

NEWSLETTER #1

“DEVELOPING RESEARCH AND INNOVATION CAPACITIES IN ALBANIA AND KOSOVO / DRIVE”

**DRIVE IS AN ERASMUS +
CAPACITY BUILDING IN HIGHER
EDUCATION PROJECT THAT
INTENDS TO:**

- Enhance the teachers' capacities and their methodologies so that they effectively equip the students (graduate level and beyond) with the skills to conduct independent research.
- Enhance the mentors' capacities to effectively guide the students in their research activity.
- Enhance the research capacities of the academic and managerial staff through study visits and tailored trainings.
- Strengthen the managerial capacities for research activities and innovation in institutional level by setting or strengthening dedicated research and innovation support structures (RISS).
- Promote research excellence and innovation by developing a network that eases the interdisciplinarity and cooperation among local and international actors.

PROJECT PARTNERS



UNIVERSITETI
POLIS

Polis University



Polytechnic University of Tirana



European University of Tirana



University of Prishtina "Hasan Prishtina"



University of Gjakova "Fehmi Agani"



Universum College



Hamburg University of Technology

**POLITECNICO
MILANO 1863**

Politecnico di Milan



**AALBORG UNIVERSITY
DENMARK**

Aalborg University

WHAT IS THE AIM OF DRIVE PROJECT?

The general objective of this project is to contribute in the development of the research and innovation capacities of HEIs in Albania and Kosovo by enhancing their institutional capabilities, staff skills and networking.

WHAT DO WE DO?

WP1 – Define project management structures and action plan

In the Kick-off Meeting the consortium will formalize the conditions and the rules behind the cooperation in the partnership agreement which will be discussed and signed by the partners. The Partnership Agreements, as guided by EACEA, are individual contracts with each of the partners with specific tasks, deadlines, responsibilities as described in the respective work packages. The Kick-off Meeting will be held in Albania in the premises of Coordinator (POLIS University) in the second month of the official start of the Project. All partners will attend the Kick-off Meeting with two representatives (preferably a representative of the Management structures and a Coordinator/Contact Points from every institution, partner in this Consortium. Three Structures will be established in the Kick-off Meeting: Steering Committee, Managerial Committee, and Project Quality Committee. WP leaders are U_POLIS & University of Gjakova "Fehmi Agani"

- 1.1. Kick Off meeting;
- 1.2. Establish the project mng structures;
- 1.3. Validate the work plan

WP2 - Develop new teaching and mentoring methodologies that enhance students' research skills

The objective of this Work Package is to strengthen the students' research skills for conducting independent research and for making critical reviews of others' research, in order to contribute creatively in solving problems based on research. New forms of learning in research work will be put into operation. The partnerships require flexible networking and boundary crossing in ever-changing collaborative settings in which

no single actor has a fixed authority. Groups of teachers and specialists work together. So, in this context, working face-to-face is essential and requires mobility. 60 lecturers and mentors from 6 Partner Country Institutions will be trained on new teaching and mentoring methods; 18 new teaching methods (3 new methodologies in each partner country Institution will be developed).

- 2.1. Training workshop on teaching methodologies.
- 2.2. Training workshop on mentoring research students;
- 2.3. Publish guideline for research mentoring.
- 2.4. Validation of new methodologies by students' evaluation

WP3 - Enhance staff capacity for research

In this Work package various approaches to strengthening research capacity will be taken, including improving the capacity of individual researchers through training courses, supporting collaborative partnerships and developing research leadership skills.

The aim of the proposed activities is to enhance the abilities of individuals, and institutions, to undertake and disseminate high quality research efficiently and effectively.

30 researchers from 6 HEIs form Albania and Kosovo, partners in this Consortium, will be trained from highly qualified researchers of EU Institutions, partners in this Consortium. The second training will be dedicated to research management staff, and will be held in Tirana, in the premises of the European University of Tirana.

- 3.1. Training workshop on publishing, IPR, ethics;
- 3.2. Training workshop on research management;
- 3.3. Publish Manuals on project writing and project management;
- 3.4. Promote Gender Equality in Research and Innovation;
- 3.5. Adopt Research Quality Indicators

WP 4 – Develop Institutional Capacities for Research

WP4 aims to address one of the shortcomings identified during the needs analysis on country

and institutional level: the need for coordinating structures that have processes and procedures in place to support research and innovation within each institution.

RISS are planned to function as an inter-departmental and inter-disciplinary entity and as such they seek to bring together people from various disciplines and expertise, facilitating knowledge exchange, new research topics and innovation.

