



EPOKA UNIVERSITY

**Suggestions and Comments on Action Plan 2016 - 2020
"Support for the Development of Innovation Policies
Based on the Triple Helix Approach"**

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1. Epoka in Brief

Epoka University is an International University in the Balkan Region with the following specifications:

- Epoka University is an **international higher education institution**.
- In 2011, Epoka University was granted institutional accreditation by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Albania.
- All institutional strategies of Epoka University are build on the “**Education, Research and Contribution to Society**” triangle.
- Epoka University comprises two faculties:
 - The Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences composed of the Department of Economics, Banking and Finance, Business Administration and Political Science and International Relations
 - The Faculty of Architecture and Engineering, comprising the Department of Architecture, Civil Engineering and Computer Engineering.
- Epoka University offers education in **three study cycles** with
 - 10 Bachelor
 - 8 Master of Sciences, 9 Professional Master, 1 integrated second cycle
 - 6 PhD study programs
- The language of all study programs is in **English**
- Epoka University possesses a highly qualified **full time academic staff, 36 % of whom are foreign**.
- Almost **10 % of the student community comes from foreign countries**, mainly from the region.
- “**Internationalization**” represents the strategic objectives of Epoka University.
 - On July 20, 2016, the launching event of the **Performing and Responsive Social Sciences (PERFORM)** project was held at the premises of Tirana Times Library. The PERFORM project focuses on strengthening the relevance of social sciences for socio-economic and political reform process in Albania and the Western Balkans. The project places a particular emphasis on advancing evidence-based decision-making processes concerning public policies which is seen as a crucial element for the development of Albania. Epoka University is involved as a beneficiary institution this project together with other public and private higher education institutions in the country. PERFORM is a project of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation implemented by HELVETAS Swiss Intercooperation and the University of Fribourg. Through a systemic approach, the PERFORM project aims at strengthening the social sciences community, creating systemic linkages to political reform processes, civil society organisations,

private sector and the media as well as creating favourable framework conditions and financial mechanisms. In this context, the Rector of Epoka University, Prof. Dr. Güngör Turan, participated in the first meeting of the Steering Committee of PERFORM project. The main schedule of activities and related actions to be carried out in the framework of the project during the forthcoming months were discussed and approved at this meeting.

- As of December 2015, Epoka University is the sole private higher education institution in Albania member of the prestigious **European University Association (EUA)**. With 850 members across 47 countries, EUA is the largest and most comprehensive organization representing universities in Europe, playing a crucial role in the Bologna Process and in influencing EU policies on higher education, research and innovation. <http://iro.epoka.edu.al/home-european-university-association-1141-1636.html>
- Epoka University is the member of **The Magna Charta Observatory** as of 2013. The Magna Charta Observatory of Fundamental University Values and Rights is a non-profit organisation based in Bologna, founded by the University of Bologna and the European University Association (EUA). The Magna Charta Observatory aims to gather information, express opinions and prepare documents relating to the respect for, and protection of, the fundamental university values and rights laid down in the Magna Charta Universitatum signed in Bologna in 1988 by 388 Rectors of worldwide main universities. <http://iro.epoka.edu.al/home-magna-charta-observatory-1141-1143.html>
- Epoka University offer international **double/joint degree programs** with popular universities in Europe.
 - The Epoka University and **EADA Business School** offer in Tirana and Barcelona an **Executive Education** for the Albania, based on the tradition and the internationally certified quality of EADA Business School, accredited by the best international institutions (EQUIS, AMBA, CFA) and recognized and ranked by prestigious international surveys and reports (Financial Times, The Economist).
 - The program covers the needs of current executives working in various areas, leading their teams to identify and face the challenges to be encountered, as well as take advantage of the national, regional and global opportunities. <http://feas.epoka.edu.al/cat-joint-programme-with-eada-barcelona-1557.html>
 - Epoka University has **“Double Degree MA in International Business” offered by the Mainz University of Applied Sciences in Germany** and Epoka University under Erasmus+student mobility. Based on the cooperation agreement between both universities, the selected Master students will be able to spend one

year at HMBS with the goal of completing both the Master degree of the respective Epoka programme and the degree of Master of Arts in International Business (MA.IB) at HMBS. These degrees will be awarded after satisfactory completion of degree requirements in each of the respective institutions. The second year of studies in Germany for the selected students, will be financed by the Erasmus+ Program. The accepted student/students will be granted 800 Euros/month and travel expenses to the host country in the amount 275 Euros. <http://feas.epoka.edu.al/news-double-degree-at-mainz-germany-financed-by-the-erasmus-program-2917.html>

