

BROCHURE

HERAS activities for the period
February 2017 to July 2018



Dear Reader,

It is my pleasure to share with you the HERAS brochure that lists outcomes and activities for the period February 2017 to July 2018.

It is hoped that this brochure will be a valuable information tool and reference point for various stakeholders that are involved in HERAS activities among others.



With HERAS, we contribute to the well-functioning of Higher Education and Research in Kosovo along the principles of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and the Europe an Research Area (ERA) with the long-term objective to support the socio-economic development of the country. This is kept in mind by the HERAS team of experts when designing, implementing and evaluating the project activities, whilst cooperating closely with the direct stakeholders at policy, university and research level.

Noteworthy, I would like to mention that HERAS is a good and valuable project for all involved stakeholders since it enhances collective effort of public authorities, universities, academics, and students, together with stakeholder associations, employers, quality assurance agencies, international organizations, and institutions, with an aim of accelerating the higher education reforms in Kosovo.

There is plenty to come from HERAS in the coming period in order to achieve the above-mentioned objectives successfully; therefore, I encourage you all to follow us on our website: <https://www.heraskosovo.org/> as well as on our Facebook account for the upcoming activities and developments.

I would like to use the opportunity to thank the members of the consortium (WUS Austria, ZSI and OeAD) for being the authors of the intervention and for steering the project implementation. In addition, special thanks go to our donors Austrian Development Agency and Ministry of Education, Science and Technology of the Republic of Kosovo for financial support as well as for great cooperation during the implementation of the project activities.

Sincerely yours,

Aqim Emurli
Team Leader

INTRODUCTION

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 the 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 internationalization of research.

The project is funded by the Austrian Development Agency (ADA) with funds of the 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).

Project Partners

- Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST), Republic of Kosovo
- Public Universities of Kosovo (University of Prishtina, Prizren, Peja, Gjakova, Gjilan, Ferizaj and Mitrovica)
- Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA)

The three-year project “HERAS – Higher Education, Research and Applied Science” is being implemented from 2017 - 2019.

Since its beginning, HERAS has undertaken and accomplished institutional development activities, capacity development activities, awareness raising and advocacy activities, policy advice and community-centered activities. The specific learning practice approaches, tools and techniques, applied in the course of the implementation of these activities, were in line with the requests by the Kosovar target groups.

Intervention Logic of the Project

The project addresses the following three levels:

- Policy Level - for improved quality, effectiveness, governance and transparency of higher education and research planning and decision-making processes and policies.
- University Level - for a more student-centered, labor market oriented higher education, based on state-of-the-art methodologies, and quality measures along European standards.
- Research Level - for an increased participation of faculties, institutes and individual researchers in international research cooperation and for improved human capacities for teaching and research by means of scholarships and research projects.

Additionally, the project addresses the situation of 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 back ground.



Official signing of Cooperation Agreement between Ministry of Education, Science and Technology and Austrian Development Agency/Austrian Development Cooperation

Mr. Shyqiri Bytyqi, Minister of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) and Ms. Veronika Nitsche, member of WUS Austria board (on behalf of the implementing consortium), signed the co-financing agreement for the implementation of the project HERAS. Minister Bytyqi stated



that Kosovo needed internal support and in this case, Austrian support in order to promote higher education, research and applied science. From the other side, Ms. Nitsche highlighted that the HERAS project contributed 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 total budget of the project HERAS is EUR 2 million.



The project is funded by the Austrian Development Agency (ADA) with funds of Austrian Development Cooperation (ADC), and co-financed by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (10%). 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).