Out of the 6 HEIs from Albania and Kosovo, 2 have already similar units in embryonic stage and the remaining 4 have the objective to have dedicated units that support research and innovation in their Institutional Development Strategy.

However, besides the positive intention, know-how on how to get these structures up and running is required. Therefore, this WP has a twofold objective:

- Formalize RISS (legally within the HEI, as well as develop regulations, action plans for their activity)
- Train RISS staff so they are able to effectively and efficiently manage RISS

There will be 3 trainings (one in each Program Country Institution) with 4 participants from each HEI in the Partner Countries. The trainings will consist in equipping the trainees with the required know-how on RISS operation. The outcome of each training workshop will directly serve the functioning of RISS. Therefore, the overall outcome of this WP will be improved capacities not only for the staff who are going to get direct training, but because of the formalization as an integral part of the HEI structure, they will ultimately result in improved capacities for the entire institution, achieving long-term impact and sustainability of the project results even beyond the lifespan of the project. The presence of RISS will also facilitate the networking process within the Consortium but also with the other actors of the innovation eco-system.

- 4.1. Establish / Strengthen RISS;
- 4.2. Training of RISS staff (3 training workshops);
- 4.3. Develop RISS regulation, job description, strategy and action plans;
- 4.4. Operationalization of RISS;
- 4.5. Equipment Purchase

WP5 – Establish Network of Research Excellence

WP5 aims to initiate a process of intensive collaboration among HEIs of the region in the areas of research and innovation. The project team will play the role of catalysts to facilitate the synergies in research and innovation. WP5 foresees workshops and joint work among consortium members in the region.

The European members develop presentations that illustrate best practices of successful research network development. The team members from partner countries organize two workshops: one in Kosovo and one in Albania and invite academics and faculty from their university and industry experts.

The aim of the first workshop is to define a map of the teaching, research and technology transfer activities of each HEI involved, on the basis of which a roadmap for collaboration areas is defined. The second workshop, starting from the results of the first one, will set the activities to be implemented to achieve the roadmap and the calendar of them.

- 5.1. Establish a roadmap for the network;
- 5.2. Develop a calendar of activities;
- 5.3. Develop local and international linkages through interdisciplinary research groups;
- 5.4. Develop a virtual platform

WP6 - Quality Monitoring and Control

The Project Quality Committee (PQC) - The initial deliverable consists on creating the internal mechanism, the Project Quality Committee (PQC), which is entitled to adopt and monitor the quality action plan and define the performance indicators upon which the quality of the project will be assessed. The representatives of all partner HEIs and stakeholders will contribute by filling out the questionnaires and other online tools used to collect and generate data regarding the project performance.

Responsibilities of the PQC include the adoption and implementation of the Quality Action Plan for the cycle of the project. More specifically, PQC will conduct the following activities :

- Monitor the implementation of the Quality Action Plan and inform the WP lead on

warning signs, deviations and provide recommendations for improving the implementation ;

- Assist in the designing of the questionnaires and online surveys that will be delivered to the partner HEIs and stakeholders in order to collect both qualitative and quantitative data. After each major activity or event, task leaders will gather feedback on the process of the implementation and assess the impact;
- Monitor and evaluate the quality of the deliverables according to the indicators specified on the Logical Framework of the project;
- Provide guidelines and recommendations for the improvement of the quality of the deliverables;
- Plan and apply the necessary corrective actions if any deviation on project outcomes has been identified.

- 6.1. Develop a quality action plan;
- 6.2. Subcontract an external expert;
- 6.3. Mid-term monitoring reports and recommendations;
- 6.4. Final quality report

WP7 - Dissemination and Exploitation

Based on the Dissemination Strategy the project will develop the following activities:

Dissemination activities:

Project visual identity materials like flyers, posters, roll-ups, brochures, promotional video, interactive and user-friendly website, modular learning and information materials will be developed. The materials will be tailored to the context and the preferences of the target groups, also materials like postcards or film clips will be used to attract young learners.

Newsletters will be published every six months announcing and reporting about relevant achievements and events.

Tailor-made publications will inform and attract different target and user groups, e.g. students, enterprises, HR-experts, researchers, networks and administrations.

A project website shall be dedicated to the project results, with a special corner using interactive features such as “forum”, “contact your peer”

section. Such website goes in line with the main focus of DRIVE, to create an innovation and research network in the Western Balkans. The website will also contain a subscribe section where new researchers express their interest in being part on virtual forums and potential meetings.

