresented groups in higher education in line with identified needs).

The expected results can be described on different levels:

Institutionally

- The partnership strengthens the management and the teaching/educational skills and capacities of the scientific institution in Kosovo.
- The partnership strengthens and/or establishes a sustainable cooperation between the Kosovan and Austrian academic institution(s) and leads to follow-up projects and educational activities.
- The partnership empowers female and young academics.

- The partnership has a positive impact on and addresses specific needs of (prospective) students from marginalized groups in order to enhance their access to and participation in higher education without obstacles related to their social, cultural and economic background.
- The capacity development measures enhance the quality at higher education institutions in Kosovo.

Educationally, scientifically

- Innovative curricula, teaching methods and other educational activities that are in line with the thematic focus of the program are introduced to improve the academic standard of the partner institutions.
- Short-term exchange of lecturers and students (Kosovo-Austria, Austria-Kosovo) is realized
- The partnership improves the linkage between the HEI and the labour market and increases the employability of graduates.
- The partnership contributes to an increased integration of partners in international scientific Networks.
- The dissemination and utilization of findings and results are shared within other institutions and lead to further activities: follow-ups, publications, conferences, teaching, curricula and are of policy use for national or regional development activities.
- The partnership has a positive influence and raised awareness regarding the Kosovo's obligations in the field of human rights including the right to education.
- The partnership contributes to the applicability of research results in practice.

2.4 Budget / Financed cost and project duration

The requested grant should not exceed the amount of 40,000 EUR, accounting for a project period of max. 2 years and depending on real cost calculation. In addition, a min. of 10% need to be contributed as co-financing by the project partners (i.e. a grant of 40,000 EUR requires min. co-financing of 4,000 EUR; the total project budget would be 44,000 EUR)

Use the attached file Timetable and Budget for a presentation of the detailed project budget.

Please refer to **Guidelines for the Budget and Financial Report** for further information on eligible costs and financial reporting.

3. Evaluation criteria and procedures

3.1 Thematic and Organisational Dimensions

Applications will be approved based on how well they integrate and demonstrate the ability to implement the following dimensions: (1) project design and substantive quality, (2) project management and the capacity of the consortium, (3) applicability of project results and sustainability, (4) cost efficiency. The evaluation criteria listed below should assist both, the public higher education institutions writing the project proposals and the external evaluators as an evaluation guideline.

Thematic and/or organizational dimensions	Specification / Description Evaluation grid
1. Project design and substantive quality (problem oriented, relevant)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Is the proposed action in line with the national research priorities? - Are the proposed activities chosen and designed in a way that enables reaching the set objectives, impacts and indicators? - Does the project description clearly outline the benefit of the project: are project objectives and its envisioned impact in line with the needs of the partner(s) in Kosovo? Is this well argued in the project description (challenges to be addressed, its context, and background, description of local, institutional and scientific needs in Kosovo)? Is the motivation to implement the project given by both Kosovan and Austrian partners? Is the project approach innovative in terms of theoretical, interdisciplinary, methodological/empirical and educational aspects? - Are the expected project results realistic and to be reached with proposed design of the project? Are the indicators of progress measurable and verifiable? Are the beneficiaries clearly defined? - Is the project methodology designed in line with the expected results? Are capacity development activities foreseen and well designed? - Are the cross cutting topics integrated into the project design? To which degree can the project be expected to address the situation of students from marginalized groups in order to enhance their access to and

	<p>participation in higher education without obstacles related to their social, cultural and economic back ground?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Academic quality of project objectives and of capacity development measures (i.e. education, research and/or management).
<p>2. Project management and capacity of the partners</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Does the selection of partners fit the set objectives? Has there been any previous cooperation to build upon in this partnership? Are the roles of partners clearly defined/set out? - Do the project partners have sufficient capacities for project implementation? Does the project team integrate young academic staff, and/or women = added value? (and attached CVs)? - Is the project management clearly defined, enabling participatory distribution of tasks and responsibilities and decision making? Does it lead to shared ownership? Is the project monitoring plan in place and appropriate? Does the project description contain a risk analysis and measures to mitigate the risks? - Is the time plan realistic and well elaborated? (Attachment Time table and budget)
<p>3. Applicability of project results and sustainability</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Are the expected results applicable in practice? How will it be ensured that the project results will reach the target group and be used by it? How is dissemination and utilization of expected findings and results planned? (spin-offs, follow-ups, publications, conferences, teaching, curricula, exchange of lecturers, etc.) - Does the project include measures that assure that the project results will continue existing after the end of the project? How do the partners plan to make their cooperation sustainable beyond the funding period? - How do partners plan to ensure project dissemination among the wider academic community?
<p>4. Cost efficiency (2.4. and the Timetable and Budget Sheet)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Is the budget cost efficient? Does it efficiently use the project means to reach the objectives of the project? - Is the budget well balanced and the allocation between the partners appropriate? - If applicable, is the usage of the equipment well justified? - How relevant are the contributions of the partners?

