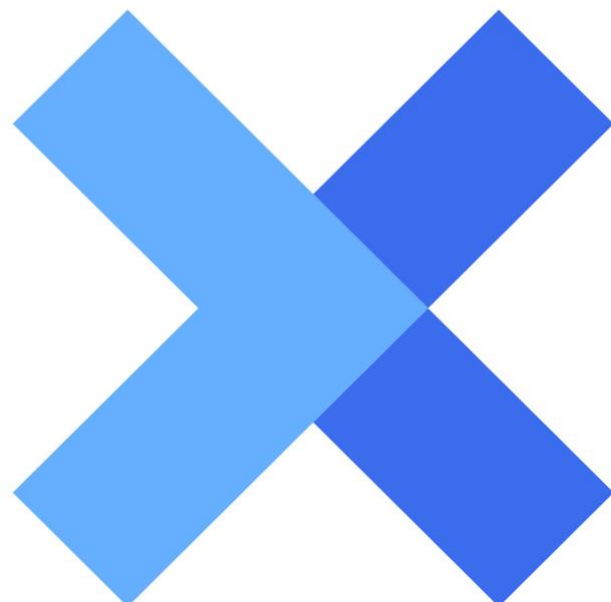


# A needs assessment report on Virtual Collaborative Teaching and Learning in Albania



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More information on the VALEU-X Project can be found at: [www.valeu-x.eu](http://www.valeu-x.eu)





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# Acronyms

|         |   |
|---------|---|
| EACEA   | Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency               |
| EADTU   | European Association of Distance Teaching Universities            |
| EC      | European Commission   |
| ECTS    | European Credit Transfer System                                   |
| EHEA    | European Higher Education Area                                    |
| EU      | European Union  |
| EUA     | European Universities Association                                 |
| ICT     | Information and communications technology                         |
| JOVITAL | 'Jordan Opportunity for Innovative Teaching and Learning' Project |
| LMS     | Learning Management Systems                                       |
| MOOC    | Massive Online Open Courses                                       |
| OIL     | Online International Learning                                     |
| PLE     | personal learning environments                                    |
| QA      | quality assurance   |
| VALEU-X | 'Virtual Albanian European Universities Exchange' Project         |
| HEIs    | higher education institutions                                     |
| VCL     | Virtual Collaborative Learning                                    |
| VM      | Virtual mobility  |



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Overview

VALEU-X project is a CBHE initiative co-funded by the European Union. This project addresses the limited exposure of Albanian university students and academics to international experience in virtual collaborative learning. It proposes blending on-campus teaching activities with international Virtual Collaborative Learning components as a VM element to introduce international perspectives in formal study programs within a holistic approach of Internationalization at Home. VALEU-X offers HEIs in the partner country Albania a chance to explore, implement, and disseminate Internationalisation at Home practices to increase their students' and staff exposure to a European and international academic, economic, and societal context. A comprehensive capacity building programme will be developed and implemented to facilitate intensive know-how transfer between the consortium members to address the problems of limited physical academic mobility, limited international perspective in university teaching modules, the gap between learning outcomes and job market needs, and ineffective use of ICT in formal higher education in Albanian HEIs.

## VALEU-X Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of VALEU-X are defined as follows:

- Qualification of academic staff at Albanian HEIs on modern pedagogical and didactical methodologies for innovative virtual teaching and learning settings.
- Support Albanian HEIs in adopting and implementing effective ICT-based internationalisation at-home activities and integrate Albanian HEIs in a global network for virtual mobility.
- Qualification of the administrative staff at Albanian HEIs on adopting and recognising Virtual/Blended Mobility as part of their institutional internationalisation strategy.

## Needs Analysis

Work Package One of the VALEU-X project, led by the European University of Tirana, is focused on gathering detail on existing provision and subsequent action plan and project needs. It lays the scientific foundation for effective and innovative intervention complying with international best practices in virtual innovative teaching and learning using state of the art ICT-based environments and tools. This work package includes the following tasks:

1. Setting up and moderating an experts' forum on innovative virtual teaching and learning.
2. Conducting desk research on Virtual Mobility and international exchange.
3. Scheduling and conducting interviews with Albanian practitioners and experts.
4. Benchmarking Albanian case against the international state of the art.
5. Conducting empirical research studies on the potential and impact of the proposed intervention.





## Data collection and quality assurance mechanism

This needs assessment report is based on the finding from different resources and used tools, specifically: desk research, baseline reports and online survey run at Albanian partner institutions. Data collection as well as the processing and reporting procedure, were run coordinated by the Albanian partner institutions and the work was by the European University of Tirana. Additionally, EU partners have been actively involved in the implementation of these tasks and have provided with extensive support in improving the quality of the work package deliverables. Quality Assurance was provided by the Quality Plan work package leader, the International School for Social and Business Studies, Slovenia.

## Key Conclusions

- 40.81% of the surveyed staff at Albanian partner universities have no experience with international staff mobility.
- 80.9% of the surveyed stated that they are capable of teaching online courses to foreign students and their confidence to design digital activities in foreign languages (92.9%).
- 80.9% of the respondents at Albanian partner universities think that digital resources they have been using are suitable for online teaching in Albania. Additionally, they also think that these resources were enough to deliver online courses (80.6%) and they feel confident using them (85.2%).
- 83.8% of the respondents said that they moved their courses online only after COVID-19 interruption came about, but 64.7% of them were not ready for this transition, at that time.
- The existing literature and statistics in Albanian language for learning and teaching online are quite fragmented and limited.

## Key Recommendations

- International exchange projects must become available to all staff members at Albanian universities and equal participation must be guaranteed by universities themselves.
- More intensive partner acquisition and MoUs signature are needed so there will be more exchange opportunities for all staff members.
- A more diversified digital learning resources portfolio in Albanian language is needed to improve the quality of online teaching and learning at Albanian universities.
- More capacity building and awareness raising programs are needed to develop skills and competences of the educators and learners in Albania, as well as change their mindset towards online education.
- A recognition system using the ECTS framework must be developed for online courses and classes.
- Virtual exchange, virtual collaborative learning and internationalization at home must become part of the formal curricula for some of the study programs, as an alternative to face-to-face education.
- More technical, didactical and pedagogical support is needed to boost the academic staff and learner's ICT literacy in Albania.



# PËRMBLEDHJE EKZEKUTIVE

## Përmbledhje

Projekti VALEU-X është një iniciativë e CBHE e bashkëfinancuar nga Bashkimi Evropian. Ky projekt adreson ekspozimin e kufizuar të studentëve dhe pedagogëve të universiteteve shqiptare ndaj përvojës ndërkombëtare në mësimdhënien dhe mësimnxënien virtuale. Projekti propozon miksimin e aktiviteteve mësimore që zhvillohen në kampus me komponentët të mësimdhënies virtuale si një element i mobilitetit virtual për të paraqitur perspektivat ndërkombëtare në programet e studimit brenda një qasjeje gjithëpërfshirëse të ndërkombëtarizimit. VALEU-X u ofron IAL-ve në vendin partner, Shqipëri, një shans për të eksploruar, zbatuar dhe shpërndarë praktikatat e ndërkombëtarizimit në mënyrë që të rris ekspozimin e studentëve dhe stafit të tyre në një kontekst akademik, ekonomik dhe shoqëror evropian dhe ndërkombëtar. Një program gjithëpërfshirës për ndërtimin e kapaciteteve do të zhvillohet dhe zbatohet për të lehtësuar transferimin e njohurive midis anëtarëve të konsorciumit dhe për të adresuar problemet e: lëvizshmërisë së kufizuar të akademikeve, perspektivës së kufizuar ndërkombëtare në modulet e mësimdhënies në universitet, hendekun midis arritjeve akademike dhe nevojave të tregut të punës, dhe përdorimi joefektiv të TIK-ut në IAL-të shqiptare.

## Objektivat specifike të projektit VALEU-X

Objektivat specifikë të projektit VALEU-X janë si më poshtë:

- Trajnimi i stafit akademik në IAL-të shqiptare mbi metodologjitë moderne të mësimdhënies, mjediset inovative dhe mësimdhënies virtuale.
- Suportimi i IAL-të shqiptare në adoptimin dhe zbatimin e aktiviteteve mbi ndërkombëtarizimin efektiv të bazuar në TIK dhe integrimin e IAL-ve shqiptare në një rrjet global për mobilitetin virtual.
- Kualifikimi i stafit administrativ në IAL shqiptare për adoptimin dhe njohjen e Lëvizshmërisë Virtuale / të Përzier si pjesë e strategjisë së tyre institucionale të ndërkombëtarizimit.

## Analiza e nevojave; Paketa e Punës

Një nga projektet e VALEU-X e udhëhequr nga Universiteti Evropian i Tiranës, përqendrohet në mbledhjen e të dhënave mbi të dhënave ekzistuese, planin e veprimit pasues dhe nevojat e projektit. Ai përcakton bazën shkencore për ndërhyrje efektive dhe inovative, në përputhje me praktikatat më të mira ndërkombëtare në mësimdhënien dhe mësimnxënien virtuale, duke përdorur mjediset dhe mjete të bazuara në TIK. Kjo paketë pune përfshin detyrat e mëposhtme:

1. Krijimi dhe moderimi i një forumi ekspertësh për mësimnxëniedhënien dhe mësimnxënien virtuale.
2. Kryerja e hulumtimeve për Lëvizshmërinë Virtuale dhe shkëmbimin ndërkombëtar.
3. Planifikimi dhe realizimi i intervistave me praktikantë dhe ekspertë shqiptarë.
4. Benchmarking, çështja shqiptare kundër shtetit ndërkombëtar të artit.
5. Hartimi i një studimi empirik mbi potencialin dhe ndikimin e ndërhyrjes së propozuar.



## **Mekanizmi i mbledhjes së të dhënave dhe sigurimit të cilësisë**

Raporti i vlerësimit të nevojave bazohet në gjetjet nga burime të ndryshme, konkretisht: hulumtimi (desk reserach), raportet fillestare dhe pyetësorët të zhvilluar online, të realizuar në institucionet partnere shqiptare. Mbledhja e të dhënave si dhe procedura e përpunimit dhe raportimit u koordinua nga institucionet partnere shqiptare dhe puna u realizua nga Universiteti Evropian i Tiranës. Për më tepër, partnerët e BE-së janë përfshirë në mënyrë aktive në zbatimin e këtyre detyrave dhe kanë siguruar mbështetje të gjerë në përmirësimin e cilësisë së paketave të punës. Sigurimi i Cilësisë u siguroa nga drejtuesi i paketës së punës të Planit të Cilësisë, Shkolla Ndërkombëtare për Studime Sociale dhe të Biznesit, Slloveni.