Workshop “Applying a Human Rights Based Approach in Higher Education”



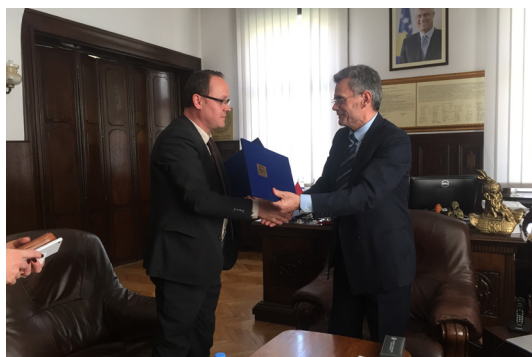
HERAS successfully organized a two-day workshop on “Applying a Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA) in Higher Education”. The aim of the workshop was to address the central aspects of higher education from a human rights perspective. This event was chaired and addressed by high level speakers from MEST, University of Prishtina (UP), the

Human Rights Center at UP and experts in this field from Austria and Kosovo. Also, it helped to share good practices from Europe in this field. The workshop was attended by around 40 participants from different institutions such as MEST, public universities, different NGOs, Students Parliament, etc. The event proved to be very successful based on vivid discussions, originating from different point of views and different backgrounds. Since the target audience was extremely interested in the topic, the project shared the summary report from the event with participants after the workshop, including the next steps that were followed up by the project in relation to a HRBA. An added value of the event was also the UP presentation of the data on mainstreaming human rights into curricula. This was well received by the entire audience, hence, the project worked on expanding this presentation into a study with regard to mainstreaming human rights in related curricula. The study was published at the beginning of 2018.



HERAS and University of Prishtina sign Memorandum of Understanding on Quality Assurance

Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). Both parties agreed that the MoU will ensure proper and effective implementation of activities of mutual interest as well as it will enable efficient monitoring and evaluation of the achieved impact. The aim of this MoU will be to support the UP improving the use of Quality Assurance (QA) instruments, with a focus on the implementation of follow-up measures along the European Standards.



Guidelines for Reviewing and Revising Syllabi for Teaching Staff and for the Staff Supporting and Supervising Curriculum Development



The HERAS project conducted three focus group interviews with UP Coordinators for Academic Development (CAD) to investigate on further capacity development needs. As follow-up to the interviews, the team of experts drafted an impact assessment/needs analysis which analyzed the implementation of learning outcomes (LO) at the UP

(awareness of staff on LO, competencies in the field of learning outcomes of key staff such as CADs, etc.). Based on the outcomes and recommendations of the assessment, the project organized a two-day workshop with CADs. The aim of the workshop was to further strengthen the competencies of the CADs and to provide them with methods and tools to prepare curricula for (re-) accreditation.

During the workshop, the team of experts and CADs jointly worked on drafting a toolkit/manual for the development of individual syllabi, which is tailored to the needs of the CADs and the teaching staff at UP. The toolkit/manual has been finalized, printed and distributed to the teaching staff of UP.



Guidelines for the Evaluation of Classes and the Use of their Results

The HERAS project conducted an internal workshop with senior management of the UP, including members of the Central Commission for Quality Assurance, on the follow-up procedures for course evaluation. The activity was developed in accordance with the needs and demands of the UP in the field of quality assurance and how the UP could benefit more from its students/course evaluation. During this event, it was agreed that the project supports the UP with a guideline on conducting the students/course evaluation. As a follow-up to the internal workshop, the team of experts drafted the guideline, whereas the finalization of the document was done in a workshop with the members of the central commission for quality assurance and vice-deans of the UP Faculties.



Workshop “Developing Innovative Student-Centered Learning Methods at Public Universities in Kosovo with the Design Thinking Methodology”

HERAS invited Wonderwerk Consulting from Vienna, who are experts in design thinking (for more information visit: www.wonderwerk.at/en/) to conduct a workshop on understanding students’ needs through the design thinking method. The design thinking is a human-centered approach that aims to integrate the needs of people in the innovation process. The workshop was aimed at academic staff of public universities. The public universities in Kosovo aim to position themselves as modern higher education institutions, providing their students not only with state-of-the-art knowledge, but also with didactics. For this reason, professors and assistants from the public universities in Kosovo were brought together to experience a set of measures/methodologies in order to make higher education in Kosovo more student-centered. During this workshop, participants got to know the design thinking approach and several design thinking tools which can be helpful for teaching staff in creating and successfully applying student-oriented learning methods.

During the workshop the participants interviewed students, translated their views and needs into ideas, prototyped and tested the ideas.