- 7.1. Dissemination Strategy;
- 7.2. Dissemination Products;
- 7.3. National info days;
- 7.4. Final Project conference;
- 7.5. Dissemination report (interim and final)

PROJECT ACTIVITIES



1. REGIONAL MEETING “IMPACT IN THE WESTERN BALKANS OF THE HIGHER EDUCATION CAPACITY BUILDING PROJECTS”

Although the DRIVE project started implementation in January 2020, during October 2019 it was possible to present a series of activities organized by the European Union in Tirana. On October 22-23, 2019, the Regional Meeting “Impact in the Western Balkans of the Higher Education Capacity Building Projects” took place in Durrës, with over 100 participants, actors of the “Increasing Capacities in HEI” projects, representatives of the European Union in Tirana and representatives of the Erasmus + Offices. Meanwhile, on October 24-25, in Tirana, “Erasmus + Seminar Contact” took place with the Western Balkans, in order to expand and network between higher education institutions of EU countries and the region. POLIS staff engaged with DRIVE project participated in these two meetings.



2. DRIVE SUCCESS STORY

In the premises of Europe House Tirana, a National Erasmus + Information Day was held on December 17, 2019. During this Info Day a CBHE Session was dedicated to KA2 Projects, and DRIVE project was presented as a success story. Mrs. Flora Krasniqi, Project Manager of DRIVE, introduced the audience to the purpose and objectives of DRIVE as well as the main activities foreseen to be conducted during its implementation. There were included several presentations from the Erasmus + National Office as well as from Beneficiaries of Capacity Building programs as success stories. Eng. Flora Krasniqi presented the Drive Project.



3. CBHE GRANT HOLDER MEETING 2020

CBHE Grant Holder Meeting was organized for the beneficiaries of the Erasmus + CBHE 2019 Call, on 27-28 January 2020, where DRIVE project was one of them. During this meeting, representatives from higher education institutions from Europe, and not only, were introduced by the EACEA agency on

management, budget and innovation guidelines. The bilateral meetings that followed brought EACEA closer to the winning IAL representatives.



4. MEETING BETWEEN EACEA AND ALBANIAN COORDINATORS

On October 24, 2019, the 2019 Call, granted Albanian Coordinators at the "Capacity Building" program, met with the representatives of EACEA, Anila TROSHANI and Inmaculada RODRIGUEZ. The meeting served as a fruitful training for the Coordinators and the sharing of experiences between the coordinators with more experience was very important element. The project team from U-Polis, Lead Partner, met and discussed about the implementation of the DRIVE project.



5. KICKOFF MEETING

Kick of Meeting for Erasmus+ funded project leaded by an Albanian Higher Education Institution, POLIS University was held on February 20-21, 2020. The project "Developing Research and Innovation

CapacitiEs in Albania and Kosovo/ DRIVE" brings together 9 partners from Albania, Kosovo and EU countries, in an effort to improve capacities for research and innovation. The meeting focuses on the definition of the main project activities and planning of their achievement. The members of the project are introduced to each other and responsibilities of each partner with regard to planned activities are discussed. This meeting was led and hosted by the project coordinator, U-Polis.



6. MANAGERIAL PARTNER MEETING

Drive project continue their work in planning future steps and activities! Drive Partners had an online management meeting on 31 of March 2020 discussing project implementation state of arts and coordinate on the ways to address the impact of the current situation on the progress of the activities.



7. ERASMUS DAYS 2020

In the framework of #Erasmusdays2020 #DRIVE team presented the project in a series of

activities organized in these 3 days, sharing the project to different audiences and stakeholders. Kickoff event of Erasmus Days 2020 organized by the European University of Tirana in cooperation with project partners, stakeholders and relevant national and International institutions. The impact added values and connection to labour market is stressed during this event. Teaching Methodologies are important in enhancing institutional capacities, staff skills and also networking, developed by EU partners and implemented in all WBC Universities.



8. TRAINING WORKSHOP

The DRIVE project training was held at University of Gjakova "Fehmi Agani" in Gjakova, Kosovo on 22-24 September 2020. Four participants from each partner country of the project participated in the training. The "Training Workshop on Teaching Methodologies" consists in enhancing institutional capacities, staff skills and also networking. Best practices examples on teaching methodology at the EU universities. Learning and teaching methodology presented from AAU Engineers – Aalborg University, Politecnico di Milano and Hamburg University of Technology. Drive partners held discussions and presentations during the workshop about teaching methodologies applied in the current study programmes and how can the PBL (Problem Based Learning) approach be applied in the courses structure. Aalborg University introduced the Problem based learning (PBL) as a main concept of learning and

teaching methodology. POLIMI University in Milano presented Learning by doing a methodology and teamwork: Presentation of the learning concept using the example of the study programme for Bachelor students. All participants were divided into work groups. The teamwork and theory-practice combination led to fantastic project development.