### **Konkluzionet kryesore**

- 40.81% e stafit të anketuar në universitetet partnere shqiptare nuk kanë eksperiencë me mobilitetin ndërkombëtar të stafit
- 80.9% e stafit të anketuar janë të aftë të japin mësimë online dhe besojnë që mund të realizojnë aktivitete të ndryshme online (92.9%).
- 80.9% e të anketuarve mendojnë se burimet dixhitale janë të mjaftueshme për të ofruar kurse online në Shqipëri dhe besojnë se mund ti përdorin këto burime (85.2%).
- 83.8% e të anketuarve pohuan përdormin e mësimdhënies online vetëm gjatë periudhës së COVID-19, por 64.7% e tyre nuk ishin të gatshëm për këtë tranzicion.
- Pengesat kryesore për zhvillimin e mësimdhënies online janë aftësitë dhe kompetencat e stafit akademik.
- Literatura dhe statistikak ekzistuese mbi mësimdhënien online në Shqipëri janë të kufizuara.

### **Rekomandimet kryesore:**

- Projektet e shkëmbimit ndërkombëtar duhet të jenë të disponueshëm për të gjithë anëtarët e stafit në universitetet shqiptare dhe pjesëmarrja e barabartë duhet të garantohet nga vetë universitetet.
- Shtimi i partneriteteve dhe nënshkrimi i memorandumeve, e cila sjell më shumë mundësi shkëmbimi për të gjithë anëtarët e stafit.
- Një portofol më i larmishëm i burimeve të të mësuarit online është i nevojshëm për të përmirësuar cilësinë e mësimdhënies në universitetet shqiptare.
- Nevojiten më shumë programe për ngritjen e kapaciteteve dhe ndërgjegjësimin për të zhvilluar aftësitë e akademikëve dhe studenteve në Shqipëri, si dhe për të ndryshuar perceptimin e tyre mbi mësimdhënien online.
- Ngritja e një sistemi duke përdorur kornizën ECTS mbi mësimdhënien online.
- Përfshirja e mësimdhënies online në kurrikulat e programeve të studimit, si një mësimdhënie alternative.
- Rritja e numrit të programeve trajnuese për të ndihmuar stafin akademik dhe studentët në Shqipëri.



# SECTION 1: Introduction to VALEU-X

## 1.1 Project Overview

Rapid advancements in information and communications technology (ICT) impose a significant change in almost all aspects of our life. Networked technologies offer opportunities to reshape human interaction, and create new possibilities in key sectors including health, business, and education. The VALEU-X project wants to add significant value to the teaching process in Albania by empowering academic staff with contemporary teaching competencies. A comprehensive capacity building Programme will be implemented to facilitate intensive know-how transfer among the consortium members to address the problems of outdated instructor-cantered frontal teaching methods, limited physical academic mobility, and ineffective use of ICT in formal higher education in Albania.

## 1.2 Project relevance, innovative character & target groups

Albania is an important partner country for the European Union in the West Balkans region with a young population and a dynamic economy in a serious need for growth and development. The country is a full member of the Bologna Process / European higher education area since 2003 and made good progress in adopting three academic cycle programmes and the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS). However, despite their intensive efforts, Albanian higher educational institutions still face multiple challenges to effectively implement the desired organisational and academic reform, particularly in terms of students and staff mobility and learning outcomes alignment to job market needs (Sulstarova, 2018).

Limited physical academic mobility is evident in Albanian case, where, from 2004 to 2014, only 132 students in master programs, nine in doctoral studies, and three scholars benefited from the Erasmus Mundus mobility program (EACEA, 2015), which exposes the national need for more exchange with European partners and their support to enhance the current situation. The statistics show that Albania's participation in Erasmus+ projects is somewhat better than Horizon 2020, nevertheless, the focus has been on the curricula and quality improvement, rather than on the development of internationalisation and international mobility. Most of the mobility projects focus on Erasmus+ Key Action 1 (KA 107) and the main factor is the "willingness" of EU counterpart to include the Albanian universities. Thus, the offer from universities to their students is lower than the demand. This makes applying for mobility extremely competitive and extremely limited, instead of giving an opportunity to all Albanian students to have an EU experience. The COVID-19 pandemic outbreak too increased the importance of virtual mobility (VM) as a tool for Albanian staff and students to have a European Union (EU) experience without physical mobility.

These facts emphasise the need for innovative approaches to modernise local teaching and learning practices and introduce new international perspective to the established academic



programmes to increase the exposure of Albanian students and academics to European and international experience at their home universities. VALEU-X addresses this specific need by proposing VM based on technology-supported blended collaborative learning activities as a flexible effective element for Internationalisation at Home.

VALEU-X follows a novel approach to support internationalisation and increase the relevance of academic programmes at Albanian higher education institutions (HEIs) by qualifying academic staff to autonomously design and implement collaborative learning arrangements using modern technologies that connect them with local and international peers in a community of practice for sustainable knowledge exchange and increasing visibility and recognition. The project, thus, targets a simultaneous enhancement in staff competencies, institutional and personnel networking, learning outcomes, and internationalisation of higher education.

The innovative advancement proposed by VALEU-X capacity building programme is characterized in:

- Pedagogical and didactical methodologies: Empowering academic staff to adopt Connectivism and Constructivism to purposefully extend their courses with effective socially situated knowledge construction and participative learning activities.
- ICT-based social learning environments: Introducing Virtual Collaborative Learning (VCL) as a modern Blended Learning arrangement to foster international student groups' interaction and offer an enjoyable learner-centred collaborative experience that matches the skills and expectations of new students' generations.
- Authentic and relevant learning: Favours problem-based learning assignments and group projects based on authentic case studies to develop business-relevant competencies including critical thinking, problem-solving, decision making, and teamwork.
- Virtual international exchange: Implementing ICT-based collaborative learning settings as a VM measure to involve academic staff in common courses with peers abroad and offer local students with an affordable international experience during their regular studies to contribute to internationalisation at Home efforts.

The project addresses the real needs of the three target groups identified in the initial survey with HEIs in the partner country Albania as follows:

- **Academic staff and young researchers:** VALEU-X empowers Albanian academics to develop and implement international components in their teaching practices and integrate them into academic exchange networks with peers in European HEIs through modern interactive technologies. This will increase the relevance of their teaching modules to recent and future job market needs and prepare them for collaborative research and academic activities with partner HEIs in the EU.
- **University students and graduates:** VALEU-X will offer this target group an inclusive, interactive, and flexible international experience through collaborative learning settings with European students and teaching staff in the virtual classroom. This will provide them with a better international understanding and applied knowledge and transferable skills relevant to the modern knowledge economy in Albania and the EU.
- **Administrative staff:** VALEU-X introduces administrative staff and policymakers at Albanian HEIs to new approaches for academic international exchange through



interactive online technologies, particularly Social Media, to increase international visibility, outreach, and harmonisation with European standards. They will be provided with best practices for adoption of Internationalisation at Home elements at the institutional level, facilitation and recognition of Virtual/Blended Mobility modules, and motivation and acknowledgement of academic staff virtual academic exchange activities.

The identified target groups will directly benefit from the following expected results:

- **Academic staff and young researchers:** Capacity building programme on international Virtual Collaborative Learning (VCL) and modern ICT use for international perspective in university teaching.
- **University students and graduates:** Common international Virtual Collaborative Learning (VCL) courses with European partner HEIs, didactical business-related case studies, and students' qualification as e-Tutors.
- **Administrative staff:** Capacity building programme on implementing Virtual/Blended Mobility as an instrument for Internationalisation at Home.

## 1.3 Aims and Objectives

VALEU-X addresses the limited exposure of Albanian university students and academics to international experience in virtual collaborative learning. It proposes blending on-campus teaching activities with international Virtual Collaborative Learning (VCL) components as a VM element to introduce international perspectives in formal study programs within a holistic approach of Internationalization at Home. VALEU-X offers HEIs in the partner country Albania a chance to explore, implement, and disseminate Internationalisation at Home practices to increase their students' and staff exposure to a European and international academic, economic, and societal context. A comprehensive capacity building programme will be developed and implemented to facilitate intensive know-how transfer between the consortium members to address the problems of limited physical academic mobility, limited international perspective in university teaching modules, the gap between learning outcomes and job market needs, and ineffective use of ICT in formal higher education in Albanian HEIs. Project activities are planned based on solid expertise and best practices of European HEIs and intensive with Albanian HEIs to achieve the following concrete aims:

1. Introduce and promote learner-centred teaching and learning methodologies: Social collaborative learning approaches are proposed based on constructivist and connectivism learning methodologies to encourage learners' interaction and active knowledge construction for a long-lasting learning impact (Jonassen, 1996). Well-constructed project-based learning activities will be implemented to facilitate permanent active students' engagement throughout the learning process (Blumenfeld et al., 1991).
2. Modernise teaching practices in Albanian HEIs with innovative technologies: Virtual Collaborative Learning (VCL) arrangements are proposed as an effective mean to improve students' professional competence, team competence, media competence, and intercultural awareness. It demonstrates a considerable potential to modernise formal higher education by integrating students in inclusive blended learning



environments using networked social technologies (Tawileh, Bukvova, & Schoop, 2013).

3. Augment internationalisation at home with VM: Modern ICT-based international academic exchange approaches are proposed to overcome limited physical academic mobility between Albanian and European HEIs and provide Albanian students and academic staff with an international experience at their home university using affordable flexible technologies (Tawileh, 2016). Well-designed VM settings and proven best practices will be adopted to meet partners' needs and priorities (Villar-Onrubia, & Rajpal 2016).

The specific objectives of VALEU-X are defined as follows:

1. Qualification of academic staff at Albanian HEIs on modern pedagogical and didactical methodologies for innovative virtual teaching and learning settings.
2. Support Albanian HEIs in adopting and implementing effective ICT-based internationalisation at-home activities and integrate Albanian HEIs in a global network for VM.
3. Qualification of the administrative staff at Albanian HEIs on adopting and recognising Virtual/Blended Mobility as part of their institutional internationalisation strategy.

## 1.4 Background of partnership: Organisations and activities

There are 9 partners actively engaged in the implementation of the VALEU-X project. This project is a partial replication of a previously implemented CBHE project in Jordan by the three EU partners, namely 'Jordan Opportunity for Innovative Teaching and Learning' (JOVITAL) (586468-EPP-1-2017-1-DE-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP) aimed at modernizing the teaching and learning practices in Jordanian HEIs with students-centred international learning activities following a constructivist active learning approach and utilising modern ICT for the immersive digital learning experience. Based on the success of this project, the three partners reached out to the six VALEU-X consortium members from the EU partner country Albania to identify their institutional needs and strategies for academic Internationalisation and to understand their local academic and national context.