One participant mentioned: „Now I will not only try to observe the needs of the students as I did before, but I can apply a structure and tools in my observation “



Workshop “Advanced Curriculum Development”

HERAS experts carried out a workshop at the University of Applied Sciences in Ferizaj on the topic of “Advanced Curriculum Development”. The workshop covered input and discussion around the development of curricula that match the needs of students and the labor market. The university cooperates with businesses in the region to ensure that graduates are fit for future jobs. The workshop was enriched by the experience and expertise of the participating staff and was rounded up with a tour around the campus.



HERAS supports MEST to develop Regulation of Functionalization of the National Contact Points (NCP) System

On March 13, 2018 HERAS in cooperation with MEST organized a high-level conference on functionalization of the National Contact Persons (NCP) System in Kosovo. The event was opened by Mr. Shyqiri Bytyqi, Minister of Education, Science and Technology and Mr. Gernot Pfandler, Ambassador of Austria in Prishtina.



During the event, the MEST officially launched the new Regulation on Definition and Functionalization of the Kosovo NCPs for the European Union Framework on Research and Innovation – Horizon 2020, which was developed with the expert advice of the HERAS project.

Mr. Bytyqi welcomed the support of the Austrian Government and stated that without the Austrian support and cooperation, the higher education reforms in Kosovo would not be happening as they should. Minister Bytyqi highlighted the MEST priorities and commitment in research and innovation and the need to increase Kosovo participation in the research projects. Minister Bytyqi particularly thanked the HERAS project for the continuous support of Kosovo's engagement to show stronger performance in international research collaboration and to further the integration into the European Research Area

(ERA). To this end, the Minister stated that there was no doubt that the new regulation would only contribute towards achieving the above.

Ambassador Pfandler stated that through the HERAS project the Austrian Government was happy to build capacities of Kosovo



with regard to the possibility of getting projects funded by Horizon 2020. The Ambassador mentioned that Horizon 2020 was the largest research program in Europe which had been allocated around EUR 80 billion for the program duration of seven years (2014-2020). He added that this was a great chance for Kosovo research organizations to compete and increase the absorption capacities, Kosovo wide. Noteworthy, the Ambassador also repeated that Kosovo had taken good steps to develop a special regulation on National Contact Points (NCP) system which outlined the efforts of the research organizations, higher education institutions, think-tanks as well as other related institutions. All of this, was expected to improve the coordination between the NCP and the MEST in the given matter.

The event proceeded with the presentations of the other panelists, discussions and exchange of views among the audience which mainly consisted of Rectors, Vice Rectors, current NCP, researchers, think tank representatives and other related stakeholders.



HERAS continues its Support to Strengthening National Contact Points (NCP) System in Kosovo

HERAS in cooperation with MEST organized a workshop for Kosovo Horizon 2020 National Contact Points (NCPs), to discuss the role and tasks of the NCPs according to the NCP regulation of Kosovo as well as structure, funding instruments, the rules for participation in H2020 and the main features of a successful H2020 proposal.

In order to increase information and awareness among Kosovo public and private institutions on H2020, HERAS and Kosovo NCPs drafted a biannual plan of NCPs activities.



Workshop “Development on Research”

HERAS conducted a two-day workshop on research development matters for the officials and academic staff of the University of Prishtina (UP). The training was tailored to the needs of the participants and included modules that were related to Horizon 2020, national/bilateral/foreign donors, and development assistance/ EU programs (e.g. H2020, IPA etc.).



Presentation of Concept Paper for Profiling of Public Universities in Kosovo

HERAS organized an event to present the concept paper for profiling of Public Higher Education Institutions. The document has been prepared by the HERAS team of experts in close cooperation with the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) and the universities. During the presentation the findings and recommendations on how to proceed with profiling in line with KESP were presented.



During the event representatives of MEST, officials of Higher Education Institutions (HEI), international representatives, members of Civil Society Organizations as well as other esteemed colleagues and participants were present. The HERAS project, in cooperation with MEST and the universities, will follow up with concrete activities in order to support MEST and the universities in the process of profiling.

Information Session on HERAS Project Call and Scholarships

In order to provide more in-depth information about the HERAS project calls such as the Programmatic Partnership (PP), collaborative research projects, and scholarships, the HERAS team organized information sessions at all Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) regarding criteria, evaluation processes and other content aspects. The interest from the universities, management, academic staff and students was very high, there were also sessions on questions and answers where they could get more information on project calls.