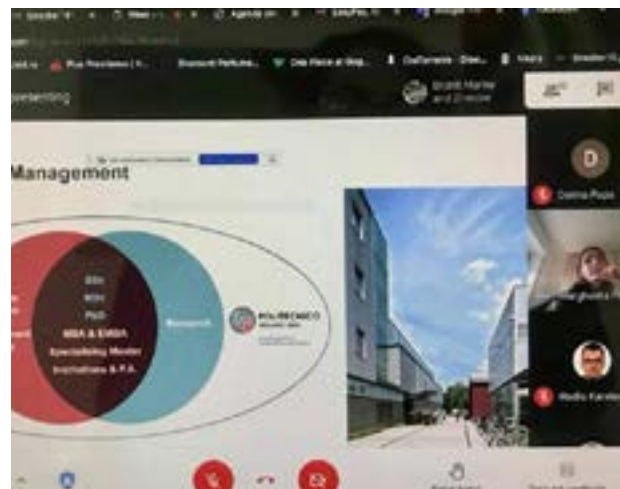
9. PREVENTIVE MONITORING VISIT BY THE ERASMUS + OFFICE FOR THE DRIVE PROJECT IN UNIVERSITY OF PRISHTINA "HASAN PRISHTINA"

In the framework of monitoring projects funded by the European Commission, through the Erasmus + program, today it was the turn of the DRIVE project, whose coordinator from the University of Prishtina "Hasan Prishtina", is Prof. Assoc. Dr. Mimoza Ibrani. Professor Ibrani informed the representatives of the Erasmus office about the developments around the project, the challenges posed by the Covid19 pandemic in the development of activities and plans for the implementation of the activities envisaged by the project. To see closely the progress of the project and provide support, to ensure that the implementation of the project is as successful as possible, part of the meeting was also the Vice Rector for International Cooperation, Prof. Assoc. Dr. Albulena Blakaj-Gashi and the Dean of the Faculty of Electrical and Computer Engineering, Prof. Assoc. Dr. Isak Shabani.



10. VIRTUAL CONFERENCE OF PROJECT COORDINATORS IN ERASMUS+ PROJECTS

On 03.12.2020, the University of Gjakova "Fehmi Agani" participated in the virtual conference organized by the ERASMUS + Office in Kosovo. The purpose of this meeting was to discuss the benefits of the projects, where the main objective is to build the capacity of higher education. In the introductory speech Mrs. Lushaku, Head of the Erasmus + Office in Kosovo stressed that their main strategic objective is to improve and further develop the Erasmus + program in Kosovo through the activation of the Kosovo Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to take an active role in various Erasmus operations. +. In this meeting were presented the CBHE projects (2015-2019) where their impact was discussed at the institutional, national and regional level. The result of this conference was the formulation of a set of recommendations for better implementation of CBHE projects, which will guide the current and new generation.



11. Training workshop on mentoring research students

Three days workshop was held online with all DRIVE project partners on 7-14-15 December 2020. The purpose of the workshop was to identify competence gaps needed for the mentoring of Masters and PhD students and to facilitate the mentoring and knowledge transfer processes by presenting and discussing the real-life mentoring case studies of EU partner universities. The workshop was coordinated by U-Polis. The training starts with a gap analysis (Workshop 1) to identify the current mentoring practices at the partner universities and their deficiencies (competences, resources, etc.). On the second and third day, the case studies at POLIMI and AAU was presented and the possible adaptation of the mentoring practices offered by the partner universities has been identified

Contact:

Eng. FLORA KRASNIQI

International School of Architecture and Urban Development Policies
Polis University

Rr. Bylis 12, Autostrada Tiranë-Durrës, Km 5, Kashar

Kodi Postar 1051, Kutia Postare 2995, Tirana, Albania.

Phone: + 355 (0) 4 240 74 20 / 240 74 21; Fax: + 355(0) 4 240 74 22

Mobile: + 355 69 8418177

email: flora_krasniqi@universitetipolis.edu.al



Follow us on:

Website: <https://driveproject-eu.com>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/DRIVE>



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