The VALEU-X consortium members are as following:

- Technische Universität Dresden (Germany) (Coordinator)
- International School for Social and Business Studies (Slovenia)
- Mediterranean Universities Union (Italy)
- European University of Tirana (Albania)
- Epoka University (Albania)
- "Fan S. Noli" University (Albania)
- Aleksandër Moisiu Universtiy of Durrës (Albania)
- "Luigj Gurakuqi" University of Shkodra (Albania)
- University of Elbasan "Aleksander Xhuvani" (Albania)



VALEU-X project tasks and activities are organized as following:

- **WP1 - Preparation:** Preparatory research and impact assessment  
(Lead Partner: European University of Tirana)
- **WP2 - Development: Pedagogical and didactical development and training**  
(Lead Partner: Technische Universität Dresden)
- **WP3 - Quality Plan: Quality management and evaluation**  
(Lead Partner: International School for Social and Business Studies)
- **WP4 - Dissemination: Dissemination and exploitation**  
(Lead Partner: Mediterranean Universities Union)
- **WP5 - Management: Management, monitoring, evaluation, and reporting**  
(Lead Partner: Technische Universität Dresden)

## 1.5 Technische Universität Dresden – Lead Partner Profile

The Technische Universität Dresden (TUD) is one of eleven German universities that were identified by the German government as an 'excellent university'. As a synergetic university, TUD closely cooperates with external research institutions, including cultural, industrial, and social organisations. In recognition of TUD's emphasis on applications in both teaching and research, leading companies have honoured the university with fifteen endowed chairs to date. The TUD prides itself on its international flair and has partnerships with more than 70 universities worldwide. TUD's strategic goals can be found in four fields of action: The internationalisation of studying and teaching, the internationalisation of research, establishing general conditions for the internationalisation of teaching and research and improving TUD's position on the international stage.

- The Chair of Wirtschaftsinformatik - Information Management at the Faculty of Business and Economics, is active in teaching, research, and knowledge transfer at the interfaces between economic, organizational, social, information technology and didactic questions. The Faculty's interdisciplinary team has a solid background in business informatics and business education and addresses these topics in applied research and teaching practices with the focus on complex university and enterprise learning environments through suitable technology-enhanced learning arrangements; and,
- knowledge-based teamwork through collaborative digital information systems.

The Chair has a long experience in designing and implementing ICT-based international learner-centred collaborative learning arrangements in formal higher education. Its award-winning Virtual Collaborative Learning (VCL) concept has been continuously developed since





2006 following state of the art technical and didactical arrangements and was successfully implemented in over 60 common virtual collaborative courses with various international partner universities around the world. Building on this experience, Virtual Collaborative Learning (VCL) is the model proposed to introduce new communication and collaboration technologies to Jordanian HEIs to enhance the educational process with problem-based learning assignments in a connectivism learning environment, based on constructivist pedagogical methodology. As the coordinator of VALEU-X, TUD is responsible for the development and implementation of the capacity building programme for Jordanian HEIs, in addition to project management activities.

The Chair of Wirtschaftsinformatik – and team, with its technical and pedagogical competencies, will coordinate the following tasks:

- Introduction of new pedagogical methodologies and teaching and learning tools
- Didactical development of training materials
- Designing and implementing online learning platforms
- Scheduling and delivery of staff and tutor's qualification
- Didactical redesign of exiting university courses
- Coordination and facilitation of Virtual Collaborative Learning courses for Albanian students



# SECTION 2: Digitalization, international virtual teaching, and learning

## 2.1. Introduction

The overall digitalization of modern society has made the knowledge travel by overcoming barriers of geography and time (Odina & Olmo, 2014, p. 299). Most social and economic sectors have been deeply affected by the globalization which is shaping the current state and the future agenda of the world markets. HEIs, as key factors of social development, are striving to meet the needs of this “*knowledge-based society*” (Cacheiro-Gonzalez et al, 2019, p. 72). The Internet and social media can help HEIs communicate more fluidly with their academic counterparts, social stakeholders, and alumni, in order to update their educational approach. E-learning has already become “a highly interactive medium of pedagogy” (Pande, Wadhai & Thakare, 2016, p. 275) whose concerns according to Jaligama & Liarokapis (2011) have become more tangible than they were a couple of years ago. Now their focus has jumped from defining the terminology and the technological approaches of the e-learning (Dublin, 2003; Obliger & Howkins, 2005; Zeitoun, 2008; Alghatani, 2011; Graham, 2013; Odina & Olmo 2014), to the selection of the proper virtual learning environment (Lowel, 2014; Vincent-Lancrin, Fisher & Pfothenauer, 2015; Cacheiro-Gonzalez et al, 2019), the level of assessment realism (Otto, 2018), pedagogical interaction required (Porter et al, 2014) and quality fostering through designing activities and experiences that fit the learning context (Clauss, Altmann & Schoop, 2019).

Therefore, HEIs make a continuous effort to involve as many pedagogical approaches to virtual ICT as they can. Besides, weblogs, social bookmarking, wiki, podcasting, instant messaging, text chat, internet forums, etc. (Pande, Wadhai & Thakare, 2016), online platforms are “a must” in the agenda of the EU, which considers them a means of strengthening cross-border communication<sup>1</sup>. The European Universities Association (EUA) data survey carried out in 2013 stated that 80% of the participating institutions already provide campus licenses for *software, repositories for the course and study material, online course catalogues and social media*. (Gaebel et al, 2014) The EUA also encourages online educational platforms like: Massive Online Open Courses (MOOC) “*a digital courseware, online repositories for educational material, tools and managing system for content development and course management, student portals, email accounts, access to computer rooms, online libraries*” (Gaebel et al, 2014, p. 8).

In the following sections, a short overview of the key terms of e-learning frame and their reflection on the HEIs development strategies is presented. The specific approaches to the pedagogical models will be reviewed on the perspective of teaching and learning benefits, challenges, and quality assurance. Then it will focus on internationalization of higher education

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<sup>1</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/education/education-in-the-eu/digital-education-action-plan\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/education/education-in-the-eu/digital-education-action-plan_en)



institution is a dynamic process which was either related to mobility, such as study abroad, exchanges, international students or academic mobility, or related to curricula, such as multicultural education, international studies, peace education, and area studies.

To conduct the literature review, several keywords and terms related to e-learning were browsed, on online resources like Routledge, ResearchGate, Academia. Beside journal articles and books, the publication of surveys carried out in the frame of e-learning and virtual learning were considered. Websites of European Commission (EC), European Higher Education Area (EHEA), European Universities Association, European Association of Distance Teaching Universities (EADTU) were consulted in terms of development strategies. Reports of previous EU projects on virtual learning like JOVITAL and EVOLVE (Erasmus+ project: 590174-EPP-1-2017-1-NL-EPPKA3-PI-FORWARD) were also consulted.

## 2.2. Key concepts and definitions of online and international virtual learning

The development agenda of European Higher Education Area states that “enhancing the quality and relevance of learning and teaching (...) will encourage and support higher education institutions and staff in promoting pedagogical innovation in student-centred learning environments and in fully exploiting the potential benefits of digital technologies for learning and teaching”.<sup>2</sup> This has already become the development strategy of the participating nations in a larger scale and an action plan for its member institutions (Gaebel et al, 2014). HEIs are in a race to advance online courses resources hoping “to transform people knowledge, skills and performances” (Pande, Wadhai & Thakare, 2016, p. 275). Therefore, either terminology or components of the “e-learning” fluctuate in the literature dedicated to this domain. Even though definitions vary slightly, they all engage in the frame of “*a meaningful strategy for intercultural learning by the movement of educators, students and administrators, as well as training courses, programs and research across national and geographical barriers, (---) in person, in the distance, virtually or through a combination of these, using virtual or distance methodologies*” (Pande, Wadhai & Thakare, 2016, p. 287).

Mainstream definitions denote slight connotations in the functionality of each of the terms used to refer to different delivery modalities:

- “*e-learning*”- “the use of information and communication technologies in diverse processes of education to support and enhance learning in institutions of higher education; includes the usage of information and communication technology as a complement to traditional classrooms, online learning or mixing the two modes” (Pande, Wadhai & Thakare, 2016, p. 275).
- “*online collaborative learning*”/“*distance learning*”/“*virtual mobility*” – “a form of educational delivery in which learning takes place primarily via the internet including services to those who are geographically distant and without access to a traditional classroom education”, including also “distance learning” (Zeitoun, 2008; Jager et al., 2019, p. 8).

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.ehea.info/page-student-centred-learning>



- “*blended learning*”- the use of various technologies and tools to support learning in different contexts, including face-to-face settings and distance learning, separately or in combination” (Sulčić, 2010, p. 188).
- “*virtual exchange*” – “an educational practice based on sustained, technology-enabled communication and interaction between individuals or groups of learners from geographically separated and/or different cultural backgrounds” (Jager et al., 2019: 5).

Odina & Olmo (2014) state that e-learning develops into four main dimensions, depending on the purpose of the learning and the mode of delivery:

- a) The physical/virtual relocation of students, professors, administrators, service staff and researcher to institutions in other countries.
- b) Availability of joint study programs.
- c) Joint collaborative research.
- d) Institutional alliances, or project-based cooperation, coordinated by the institutional network.

While, the most frequently encountered delivery models (Algahtani, 2011) are:

- a) Adjunct e-learning: the situation in which it is employed as an assistant to the traditional classrooms providing relative independence to the learner/student.
- b) Blended e-learning: when the delivery of course materials and explanation is shared between traditional learning methods and the e-learning method in the classroom setting.
- c) Online e-learning is completely electronic so that there is maximal independence of learners/students. It can be “individual learning” or “collaborative learning”, both provided in two forms *synchronous* or *asynchronous* (regardless the learners’ location and time zone), (Zeitoun, 2008; Clauss, Altmann & Schoop, 2019).

Until the early 2000s, education was traditional and took place inside a classroom where students received lessons from a teacher. E-learning paved the way for new development in teaching by enabling the use of various online platforms. International Online Learning is one of the many e-Learning methods that necessarily requires internet access and a digital system where students must have at least access to teaching materials and services. All of this raises the possibility to have more interactivity between teachers and students (Vilhelmson & Thulin, 2008).

E-learning offers the opportunity to exchange materials in all sorts of formats, such as videos, Word, Power Point and PDF documents. Conducting webinars (online classes) and communicating with professors through conversations and message forums is also an opportunity available to users. There are a variety of different e-learning systems (otherwise known as Learning Management Systems - LMS) and methods that you could follow for different courses. With the right tool, various processes can be automated such as a course with defined materials and automatically marked tests. E-learning is an affordable (and often free) solution that provides students with the ability to adapt to learning about their lifestyles, effectively allowing even the busiest person to pursue a career and gain new qualifications (Vilhelmson & Thulin, 2008).