*Information session at
University of Prishtina*



*Information session at University of
Applied Sciences in Ferizaj*



*Information session at
University of Gjakova*



*Information session at
University of Gjilan*



*Information session at
University of Mitrovica*



*Information session at
University of Peja*

Programmatic Partnership (PP) between Kosovar and Austrian HEIs

The PP projects aim at strengthening the capacities of the partner institutions in higher education, research and management and at fostering sustainable cooperation between the Kosovar and Austrian academic institutions. In this regard, all Kosovar public universities were invited to address Austrian Higher Education Institutions to jointly apply for a Programmatic Partnership. In total, HERAS funded five PP.

PP “Environmental Health Studies”

The PP “Environmental Health Studies”, a partnership between the University of Prishtina and the University of Salzburg, was launched on February 13, 2018. The project addresses the need for teaching and research infrastructure and the promotion of research-guided teaching at the environmental study programs at the Department of Biology, University of Prishtina.

Prof. Dr. Avdulla Alija and Prof. Dr. Peter Eckl, project coordinators, highlighted at the launch of the project that “with the support of the HERAS project we are able to further strengthen the existing partnership between the University of Salzburg and the University of Prishtina, and to continue supporting the University of Prishtina in capacity building for the analysis of environmental and associated human



The objectives of the project were presented by the project team followed by discussions on environmental and associated human health risk. The main conclusions that derived from the meeting were the need to intensify cooperation and communication with Kosovo authorities in order to use the data from the project, as well as the need to harmonize the study programs on environmental issues at the University of Prishtina.

PP “Treatment of Paediatric Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia with a Modified Resource-Conserved BFM Protocol in Kosovo”

The advanced PP “Treatment of Paediatric Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia with a Modified Resource-Conserved BFM Protocol in Kosovo”, a partnership between the Medical Faculty of the University of Prishtina and the Medical University of Graz, was launched on February 20, 2018. “During this advanced PP we intend to further advance the treatment of children, suffering from acute lymphoblastic leukemia, to complete the analysis of the data from the HIGHERKOS PP project, and to teach two doctors and the local laboratory technician from Prishtina Oncology Unit to perform the flow cytometry investigation themselves, so that they can independently diagnose leukemia. In summary, all these efforts will provide a substantial improvement of collaboration and experience of all partners and improve the treatment options for children in Kosova” highlighted Dr. Bardhyl Abrashi during the kick-off meeting and thanked HERAS project for the support.



PP “Industrial Collaboration in Product Design Education”

The advanced PP “Industrial Collaboration in Product Design Education”, a partnership between the University of Applied Sciences in Ferizaj (UASF) and the Salzburg University of Applied Sciences (SUAS), was launched from February 28 – March 2, 2018 in Salzburg, Austria. The project focuses on the continuous development of academic and scientific capabilities of the students and prepares them for the labor market in Ferizaj and the region, taking into account the experiences from Salzburg. In addition, during the kick-off meeting the representatives of both universities signed a Memorandum of Understanding that aims at supporting smooth and successful implementation of the project activities.



Both universities mentioned the continuous Austrian support that made the advanced PP and the previous partnership possible, as well as the excellent cooperation that continued through the years to further strengthen applied study program approaches based on the model of the Salzburg University of Applied Sciences (SUAS).

PP “Capacity Building in International Relations and Project Writing”

The PP “Capacity Building in International Relations and Project Writing”; a partnership between the Salzburg University of Applied Sciences (SUAS) from Austria, and the University of Gjilan “Kadri Zeka” as the coordinator of the project, the University of Applied Sciences in Ferizaj, the University of Prizren “Ukshin Hoti”, the University of Gjakova “Fehmi Agani, the University of Peja “Haxhi Zeka, and the University of Mitrovica “Isa Boletini”, was launched from March 27 – 28, 2018 in Gjilan and Prizren. The Rectors of the above mentioned public universities were present and presented the main developments at their respective universities as well as the priority needs in the development of internationalization, partner institutions, mobilities and projects.