3.2 Cross-Cutting Topics

In accordance with the principles of the Austrian Development Cooperation the project incorporates a vulnerability perspective. It seeks to apply a human right based approach throughout the project and to address specific needs of students from marginalized groups in line with the Social Dimension of the Bologna Process which also **constitute important aspects of the partnership projects**. Funded partnership projects are required to mainstream a gender and vulnerability perspective into the respective implementation plans, in line with the above outlined guiding questions (see section 2.1.) and the detailed application form. The following documents published by the ADC refer to the importance of these topics for development and reduction of poverty (to obtain detailed information please refer to the following documents of the ADC):

- GENDER EQUALITY:

ADC - Gender equality and empowerment of women - Policy document

(http://www.entwicklung.at/uploads/media/PD_Gender_Equality_19032010_Web.pdf)

- THE SOCIAL DIMENSION OF THE BOLOGNA PROCESS:

(<http://www.ehea.info/srticle-details.aspx?Articleid=12>)

Partnership projects will also be evaluated by how well they integrate these cross-cutting topics.

3.3. Quality Criteria of the Programmatic Partnership

- All projects must be fully in line with the guidelines and criteria for programmatic partnerships elaborated in this document.
- The partnership projects need to outline how they contribute to the realization of cross cutting topics (equal opportunities, social dimension of higher education (i.e. support to students from marginalized groups). Please refer to Chapter 3.2. for further information on cross cutting topics.

4. Evaluation Criteria and Procedures

All documents required for submission have to be in **English** and have to be submitted via regular mail (paper version, including all signatures) **AND** via E-mail (electronic version) to the addresses listed below.

Required documents
Application form
Time table and budget sheet for partnerships
CVs of project coordinators and further team members
Letter of intent from the leading management of all partner institutions

Address for submission by **postal mail**:

WUS Austria
Veronika Nitsche
Schmiedgasse 40/3
8010 Graz
Austria

Address for submission by **electronic mail**:

arbresha.meha@wus-austria.org and veronika.nitsche@wus-austria.org

Deadline for submission:

14 July 2017

Date of post mark: 14 July 2017 (it is recommended to send the application as registered mail and keep the receipt).

4.1 Timetable

Activity	Deadline
Call for proposals	21 April 2017
Deadline for submissions	14 July 2017
Technical evaluation of the project description and budget	until 20 July 2017
Expert reviews	August and September 2017
Selection Board	Beginning of October 2017
Information and contracting	October 2017
Start of the programmatic partnerships	November 2017
Mid-term report (including financial report) by project partners	Two weeks after the first half of the project implementation
Final project report (including financial report) by beneficiaries	Two weeks after the end of the implementation of the programmatic partnership

4.2 Information

The main item of the information campaign will be an information session during the kick-off meeting of the HERAS project in April 2017 in Prishtina. The programmatic partnership call will be announced on the project website, MEST website, and the website of the WUS Austria. WUS Austria will offer personal information and counselling for all prospective applicants.

Contact person:

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5. Selection procedure

1) The WUS Austria checks the formal eligibility of the applications:

- complete and correct applications and documents

- eligibility criteria
- timeframe and budget

2) Experts reviews

All eligible applications will be reviewed by two experts. The expert team should be gender balanced.

3) Final decision by the Selection Board (based on the result of the score)

Members of the Selection Board (it will be tried to have a gender balanced board):

- ADA: Head of Selection Board
- MEST representative for HERAS project
- WUS Austria
- OeAD-GmbH / Österreichischer Austauschdienst

The Selection Board will aim at reaching a balanced portfolio of grants, taking into account the objectives of the call, the quality of the applications and the experts review.

Aspects that may be decisive when a choice between equally scored applications needs to be made:

- Advanced Programmatic Partnerships with a well grounded justification on the continuation.
- Applied study program approaches.
- Extent to which a gender and a vulnerability perspective is mainstreamed into programmatic partnerships (e.g. promotion of gender-relevant research topics).
- Extent to which aspects related to the Social Dimension of Higher Education of the Bologna Process are promoted and fostered within programmatic partnerships.

The Selection Board will formally approve the decisions and advice WUS Austria to start the contracting process.