Online International Learning (OIL) is becoming one of the most innovative ways of teaching that facilitate long-distance communication. OIL is one of the forms of pedagogical



collaboration thus increasing VM, collaboration, and student experience. In the context of internationalization, students and teachers are facing different online learning environments. Providing course content on an online platform specifically allows students to access the content of the lesson (Bijnens et al, 2007).

Increasing the usage of ICT in VM will have a big impact as it will affect what is known as home teaching after the use of electronic media such as TV, video, DVD, CD, etc. and social interaction with family and close friends in real life (Vilhelmson & Thulin, 2008).

The use of mobile devices in education brings new opportunities to promote students as content producers as there are many interesting and free applications to produce images, videos and texts, among others. The idea that students should be creative is consistent with studies related to personal learning environments (PLE). The use of mobile devices in education such as smartphones and tablets bring new opportunities to promote students as content producers. There are many interesting and free applications to produce images, videos, and texts, including social program applications, which enable collaboration between students (Patrícia, Bassani & Barbosa, 2018).

OIL is today one of the most comprehensive forms of teaching, where various platforms are used to realize OIL. Moreover, the elements of a lesson can be adjusted and adapted just as they can be realized in "reality". In addition to all these advantages during implementation, must keep in mind that innovation, demand, and quality aspects are crucial in terms of content, sustainability, resources, and cost. (Schoop et al, 2016).

## 2.3. VCL Concept and Practices

The VCL concept transfers learning in international small groups into virtual space. The students work on complex and realistic tasks, which they organize largely on their own within their group. The concept is based on four pivotal elements which are interlinked (Clauss et al. 2019).

- Realistic cases and working tasks
- Technical platform
- Professionalised pedagogical support concepts

### Learning Analytics & information visualisation

The problems solved in this way can lead to a better understanding of learning and the use of case studies. This, has a positive influence on the learning outcome (Kopp et al. 2014). The degree of difficulty is increased by a complex problem that cannot be solved alone and requires the expertise of the various group members (Balázs, 2005). A detailed view of the VCL framework can be found under current examples of work and publications of the DAAD:

Further Information on the VCL can be found on the Website of the DAAD:

Detailed presentation of the VCL framework:

[https://eu.daad.de/medien/eu.daad.de.2016/dokumente/service/veranstaltungen/2019/bologna-und-ehea/schoop\\_clauss\\_safavii\\_a\\_framework\\_to\\_boost\\_ve.pdf](https://eu.daad.de/medien/eu.daad.de.2016/dokumente/service/veranstaltungen/2019/bologna-und-ehea/schoop_clauss_safavii_a_framework_to_boost_ve.pdf)

The publication of the DAAD Article in relation to the before mentioned presentation:



<https://www.daad.de/kataloge/epaper-daadkonferenzband/#0>

VCL Activities - Best Practice Articles:

Kickoff event:

<https://lswiim.wordpress.com/2020/05/05/success-at-the-cvc-2020-kick-off-liveevent-in-ms-teams/>

Half time event:

<https://lswiim.wordpress.com/2020/05/20/half-time-collaboration-in-the-virtual-classroom/>

Final results:

<https://lswiim.wordpress.com/2020/07/06/final-results-collaboration-in-the-virtual-classroom-2020/>

## 2.4. Higher education policy and practice

In the frame of the large defining purposes and delivery modes of virtual learning, mainstream research considers virtual exchange as an educational practice based on sustained technology, which enables the communication between individuals or groups of learners of different geographic and cultural background. It is a type of “online collaborative learning, which can be either in the form of class-to-class exchanges supported by university teachers or in the form of group exchanges facilitated by external exchange providers, is promoted by the EU as a tool for inclusion and to offer more young people an international experience”<sup>3</sup>. It can be included in the curriculum as *embedded mobility within a course, exchange mobility for individual students, networked mobility in networked curricula and courses with mobility windows and integrated mobility in joint curricula*.

EADTU summarizes its benefits as follows:

| Opportunities for learners   | Opportunities for staff  | Opportunities for institutions  |
|--|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Flexibility, accessibility for potentially all students</li> <li>■ Individual portfolio development throughout the study career</li> <li>■ More opportunities for mobility, a new field of study and new ways of</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Enhancement of the quality of a course or curriculum: content, collaborative, active learning</li> <li>■ Connecting educational networking with research networking</li> <li>■ Continuous professional</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Expanding the university’s academic offer in an international context at scale, internationalization of the curriculum, global teaching.</li> <li>■ Innovative pedagogies creating an international experience for students</li> </ul> |

<sup>3</sup> [https://eadtu.eu/documents/European\\_report\\_on\\_Virtual\\_Mobility.pdf](https://eadtu.eu/documents/European_report_on_Virtual_Mobility.pdf)



|  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>learning, virtual internships</li><li>■ Competence building: intercultural competences, linguistic skills, collaborative learning, media and digital literacy skills, open-mindedness, teamwork, critical thinking, networking</li><li>■ Long-term and intermittent mobility</li><li>■ Improving employability</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>development, learning from international colleagues (sharing good practices, new methods...)</li><li>■ Enhancing teaching skills and teaching quality</li><li>■ Career development</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Enhancing the quality of courses and curricula</li><li>■ Networking with other universities in education and research, sharing teaching capacity</li><li>■ Enhancing the attractiveness and competitiveness of the university</li><li>■ New approaches concerning alumni activities, continuous education and lifelong learning</li><li>■ Cost-effective</li></ul> |
|--|--|--|

## 2.5. Intercultural exchange in online learning

VM is a new phenomenon and has been influenced by the development of ICT; however, VM also encourages higher education institutions to further develop their appropriate pedagogical models, to change the content of didactic for courses and didactic learning tools<sup>4</sup>. VM has the advantage of facilitating intercultural experience among students and academic staff, allows discussions to be organized between groups without ethnic and border differences, international seminars, or even the creation of international learning communities. Through VM, academic staff and students gain interpersonal and intercultural skills and could expand their cultural, social, and political boundaries. By enabling the provision of additional courses, VM allows students to further specialize in their fields of study (Ferguson, 2012).

VM allows young people to explore opportunities not only to see the world but also to gain different experiences from different cultures. Young people are always characterized by the desire to seek new and different environments from those offered by birthplaces. Despite the flexibility and willingness to try something previously unknown, young people need to learn how to adapt to cultural differences, especially how to adapt to local traditions and customs.

Some of the advantages of the most common VM of educational mobility for students are flexibility; self-confidence and adaptation to a multicultural environment; proper intercultural knowledge; intercultural dialogue; developing strategies to combat stereotypes and prejudices; and the elimination of categorizations within groups from a cultural point of view (Ahmed, 2012; Grosfoguel, 2012).

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<sup>4</sup> [http://www.elearningeuropa.info/directory/index.php?page=doc&doc\\_id=7245&doclng=6](http://www.elearningeuropa.info/directory/index.php?page=doc&doc_id=7245&doclng=6)



VM has different characteristics and elements depending on the typology of VM activities, mainly composed of seminars, courses or virtual programs, practice, and virtual activities to support or expand physical mobility. Summarizing the practices and concepts of VM can be defined as an activity or a form of learning, research, communication, and collaboration. VM enables universities to collaborate at different levels. The main feature of VM that should be emphasized is that the virtual study courses or programs can be designed and provided for students from more than one host university and this is usually not the case in physical movement (Bijnens et al, 2006).

During VM students can follow courses from different institutions, study and work together in a more diverse international group, gaining experience in addressing the cultural differences of more than one country. New European initiatives are taking further steps in developing joint VM activities to provide students and teachers with cultural background and enriched elements of the university environment (multilingualism, virtual tours, virtual support) so that students have more cultural advantage than those involved in real mobility and intercultural experiences. The cultural content becomes important to students and academic staff of HEIs (Tereseviciene, Volungeviciene & Dauksiene, 2015).

Collaborative learning is an electronic learning approach in which students can interact in society with other students as well as with instructors. It is often necessary to identify models for designing software applications that are comprehensive and can be used as didactic training materials. It is obvious that technology is also an excellent ally to help people with various disorders such as autism, deaf-mute and blindness. In this context, the development of computer applications must lead to a wider spread of initiatives that tend to support this category but also to help treat these disorders. One of the many advantages of VM is the provision of learning opportunities for people with intellectual disabilities (Arachchi, Sitbon & Zhang, 2017).

## 2.6 The Opportunities and challenges of using virtual mobility

According to the Global Industry Analyst report, e-learning emerged as the 2<sup>nd</sup> most employed method for lifelong learning in organizations and as a tool to reduce costs, increase flexibility and simplicity of the training programs (Sulčić, 2010, p. 187). Since the continuous learning structures use it extensively, the academic market is continuously compelled to think of innovative ways of its curricula and research integration. Jain & Tagi (2017) recognized four main rationales in the range of the HE virtual integration (p. 72):

1. *Social-* need for familiarizing students with technology;
2. *Vocational-* preparing students for jobs which require ICT skills
3. *Catalytic* – utility of technology to improve performance/effectiveness in teaching;
4. *Pedagogical-* utility of technology in enhancing learning, flexibility, and efficiency in curriculum development.

In order to meet them, HEIs need to commit themselves to change the academic routine in terms of academic administration of the program or the course (Sulčić, 2010), direct involvement of the staff in charge on the students (Otto, 2018), monitoring the process of





assessment in order to ensure the quality of the courses and increase the student motivation (Lowell, 2014; Vincent-Lancrin, Fisher & Pfothenauer, 2015). There should also be careful consideration of the “*curriculum calendar harmonization*” among partner institutions with the aim of creating common management procedures and facilitating the interaction between consortium partners and learning participants (Odina & Olmo, 2014, p. 192).

The most prominent challenge in the e-learning literature is the fact that even though most European HEIs have policies and strategies for online courses, they lack proper policies for staff teaching and learning support (digital skills), course development (pedagogical competence) and assessment (fairness and realism) (Sulčić, 2010; Pande, Wadhai & Thakare, 2016; Tømte et al, 2019).

“One of the challenges of the Distance Higher Education modality is to promote the advantages it offers to groups that do not have the opportunity to participate in other traditional models (...) so that students can combine self-regulated and collaborative training processes, as well as training in digital competence that has become increasingly necessary to participate meaningfully in the new knowledge society and economy of the twenty-first century” (Cacheiro-Gonzalez et al, 2019, p. 71).