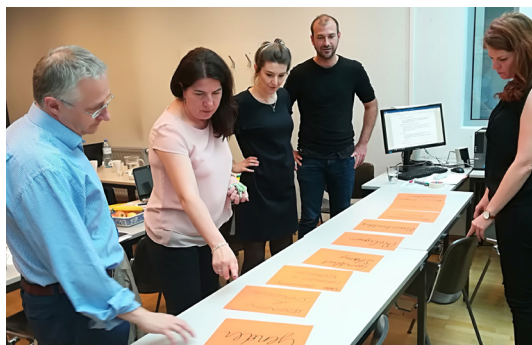
The partners agreed to work in the area of internationalization and to share good practices from SUAS in the area of capacity building in international relations and project writing.

The PP “University Education for Intercultural Understanding and Peace-Building”

The PP “University Education for Intercultural Understanding and Peace-Building”, a partnership between the European Training and Research Center for Human Rights and Democracy of the University of Graz (UNI-ETC) and the University of Prishtina was launched from June 27-29, 2018 in Graz, Austria.

The PP aims to integrate intercultural understanding, human rights and peace-building in the mission and strategy of universities in Kosovo. The kick-off meeting at the University of Graz was followed by a two-day intense workshop where experts from the Universities of Graz and Prishtina jointly developed the curriculum for an interdisciplinary university course for intercultural understanding, human rights and peace-building in the specific context of Kosovo, one of the three core activities within the programmatic partnership.

Further planned project activities include a conference on the topic and a publicly accessible collection of human rights literature which will be established at the University of Prishtina.



Scholarships

In order to improve human capacities and well-functioning of Higher Education and Research in Kosovo, the HERAS project offered scholarship funds for PhD and post-doc fellowships.

Students, professionals and post-doc researchers from Kosovo who are staff members at Kosovar public universities were invited to apply for a PhD/Post-doc fellowship for (Austrian) universities. During their studies the scholars will keep close contact to their home institutions. After having finished the PhD studies or the post-doc fellowship, the scholars are obliged to return back to their home institution and to work at least for 5 years for a Kosovar public university.

The HERAS team organized an award ceremony event for the new scholars who benefited from the HERAS scholarship fund. The event marked an official occasion where all candidates who had been granted a scholarship for PhD or PostDoc, received an official 'Letter of Acceptance' by the management authority of the project, together with the representatives of the Austrian Development Agency (ADA), Austrian Agency for International Mobility and Cooperation in Education, Science and Research (OeAD) and WUS Austria. The OeAD's Regional Offices provide ongoing and comprehensive advice for all scholars and organize events and excursions to socialize and link further.



Collaborative Research Projects

In order to increase scientific networking and project cooperation between researchers from public universities and universities of applied sciences in Austria, in Kosovo and the Western Balkan region with special attention to young and early stage researchers, the HERAS project offered funds where all ethnic groups in Kosovo were invited to participate. The activities in the funded projects enabled researchers from Austria, Kosovo and the Western Balkan region to work together on mutually beneficial science-driven projects and empowered especially young researchers in Kosovo to cooperate within international projects.



Social Dimension Small Scheme

In line with the goals of the Social Dimension of Higher Education of the Bologna Process, this grant scheme aims at fostering access, participation and successful completion of higher education for persons from underrepresented/marginalized groups. The call was based on findings from the Focus Group Interviews (FGIs) on the Social Dimension of the Bologna Process which were conducted in Pristina between March 11-13, 2015. The actual call was open from January 31– March 31, 2018. In total, ten projects were accepted for funding. The selected projects are covering thematic areas such as mentoring and career guidance for students from underrepresented groups; outreach to potential students through working with schools; combating existing stereotypes that hamper access to education for all; targeted support and empowerment of female students from minority communities; and fostering access to higher education for persons with disabilities. The projects are being implemented by groups of students, CSOs and public universities in the period from May to December 2018.

During an initial workshop for grantees on June 6, 2018, participants were introduced to the HERAS project, the Social Dimension of the Bologna Process, the reporting requirements and to the other projects receiving funding under this scheme.

Results and good practices from the implementation of these projects will be presented in a public dissemination event in early 2019.



Facts and Figures

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