- **Research and Projects Office**, an important support in research and projects.
 - Epoka University was part of the **TEMPUS project "Innovation and practice of the curriculum in professional studies in the field of digital television and multimedia"** (Project number: 517022-TEMPUS-1-2011-1-RS-TEMPUS-JPCR), funded by the TEMPUS program of the European Union (EU). The grand holder of this project was the School of Electrical Engineering and Applied Studies Computer Science (VISER) in Belgrade, which coordinates the consortium consisting of seven universities and partner institutions from the EU, the region and the country. The specific objectives of the project was the development of innovative curricula professional studies (VOCs) in the field of Multimedia and Digital TV (M&DTV) and design curricula for specialized professional studies (SPS) in the field of M & DTV. Implementation of project activities lasted three years, October 2011 to October 2014 and successfully the project finished on December 2014. <http://projects.epoka.edu.al/home-tempus-1536-1538.html>
 - Epoka University is a full partner in the Erasmus+ Project "**Strategic support on strengthening the quality assurance structures at the private higher education institutions in Albania**" project no. **561510-EPP-1-2015-1-AT-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP (QAinAL)**, under the call KA2-Capacity for innovation and the exchange of good practices – Capacity Building in the Field of Higher Education (Call for proposal EAC/A04/2014), granted by European Commission. **The project has officially started on October 15, 2015 and ends on October 14, 2018.** <http://projects.epoka.edu.al/home-ongoing-erasmus-projects-1536-1578.html>
 - The project titled "**Knowledge FOr Resilient soCiety / K-FORCE**" submitted to the Erasmus+ Program for the action **Capacity-Building in Higher Education (CBHE)** has been selected for the EU co-funding. Out of 736 applications submitted, 653 have been considered eligible, and 147 have been selected for funding.

University of Novi Sad, Serbia is the applicant organization. Epoka UNIVERSITY is partner of the co-funded project together with 14 other institutional partners from Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania, Denmark, Sweden, Slovakia and Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The overall broader objective to which K-FORCE project will contribute is to build a sustainable educational foundation in Disaster Risk Management & Fire Safety Engineering field and ensure national professional resources and regional capacity for resilient society. In the three years of K-FORCE project period, four curricula will be modernized or developed and implemented (in EN, SR, AL, BH).
<http://projects.epoka.edu.al/home-ongoing-erasmus-projects-1536-1578.html>

- Epoka University offers ***Digital Library*** with regard to all the program studies offered.
- Epoka University bolsters an excellent ***employability rate*** of its graduates, standing at 91%.

2. Profiles of Priority Actions on Action Plan 2016-2020

Priority Action 1.1: Establishing a National Innovation Council incl. Technical Secretariat

Suggestion and Contribution: Very important and vital for the establishment of innovation pillars in Albania. And, Epoka University would like to be member of National Innovation Council if possible as of representative of private universities in Albania with available infrastructure and international experienced academic staff.

Priority Action 1.2: Drafting and Implementing a Capacity Development Strategy for Central Agencies Providing Innovation Support Services

Suggestion and Contribution: There must be at the same time a “Drafting and Implementing a Capacity Development Strategy” for Academia. The Ministry of Education and Sport should enforce the universities/ research institutions to set up a minimum required of their budget/ human capital/ investments, in terms of percentage, just for research and development which includes innovation. Drafting of this strategy will help the universities/ research institutions to concretize their thesis topics/ researches by increasing their applicability in the real market. And, Epoka University would like to participate and take a part at every steps of this action.

Priority Action 1.3: Developing a Virtual Innovation Support Network / Mapping of Innovation Support

Suggestion and Contribution: The online portal should include also a session in which both, the students/ researches/ individuals and companies/ institutions/ NGOs can directly post their innovative ideas, projects, needs and partner request as supportive body. This session will make more evident the innovation demand and supply. In additional, it will help this kind of virtual network to be more vital and touchable. And, Epoka University IT team is ready to support this action if possible.

Priority Action 1.4: Continuation of the Triple Helix Competitions

Suggestion: Good incentive, however the organisers of the competition should find the way to increase the awareness of the students/universities regarding the importance of this competition.

Priority Action 2.1: Introducing a Financial Support Scheme for Industrial PhDs and Talented Graduates in Innovation Projects

Suggestion: The financial support scheme is a crucial step to be taken for the establishment of triple helix model. Indeed, the parties should clearly set up a regulation which follows the full process, from the beginning till the finalization

of the project, including the budget, the submission timelines, the quality of the delivered product, etc.

Priority Action 2.2: Promoting Opportunities for Business-Academia Collaboration

Suggestion and Contribution: The government should support the academia in their incentives of organising conferences/ symposiums / discussion panels covering special emphasizes to the businesses, manufacture, industry, etc. (Example: Epoka University intends to held the symposium **“Promoting Manufacturing Industry in Albania”** which intends to bring together representatives from government, chamber of commences, business owners, academicians and representatives from region that are part of manufacturing industry. The organising team has faced difficulties in finding panellists of the field, businesses which can sponsor this kind of activity that is in their own interest and so on...)

Priority Action 3.1: Providing Upgrading Support for Incubator/Accelerator Programmes

Comment and Suggestion: Very important action, and Epoka University would like to give support/contribution to this action.

Priority Action 3.2: Assessment of the Cluster Potential and Concept for Introducing a Cluster-Oriented Approach in Albania

Comment: In the Albanian market there exist some kinds of “teams” and “businesses cooperating together”, in the real market or in the virtual world of internet. Indeed, the Albanian market faces difficulty in identifying a real cluster. The identification of the obstacles in the (emerging) clusters and their orientation will be one of the real challenges of this action plan.

Priority Action 4.1: Setting up a Business Angel Network

Comment: No comment

Priority Action 4.2: Implementation of an Effective Innovation Voucher Scheme

Comment: No comment

Priority Action 4.3: Conducting a Feasibility Study for the Extension of Funding Schemes to Stimulate Innovation and Review of the Relevant Legal Framework

Comment: The team conducting the related study and the review should include all the parties, business-academia-government.

Priority Action 4.4: Assessing the Potential of Fiscal Incentives to Stimulate Innovation

Comment: Highly indispensable step to be taken into consideration.