Nearly half of the surveyed institutions by EUA in 2013 admitted having an institutional strategy in place; while only a quarter was currently developing one (Gaebel et al, 2014). To cope with this situation, in the following years, the EU policy drew such attention on virtual learning, to create a new context to minimize this challenge. The results of the EADTU survey carried out by its Task Force and Peer Learning Activity on VM, in 2018, showed that the range of the challenges had changed from a “macro” tertiary education level to a “meso” level, (EADTU, 2019) listing them as follows:

- need to develop leadership with regard to the internationalization of education;
- support and incentives to program coordinators and teaching staff;
- proper selection of online pedagogies, depending on the educational design;
- extension of International Relation Offices activities to curriculum teaching and support services;
- organization of on-site staff training;
- creation of subject area communities and online sharing of course materials.

The next two most prominent challenges remain that in most HEIs institutions the process remains “a top-down” one encouraged by decision-taking bodies rather than a unit initiative and that “decisions regarding content, method of teaching and deliverance models (online, campus, blended) have not been fully embraced by the technological perspectives of most HEIs” (Tømte et al, 2019, p. 100). Cacheiro-Gonzalez et al. (2019) follow that, in that respect, constant updates are required in the three issues:

1. pedagogical functionalities
2. online instructional design
3. didactic interactions.

The researchers (Mehanna, 2004; Bower, 2006; Pande, Wadhai & Thakare, 2016; Cacheiro-Gonzalez et al., 2019) agree that it is critical to design perfect pedagogical practices for effective e-learning. Current models are underpinned by the lack of systematic and empirical work on the set characteristics of evaluation and mechanisms of implemented practices in the

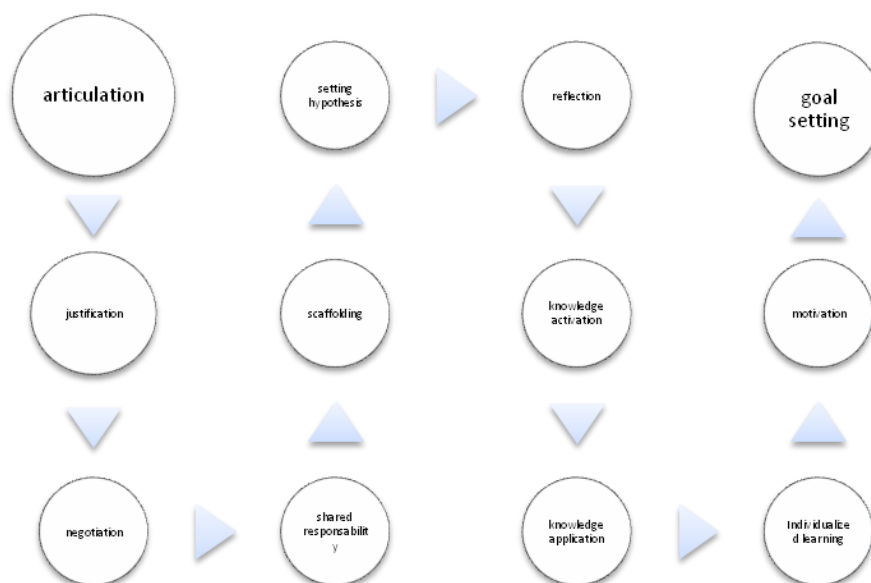


virtual classroom environment (Mehanna, 2004). Yet “*techno-pedagogical models*”, like the TPACK- Technology, Pedagogy and Content Knowledge (Mishra & Kochler, 2006, as cited in Cacheiro-Gonzalez et al., 2019) and SAMR – Substitution, Augmentation, Modification and Redefinition (Puentedura, 2016, as cited in Cacheiro-Gonzalez et al., 2019) offer a reliable framework for virtual classroom environments.

The literature review presented by Mehanna (2004) on the research carried out by Ajzen (1985), Markus & Ruvulo (1990) and Marzano (1998) defines the interaction of *four systems* of the human thought operating in most virtual learning models:

|    |   |  |
|----|---|--|
| 1. | The self-system processing of presented tasks | When the presenting task is judged important and the rate of success is high, positive affection is generated and the individual is motivated to engage to the presenting task |
| 2. | The use of related knowledge                  | Underlying information mental processing   |
| 3. | The cognitive processing of tasks             | Individual knowledge-based processes   |
| 4. | The meta-cognitive processing tasks           | Control of the knowledge processing; “a learning engine”   |

The characteristic features of each of these four learning systems are detailed in the following diagram of cognitive and metacognitive processes involved in virtual learning systems, based on the description of Mehanna (2004).



The above systems were detailed in educational interaction forms in online learning environments by Garrison & Anderson (2005) (as cited in Cacheiro-Gonzalez et al, 2019), as follows:



| Elements           | Categories                | Indicators                                  |
|--------------------|---------------------------|---|
| Cognitive presence | <i>Triggering events</i>  |   |
|                    | - Exploration             | - Feelings of perplexity                    |
|                    | - Integration             | - Exchange of information                   |
|                    | - Resolution              | - Association of ideas                      |
| Social presence    | - Affective dimension     | - Expressing emotions                       |
|                    | - Open communication      | - Express themselves freely                 |
|                    | - Cohesion of the group   | - Promote cooperation                       |
| Teaching presence  | - Design and organization | - Establish the program content methodology |
|                    | - Discursive elaboration  | - Construct meaning together                |
|                    | - Explicit guidance       | - Focus the debate                          |

Following the above theoretical perspective, it can be said that the virtual classes present several benefits to the 'learning groups collaboration':

- Teachers review the group activity instantaneously by browsing windows (Odina & Olmo, 2014).
- They assess the group progress by reviewing the messages posted to the chat window (Odina & Olmo, 2014).
- There is space for later inspection allowing importance up in the process, not just the final product (Odina & Olmo, 2014).
- Students can be promoted to compare their work within the team progress (Bower, 2006).
- It assures a transformative role student toward self-regulated learning strategies (Cacheiro-Gonzalez et al, 2019)
- It allows flexibility of time and place and allows self-pacing by increasing satisfaction and decreasing stress (Pande, Wadhai & Thakare, 2016)

The success of the e-learning is mainly due to the proper link an institution creates between the design of the learning material and the selected technological tool. Therefore, its quality assurance (QA) "*struggles with both content and pedagogy*" (Lowell, 2014, p. 3). Otto (2018) claims that "notwithstanding its promising potential (...) there is a lack of empirical experiences, identifying ways to design and implement VM in university courses and to determine key factors for students' learning experiences" (p. 3368). This is why the ENQA survey on e-learning QA (2015) found that only 29% of the participating HEIs had a system of



internal QA (while 35% were discussing about it) and 23% of HEIs relied on external QA (while 28% were discussing about it)<sup>5</sup>.

Yet, there have been different research to define quality dimensions (Clauss, Altmann & Schoop, 2019) and quality criteria (summarized in the edition of “*Compendium of Quality criteria in Blended Learning*”, by F. Meliardo (2006)), aiming to define a set of measurable QA tools for e-learning.

QA dimensions:

1. Professionalized pedagogical support concepts
2. Realistic cases with working tasks
3. Technical platforms

Since the quality assurance of digital learning is an ongoing process there are some principles that need to be taken into consideration (Meliardo, 2006):

- Quality is not and should not be only the final destination/ product of the learning
- Before starting whichever form of digital learning, a needs assessment should be conducted
- Formative assessment is a main concern of quality while the course is taking place to measure the progress according to the plan and aim for continuous improvement
- Summative evaluation also needs to be taken into consideration to determine the learning outcomes.

The main criteria of e-learning QA may be summarized through learning objectives/target groups, learning design and methodology, e-media design, assessment of the standards and usability and motivation of the course. The more practical, recognizable, and applicative are these, the more likely it is that the learning objectives of the course will be met. When the course is designed to enhance situated learning upon proper technical design, the learner involves prior knowledge processing to understand the context, assessment of the problem-solving situation, acquisition of the new knowledge and application of the latter in a group decision making context (Clauss, Altmann & Schoop, 2019).

It also requires the active engagement of the staff and the students in an active process, by making them aware of new ideas or experiences, the understanding of the course expectations and extraction of the practice and previous knowledge in authentic environments (Mirriahi et al., 2015). The whole process leads to fostering QA criteria, whose internal/external review enhances future improvements in the academic offer, by making e-learning “a meaningful intercultural experience” (Clauss, Altmann & Schoop, 2019) to higher education students who aim to increase their understanding of international learning contexts and foster future employability skills (Jager et al., 2019) by enhancing their digital competence, foreign language competence, communication skill and media literacy.

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<sup>5</sup> [https://enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/E-learning-in-the-European -Higher-Education- Area\\_Gaebel.pdf](https://enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/E-learning-in-the-European-Higher-Education-Area_Gaebel.pdf)



## SECTION 3: Albanian baseline report

### 3.1. The legal framework of Higher education in Albania

Higher Education (HE) in Albania has gone through different important stages during its development. The first qualitative step towards international collaboration is when Albania signed Bologna Declarations in 2003. Then this transformation of the HE in Albania, which supported the concept of the internationalization, became a task, and was included in the laws and strategies that followed. This mission of the HE is clearly stated on Law no. 80/2015 ("On Higher Education and Scientific Research in Higher Education Institutions in the Republic of Albania):" in order to promote international collaboration in Higher Education". This mission started to be completed after the signature of different agreements with different international institutions of HE as well as participation in many international projects etc. The Higher Education in Albania also understood that the internationalization of the Universities in the field of teaching and scientific research is one of the global challenges.

One process that has helped raise the quality of HE is undoubtedly the internal and external quality assurance. Meeting international standards in education has made universities more competitive with each other. This mechanism has helped increase the transparency in higher education institutions and facilitate mobility too. Being an independent process, it increases credibility and gives its help in improving the quality of higher education institutions and study programs. It supports and promotes the internationalization of universities, quality teaching and contemporary methodology.

Another mission of HE in Albania has been and remains the modernization of teaching and learning. To achieve this mission, The Council of Ministers of Albania approved for the first time the "National Strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation 2009–2015". This strategy gives priority to infrastructure improvement and the inclusion of the new technology, which support teaching and research. The latest strategy is the "National Strategy for Science, Technology and Innovation" (2017-2022) which is based on one of the principles that support internationalization in the field of scientific research, strengthening these links at both regional and international level. All of these strategies support teaching with high standards. Involvement in projects such as CEEPUS, ERASMUS +, Horizon 2020 and other EU funded programs made possible the mobility of students and academic staff by bringing the best practices from the EU universities to the Albanian higher education system. Besides, the internationalization process of the Albanian HEIs has made possible the continuous improvement of the teaching and learning practices and tools using as a benchmark reputable EU partner HEIs. The upgrade of the teaching and learning practices has been done gradually and sometimes it has been challenged by many legal and infrastructural barriers.

The modernization of teaching cannot be understood without the involvement of technology in this process. Experiences with international HE institutions brought to Albania the introduction of new concepts, such as e-learning and Lifelong Learning. However, this transition was not easy for many Albanian universities and there are still HEIs with limited ICT infrastructure and human capacities. The progress towards technology adaptation of teaching



and learning in Albanian HEIs highly depends on the university vision and strategy, availability of funds, legal establishment (public vs. private universities), location, etc.

The implementation of these concepts began with the use of electronic technology in specific subjects or modules. Following the implementation of strategies for a new way of teaching, the installation of the Internet in the Albanian HEIs was slowly created, where professors and students had free access. In this framework, there were also established several laboratories with developed technology, etc. In the beginning, this transition was difficult due to the limited ICT literacy of the academic staff at the Albanian HEIs. Of course, this situation in Albania has changed and the inclusion of ICT in teaching has become a necessity, not only for those study programs that had the priority in their curriculum but also in other programs. The extension became necessary especially in the second cycle of studies (Master). New education strategies began to require teachers and specialists who possess digital competencies. This also led to the re-organization of the curricula for several study programs.

One of the goals of Law No. 80/2015 “On higher Education and Scientific Research in Higher Education Institutions in the Republic of Albania” is: “*to create sustainable quality assurance mechanisms in higher education institutions, in accordance with standards European*”. Today's standards in the EU tend towards the digitalization and this trend should be followed by higher education institutions in Albania too.

Digitalization in the EU, as a process, has begun to materialize more in the organizational and administrative aspect. The Albanian Academic Network (known in Albania as RASH) today supports several processes in the HE, such as university enrolment through the U-Albania platform, the ESSE3 System in aid of managing teaching secretaries, and most recently the U-Library (Digital Library).

But the process of digitalization needs to be further expanded and extended to teaching too...'. the digitalization of higher education institutions, along with raising the awareness of digitalization by academic leaders responsible for educational programs and staff development programs.” (Tømte, et al, 2019, p. 111). The evolution of e-learning should go as far as organizing virtual classes nowadays, towards collaborative learning which contemporary education is going through nowadays.

The concepts of e-learning entered in HE long time ago but the immediate transition to almost complete online courses found HE in Albania unprepared. The situation created by COVID-19 brought out many problems for the organization of virtual classes and the development of online learning. Many professors and students did not have much knowledge of platforms, such as Moodle, Zoom, Google Classroom, etc. and had considerable difficulties in using them. Based on this experience, the focus of HE in Albania should be placed on creating the proper conditions for continuous virtual teaching and learning. For a qualitative lesson, the experience of international universities that have gone through this process before is certainly essential.

The mobility of the academic staff and students is one of the main goals of the Bologna Declaration (1999), but it has now become one of the parameters of quality assurance in the HE too. The fulfilment of such a criterion is a strong point in the process of Institutional Accreditation and study programs. If this mobility is highly qualitative, the more likely it is to provide qualitative teaching too. Mobility through various international projects has helped the staff, but also the students to create a new vision on teaching and learning in HE as well as



modernizing this process. But physical mobility has also had its difficulties. Students are very willing to have new experiences via intercultural and inter-linguistic exchanges; however, their motivation to join exchange programs have been challenged by various obstacles such as staying away from family, financial problems, fear of moving to new unknown country/culture, etc. This has reduced the level of mobility, identified in the "*First Report for Reforming Higher Education Education and Scientific Research*" which states: "*The very low percentage of students' mobility is one of the most significant indicators of an irresponsible responsibility in their service.*" (First Report for Reforming Higher Education Education and Scientific Research, 2014, p. 17). It is now the time for mobility to be virtual too. This new concept of mobility will give professors and students the opportunity to be more involved and is not limited to the physical one. Physical mobility is, of course, limited by the limited budget due to limited travelling budget and costs of stay.

## 3.2. Institutional Baseline Reports

All partners of the VALEU-X Consortium were asked to complete a survey outlining the level of participation in virtual/online teaching and learning within their institution and their challenges during this process.

The main issues the partners were asked to provide are:

- An institutional profile
- Online learning perception and strategy
- Staff involvement and motivation in online teaching
- The infrastructure and resources available for online delivery
- Students experience with online learning
- Future projects to do with online/distance education

### 3.2.1. European University of Tirana (UET)

UET is a leading private higher education institution (HEI) in Albania with 4,689 active students, offering quality teaching and research in various disciplines: economics, politics, law, education, communication, engineering, health, and sports. UET is a mission-driven university, fast-growing and aiming at contributing to the progress of the Albanian society through the professional and academic development of future generations, research, and innovation. UET is established in full compliance with the requirements and criteria of the Bologna Charter, including study programmes in the five levels of higher education: Bachelor; Master and Doctorates (Dr.) within five faculties namely Faculty of Humanities, Education and Liberal Arts, Faculty of Economics, Business and Development, Faculty of Law, Political Sciences and International Relations, Faculty of Engineering, Informatics and Architecture, and Faculty of Technical Medical Sciences.

*UET vision* is oriented towards becoming a benchmark for other universities in the development of knowledge in the Albanian society; a centre of excellence in the academic formation of our students; a centre of expertise in the social, political, legal, economic and information technology studies in the country with a wider impact in the region and beyond; as well as a centre of excellence in scientific research according to the areas of expertise within the university.



### **a. Online learning perception and strategy**

UET engages in high-quality teaching and research as well as exchange programmes, capacity building projects and joint initiatives with local and international partners in the following major disciplines: information technology and engineering, social sciences, economy, law, political sciences, and health sciences. UET has a pool of highly qualified lecturers, researchers, scholars, and project managers. It encourages a culture of knowledge-sharing, openness, and horizontal linkages between HEIs, CSOs, research centres, private sector, governmental organizations, and relevant stakeholders. UET maintains its commitment to impact the society at large in Albania and seeks to have a regional contribution too. To do so, UET pays importance to its strategic communication, visibility of actions and dissemination of information.

UET has established a national and regional network with a significant number of high-quality universities across Europe, as well as with other actors of civil society, public and private sector, in order to create different spaces and opportunities for students and the academic staff. There are multi-faceted institutional academic partnerships with, Sciences Po (Paris), LSE, University of South Wels, Stockholm Business School, The Hague University of Applied Sciences, University of Salzburg, Central European University, Humboldt University, La Sapienza University, etc. UET specifically cooperates with the Aston University in Great Britain in the framework of the Doctoral School programs. UET also collaborates closely with other higher education institutions in Southeast Europe and European Union in the framework of the Tempus, Jean Monnet, Erasmus + programs, as well as with other institutions in the framework of research supporting programs by international and local donors like the Regional Research Promotion Program; NUFFIC, Impact Assist/USAID, Open Society Foundation, etc.

Online learning is the process of learning through different platforms such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Moodle (UET LMS), Google-Meet etc. International online learning is following international courses/ training from home, through technology. All courses are delivered at the campus (face-to-face), however, for years we have been using a MOODLE platform (UET LMS) for all the courses, to support the face-to-face teaching and learning. After the COVID-2019 outbreak, almost all courses were transferred to online teaching and learning environments. The digitalization of courses is being performed using MOODLE (UET LMS) and Microsoft TEAMS. After Covid-19 outbreak, students of all levels appreciate the possibility to follow online courses. Being concerned from the risk of the academic year and courses postponement, students demonstrated a relatively high level of engagement in the online courses since the very beginning.

There is no university policy on online/distance learning; however due to the outbreak of COVID-19 we recognized the need for such a reference resource, and we are currently drafting an internal policy document. We have institutional documents too and there is no coordinated effort at local/regional level. The two main documents at the institutional level are as following:

- Strategic Plan of Education 2015-2020
- Scientific Research Strategy 2017-2020

These documents are currently being revised and soon the new strategies for the next 5 years will be internally published.





### **b. Staff involvement and motivation in online teaching**

After the pandemic outbreak, the staff is 'highly motivated' to provide online/distance education due to the fear of losing their jobs. We expect that from now on digital teaching will definitively be part of the staff academic portfolio.

Especially young academic staffs are highly involved and motivated. They participate in different ICT training during the academic year, organized by the IT Unit at UET.

We organized every semester training with all academic staff of how to use technology in teaching, with a focus on MOODLE. Those training were 2 hours face to face and after that, they got additional training materials by emails and/or in the dedicated training section in MOODLE where is stored all training materials prepared for them. Starting in March 2020, we created some training groups for academic and administrative staff on TEAMS where we conducted live training. The videos are recorded on the STREAM platform and accessible 24 hours for them.

### **c. The infrastructure and resources available for online delivery**

We have IT support office which technically supports all professors and lectures during the online courses. We have done live training with the professors for the platforms we use. We also have prepared several video training and manuals and distributed them to the staff. All staff has direct live support when they need it. We supported them creating their subject teams on TEAMS and enrolling their students. We keep supporting teachers and students for any difficulties they are facing using these platforms.

Young age academic staff (junior staff / MSC and PhD level mostly) are the real 'online education champions' at our university. We started online courses with MOODLE in November 2016 for all our university. We did not include any video or live streaming. We started teaching with full live streaming with Microsoft TEAMS on 16<sup>th</sup> of March 2020, after the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak. At our university, we use Microsoft Teams, a customized version of MOODLE, Microsoft STREAM, Exchange online and Microsoft Azure to provide online courses.

ICT resources that are available to our staff and students:

- Computers / laptops
- Laboratories
- Projectors
- Individual access at the UET LMS, Microsoft TEAMS, Microsoft STREAM.
- Online training sections for students and teachers
- Many PCs should be upgraded/ replaced to support the software we use for academic purposes.
- Other new hardware and software licenses are needed to fully support the academic process of the university.

### **d. Students experience with online learning**

This is the first semester we are providing full live streaming online courses so at the end of the semester we will collect and analyse the student's satisfaction from this process. However, we have done some questionnaire on technology (Moodle) adoption at our university, for study



purposes where we collected their perception on using Moodle (UET LMS), but it was not an official study. Even though some of the results, related to issues identified by students for the UET LMS usage level by professors, were delivered to the rector of the university.

#### **e. Future projects to do with online/distance education**

UET is currently investing in IT Infrastructure to support all aspect of online learning and teaching, like servers, storage, licenses, etc. Additionally, there are several relevant CBHE projects being implemented at UET such as:

- Virtual Albanian European Universities Exchange – VALEU-X (<http://uet.edu.al/new/virtual-albanian-european-universities-exchange-valeu-x-2019-2021/>)
- Accelerating Western Balkans University Modernization by Incorporating Virtual Technologies – VTech@WBUUni (<http://uet.edu.al/new/vtech-project/>)
- Internationalization at Home: Embedding Approaches and Structures to Foster Internationalization at Western Balkans – INTERBA (<http://uet.edu.al/new/interba/>)

Finally, UET is planning to include the idea of online courses in its institutional regulation. The online teaching with Microsoft TEAMS is having a remarkably high rate of adoption by the students. At least 94% of students have used TEAMS at least once during March-April 2020. In the future, UET will consider the possibility to offer dual courses/training and workshops in distance, as well as online learning design and delivery.

### **3.2.2. Epoka University (EPOKA)**

EPOKA University is an international higher education institution located in Tirana, Albania. The University conducts its academic activities in full compliance with the provisions of the Albanian higher education legislation and the requirements of the Bologna Process since the 2007-2008 academic year. EPOKA University comprises three faculties: The Faculty of Architecture and Engineering; the Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences; the Faculty of Law and Social Sciences. EPOKA University offers education in three study cycles, respectively Bachelor's, Master's, and PhD, with 12 Bachelor, 16 Master and 6 PhD study programs. The language of instruction at EPOKA University is English. All institutional strategies of EPOKA University are built on the "Education, Research and Contribution to Society" triangle.

EPOKA University is an institution of higher education oriented to scientific research. It manages and organizes its scientific research policy in accordance with its Strategic Plan in the framework of "Research Excellence at Epoka" under the Research and Projects Office. Epoka University has four research centres: Centre for European Studies (CES), the Center of Research and Design in Applied Sciences (CORDA), the Yunus Center for Social Business and Sustainability (YCSBS) and the Continuous Education Centre (CEC). As EPOKA continues into its second decade of operations, it has developed the Strategic Plan 2018-2022 and looks to further advance its mission of providing outstanding education, research, and contribution to society.

#### **a. Online learning perception and strategy**



EPOKA University functions in accordance with its Statute. The mission and objectives of EPOKA are in harmony with the mission of higher education in Albania, as stipulated by the Law of Higher Education (80/2015). EPOKA consistently aims at achieving higher academic standards, supporting the educational aspirations and achievements of everyone, promoting scientific development, preparing senior specialists, providing in-depth academic studies and conduct of research, continuous training, and helping Albania's economic development. Regarding this issue, the Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth have not foreseen 'online teaching' as one of the recognized and regulated forms of teaching or learning process in Albania.

However, EPOKA University has a strategic plan at the institutional level for the development and improvement of teaching and learning methods. EPOKA University Framework Strategy 2018-2022 refers to the teaching process as one of the three main strategic goals (teaching, research, service to the community) of the university. Among others, in the said Framework Strategy the institution has set goals as (G.1) Improve the quality of study programs by launching innovative and multi-disciplinary study programs, (G.3) Improve the curriculum, and (G.4) Improve methodology of teaching. The institution has stipulated in the strategy several instruments measure the achievement of the above-mentioned goals: (I.4) Revise curriculum to integrate critical thinking skills and entrepreneurship, (I.6) Train faculty for course design according to Bologna System, (I.7) Incentivize staff to critically assess their teaching philosophy and methodology, and (I.15) Review and adapt international teaching and management standards for international accreditation bodies.

In addition to the above-mentioned mechanism, EPOKA University has a PCQA (Permanent Commission on Quality Assurance) which, among others, conducts the periodic evaluation of the teaching and learning activities and scientific research according to the Policy on Continuous Improvement of Study Programs, which aims to continuously improve and modernize the teaching and learning process at EPOKA University.

#### **b. Staff involvement and motivation in online teaching**

Due to the fact that 'online teaching' is not recognized by MESY, currently, at EPOKA University there is no class offered online-only. Nevertheless, academic staff members of EPOKA are mostly using blended approaches in teaching and learning activities. In this context, all classes at EPOKA make use of IT systems and infrastructure in the teaching and learning process (e.g. Smartboards, EPOKA Interactive System, Learning Management System, Google Classroom, Microsoft Teams etc.) to make classes more productive, interactive, and enjoyable. Furthermore, many classes have incorporated 'simulation cases' in their syllabi, thus establishing a virtual collaborative learning setting for students. High interest is observed from academic staff members to incorporate new virtual approaches into the teaching and learning processes, however further technical and pedagogical training are needed to offer high-quality, virtual interactive classes.

#### **c. The infrastructure and resources available for online delivery**

Academic staff and students use various IT systems and consolidated IT infrastructure necessary for the teaching and learning process. Students are equipped with an email address which offers them a lot of opportunities through the features of Google-based *epoka.edu.al* mails such as access to their personal account of *Epoka Interactive System (EIS)* from where they can follow all details and progress of their education and all other issues related to their



relationship with the University. Also, through the *Learning Management System (LMS)* each lecturer coordinates and organizes course materials online by sharing lecture notes and assignments, and students deliver their project or homework and other similar activities necessary for the specific course. Instructors and students have access to *Google Classroom*, *Google Meet* and *Microsoft Teams* too, which provide streamlined communication between instructors and students.

There are enough labs, classrooms, offices and other facilities with electronic equipment and information technology for the realization of classes. All the classrooms are equipped with the necessary infrastructure for a convenient and effective learning process. Classrooms, Auditoriums, Labs, and other facilities are fully equipped with all the required tools, programs and equipment. To enable a more effective teaching methodology based on ICT, the classroom computers and the computers located in the laboratories contain all the necessary software, programs and packages needed in specific courses like MS Office, SAP2000, ETABS, .Net Visual Studio C ++, Matlab, GNS3 latest, Multisim 11, VMWare Workstation, MySQL \ Workbench, Eclipse, Python (x, y), Rhinoceros 4 SR8 + -MAX, SPSS, EViews, etc. Each semester, based on the requirements of the academic staff, the ICTCO updates the needed software. *EPOKA DSpace* is the institutional repository of EPOKA University: DSpace is an open-source repository software package typically used for creating open access repositories for scholarly and/or published digital content. EPOKA University has access to online libraries where students can read and download numerous books and scientific papers. Currently, EPOKA University has access to JSTOR, a shared digital library that includes more than 2,000 academic and scientific journals.

#### **d. Students experience with online learning**

At the end of each semester, the students could fill a student satisfaction survey related to the evaluation of each lecturer and class for the face-to-face classes. Student experience for online learning is not being assessed for the moment as online teaching is not foreseen as a recognized form of teaching by MESY. However, it is obvious that students are open and eager for online teaching and learning methods. Given the circumstances of Covid-19 crisis, all classes of EPOKA University have shifted to remote/online teaching and feedback is requested from students continuously in order to improve the remote/online learning process which started as an emergency measure to keep the education process active. By the end of this semester a well-structured survey will be conducted to measure student online experience, to compare the current state of remote teaching with the traditional ones and to capture the level of satisfaction of students regarding remote teaching.

#### **e. Future projects to do with online/distance education**

EPOKA University has a strategic plan at the institutional level for the development and improvement of teaching and learning methods to cope with changing trends. EPOKA University is very open to collaborating with international partners to learn from best practices they have and bring synergy in online/virtual learning design and delivery. In this context, VALEU-X project is a great opportunity for EPOKA University to explore European practices of Virtual Collaborative Learning and bring-in new approaches of modern teaching and learning methods. EPOKA believes that the results of this project may serve as a good background to call for new policy-making towards including virtual/remote/online teaching and learning experiences in the current curricula of the Albanian higher education sector.



### 3.2.3. “Fan S. Noli University” (UNIKO)

UNIKO was established in 1971 in the city of Korçë (Albania) and since 2008 it offers study programs in four faculties, namely: Faculty of Agriculture, Faculty of Education and Philology, Faculty of Economy and Faculty of Human and Natural Sciences. UNIKO offers long-life learning courses/modules in the Faculty of Education and Philology - The Center of Lifelong Learning: a training unit, whose mission is to train pre-university teachers-in-duty; and, part of the Faculty of Agriculture is the Didactic Experimental Economy, which provides the proper context of scientific research and professional practice for the study programs this faculty offers.

In 21.09.2017, UNIKO received a 5-year institutional accreditation period by the British Quality Assurance Agency; the review ranked it among the first two public and the first four public and non-public higher education institutions in Albania. In line with this quality review and the Code of Quality, approved by the National Agency of Quality Assurance, UNIKO is continuously updating its teaching and learning standards.

#### a. Online learning perception and strategy

UNIKO operates on its Development Strategic Plan 2016-2020, whose main objectives are:

- Human capacity building on the academic (teaching, learning and research) activity.
- Improvement of the infrastructure available to the above.
- Internationalization of the academic activity by enhancing research quality.
- Collaboration with public and private institutions and sectors in the project application.

This development strategy outlines “online learning”, within the strategic internationalization educational plan by engaging new teaching and learning methodologies (e.g., “e-teaching”, “learning through ICT”, “blended learning”), by encouraging academic staff qualification in developing their teaching skills through ICT. It is also part of the research plan by supporting basic research and offering incentives for applied research and able to contribute to the development of people and society. Terms currently used to refer to this form of teaching /learning in the legal documentation and communication of the UNIKO are: “*online learning*”, “*blended learning*”, “*distance education*” and “*digital education*”.

#### b. Staff involvement and motivation in online teaching

Before the pandemic outbreak, the academic staff at UNIKO used to offer mainly on-site teaching and at the time of the pandemic outbreak they had received the initial training in using Moodle-LMS and Google classroom. UNIKO also operates an Information and Communication Technology Office, in charge of the technological welfare of the institution. They are also in charge of the technological updates of the teaching and learning platforms and equipment available to the staff and students.

The young age faculty is willing and committed to learn new approaches to teaching and learning using ICT, which is manifested by their readiness to attend IT tutorials on digital teaching. The topics they show particular interest in are related, but not limited to: class presentations, video lecturing, e-quizzes, simulation tools, material sharing, audio tools, assessment and vector graphics.



### **c. The infrastructure and resources available for online delivery**

UNIKO has not established an e-learning centre yet. It has built an ITC infrastructure which links to the needs of the study programs. It offers 17 IT didactic and research laboratories, used for the improvement of the teaching and learning activities in the university. Yet, their application in online services has been limited so far. Most staff tend to use them on the university location and not many platforms or software, besides the ones mentioned above, have been installed to encourage online learning.

### **d. Students experience with online learning**

UNIKO offers face-to-face teaching to 2364 bachelor students, 821 professional and scientific master students and 444 to associate degree students. 58% of them are female and the average age is 22.5 years old. It also offers course modules to alumni and teachers-in-duty as part of their life-long learning.

Prior to the COVID-19 situation, UNIKO has offered online courses only in the frame of capacity building international projects in two modules of the second cycle. The last few weeks the university has been offering online education to meet the needs of the new social and health situation. It operates through Moodle-LMS, Edumeeet, Google classroom and Google meet. The quality of the course delivery is being monitored by the Rectorate, through questionnaires with the students and teachers. Students of the second cycle are more likely to attend online courses due to their need for time and place flexible teaching. Most of these students already work part-time, therefore they need a less strict course schedule. UNIKO also uses as a repository the ESSE3- Digital Information System for the HEIs, mainly in terms of the digital student database for online communication with secretaries, academic evaluation, and information on the respective curriculum.

### **e. Future projects to do with online/distance education**

UNIKO's legal framework on online learning is in place and decision-taking bodies are working on an Internationalization Strategy and action plan on the distance learning frame, staff training capacity building, infrastructure update and international project network enlargement. Decision-taking bodies are willing to encourage distance learning opportunities at the university as a means to improve its internalization state-of-art. The relatively young age of the teaching staff and the currently reflected incentives to use online communication is a good sign for their future motivation in providing e-learning to their students. UNIKO administrative staff: IRO, ICT and the Curricula Office are willing to enlarge their actual activities on online curricula and ICT training of both staff and students. UNIKO does not have an e-learning centre and is willing to update its current ICT infrastructure with update platforms and software on e-learning.

## **3.2.4. “Aleksandër Moisiu” University of Durrës (UAMD)**

Established in 2006, UAMD is the fastest-growing public university in the country with approximately 20,000 students in the three study cycles and six main units: Faculty of Business, Faculty of Education, Faculty of Information Technology, Faculty of Political Judicial Sciences, Faculty of Professional Studies, and Faculty of Integrated Studies with Practice (FASTIP). FASTIP exclusively offers 42 Bachelor Study programs, 25 Professional master's



degrees and 19 Master of Science Degrees, and 10 Professional diplomas available. UAMD is currently the second-largest university in Albania.

UAMD is a student-centred institution which introduced new methods to foster and develop critical and analytical thinking as well as a sense of responsibility and social commitment. UAMD is the first public higher-education institution that applied the Integrated Students Management System (ISMS) which provides the best technical infrastructure for reorganizing and sharing information with students and academic staff. Degrees are offered in two languages (Albanian and English) and the evaluation system is based on the European Credits Transfer System (ECTS) and the American Credit System (USCs).

#### **a. Online learning perception and strategy**

Lessons were delivered face to face until February 2020, switching to distance/ online learning in March 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak. It is of great importance to emphasize here that this emergency created all over the world also created the opportunity that students and professors get to know by hands on the real meaning of distance learning and its bearable fruits behind it. As they continue their teaching and learning, professors appear to be very interested in distance learning which for them presumes a good home comfort in this time of distress. By now, they use some platforms that involve Google Classroom, EZtalks, Moodle, Zoom. Soon, UAMD will be able to offer to its professors and students a personalized Learning Management System, which is being worked upon.

#### **b. Staff involvement and motivation in online teaching**

For the moment, there are no incentives from the part of the staff for providing distance education, but it is being worked on a special strategy regarding the local institutional education strategy for the areas of interest because the staff is motivated to learn more about virtual classes and successful teaching and learning through this process.

#### **c. The infrastructure and resources available for online delivery**

For the staff to be as quickly prepared and well acquainted with online learning platforms and their designs, we collaborate with the Lifelong Learning Centre that offers training on Blended Learning, Digital Literacy, and much more. Some of our staff are already literate with Moodle Platform and are Moodle Certified Trainers.

#### **d. Students experience with online learning**

Considering the fact that distance learning is the new option, UAMD has also created a questionnaire in order to research the level of satisfaction of students having to receive all lessons online. The results were surprisingly great, and this is stated because they had never had distance learning experience before, with 75 % of them being satisfied with new teaching/ learning mode on.

#### **e. Future projects to do with online/distance education**

UAMD is involved in projects that embrace online learning. Two relevant projects, '*Developing teacher competencies for a comprehensive vet system in Albania*' (TEAVET) and '*Accelerating Western Balkans University Modernization by Incorporating Virtual Technologies*' VTECH are the ongoing projects which our institution is working on, having 16 delivered modules so far, of which 5 deal with online learning.



### 3.2.5. “Luigj Gurakuqi” University of Shkodra (UNISHK)

UNISHK was established in 1957 and this university has experienced significant changes in the structure, content, organization, and direction since its establishment. It has traditionally been the major institution of higher education in the region of Northern Albania, especially in the field of technical and scientific disciplines. UNISHK has six faculties: Faculty of Natural Sciences, Faculty of Education Sciences, Faculty of Social Sciences, Faculty of Foreign Languages, Faculty of Economics and Faculty of Law. Additionally, UNISHK has two scientific centres: Centre of Albanological Studies and Water Research Centre of Shkodra Region. USH vision is to become one of the leading centre of Higher Education in Albania by maintaining high standards and offering the best expertise on the study programs, quality of teaching, innovation in research and also being positioned as a partner with community state, region and beyond. Our main goal is to improve the quality of our citizens' life by working at the local, regional and global level through creation, dissemination and application of knowledge.

#### **a. Online learning perception and strategy**

UNISHK has drafted a strategy concerning the provision of quality lessons with modern methods, scientific research, internationalization of the university (meaning: Scholarship Schemes, Partnerships, International Curriculum; Research; Mobility of academic staff); Integration of ICT in teaching/learning. However, online learning as a practice is quite new at the university level and the transition from traditional to e-learning occurred only recently due to the pandemic outbreak.

#### **b. Staff involvement and motivation in online teaching**

After the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak, all the academic staff members of UNISHK are involved in online teaching. Especially young academic staff members are highly motivated for virtual teaching and learning practices and they are improving their ICT skills and competencies. In the teaching and learning process academic staff at UNISHK is using interactive platforms, as: Moodle, Zoom, Google Classroom and Microsoft Teams etc.

#### **c. The infrastructure and resources available for online delivery**

UNISHK supports the Learning Management System (LMS) as a virtual teaching environment supported by the university, an environment on the web, designed to offer students and their lecturers a range of tools and resources to facilitate the study and teaching both for students and teachers. Through the T@sk project, it was possible to install the Moodle Platform (<http://lms.unishk.edu.al/moodle/>) which aims to teach with elements of the online methodology. Currently, this platform is being used by a part of the staff at this time to conduct online teaching.

UNISHK provide free internet access to professors and students. It used to be free for the academic staff only, however, thanks to the improved infrastructure it is now a free service at all the university premises, USH shas an IT office with its specialists who are available to all staff and students.

USH has created a good logistics instruments/equipment for modern digital platforms:

- Registration of students through the U-Albania platform (<https://ualbania.al/>).





- The ESSE3 system (<https://www.unishk.esse3.u-gov.rash.al/>) through which we inform students about the exams, grades (evaluation), student career event etc. The students are informed in real-time about the dates of the exams, they can book a date for the examination and get the results etc.
- Digital Library (<https://ulibrary.rash.al/>) made available by the Albanian Government with about 117515 titles divided into Articles, Magazines and Publications, Rosetta Stone Library Solution Plus: e-learning 30 languages up to B1 level, over 170,000 e-books from Oxford University Press, MIT Press, State University of New York Press, Cambridge University Press, University of California Press, McGill-Queen's University Press, Harvard University Press; and many other materials.
- SMAK (<https://smak.unishk.edu.al/>) – a digital platform which helps in informing the pedagogical loads, annual contracts of pedagogues, teaching evidence according to Faculties and Departments, etc.
- The platform where all the official correspondence of the Faculties and the Rectorate is performed online (<http://192.168.26.30:8080/shkresat>).

#### **d. Students experience with online learning**

UNISHK used to deliver face-to-face teaching only. The transition that occurred after the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak was the first experience that UNISHK has in offering full online teaching and examination. The IT staff at UNISHK has trained the academic staff in preparing online course materials and delivering online teaching. Additionally, the IT Unit will train the academic staff in designing the online exams. An online satisfaction survey will be launched at the end of the semester to collect feedback from staff and students on their first e-learning experiences.

#### **e. Future projects to do with online/distance education**

In the framework of this project, we have established The Continuing Education Training Laboratory, where many trainings for teachers have been done by equipping them with digital competencies such as Moodle. Moodle, a Learning Management System (LMS) for the creation of Internet-based courses; Digital Learning and Teaching Tools. Additionally, UNISHK has benefited from the '*Developing teacher competencies for a comprehensive vet system in Albania*' (TEAVET) Project (<https://teavet.org/>).

### **3.2.6. University of Elbasan “Aleksandr Xhuvani” (UEAXH)**

UEAXH was established in 1991 in Elbasan (Albania) and is highly committed to providing the high-quality teaching and research. UEAXH offers study programs in the three study cycles: professional 2-years degrees, bachelor, master, and doctoral studies, designed in full compliances with the Bologna Declaration. These study programs are offered in five faculties: Faculty of Economy, Faculty of Human Sciences, Faculty of Education Sciences, Faculty of Natural Sciences and Faculty of Technical Medical Sciences. The main objective of UEAXH is to train professionals capable of meeting the challenges of development in the fields of humanities, natural sciences, economics, education, and technical medical sciences. For the academic year 2019-2020, in UEAXH there are 9528 full-time students.



#### **a. Online learning perception and strategy**

There are courses that can be offered online or for distance teaching and learning, but our experience so far has been in class only. However, at the actual situation, we are also offering online teaching and learning all the courses of the department of Social Science based on our in-house equipment and software. In the Faculty of Educational Sciences, the Department of Social Work offers the possibility to have distance/e-learning courses, using the Moodle platform. They are around 200 students involved in the process.

The mode of delivering lessons mode is as follows:

- Online only/distance learning is 0%
- Face-to-face (on-campus) students is 100%
- Blended (face-to-face and online/distance learning) is 2.1 %

#### **b. Staff involvement and motivation in online teaching**

The academic staff is very eager to better improve the learning process and of course, they also have shown a great interest in providing online teaching. This is also based on the latest experience, where all professors are providing online teaching, while in the meantime they are also learning and improving their tech skills in on/line learning.

#### **c. The infrastructure and resources available for online delivery**

We have two main systems in our university:

First is the Educational Management System, which is the main database of our university including student's assessments, Financial recordings, academic and administrative staff, courses, programs etc. The second system is for E-Learning based on Moodle platform, but available for one department only. The first online course was delivered in 11/11/2019. There has been a trend in increasing demand for online courses, mostly from students who are interested in MA or PhD studies. This is also based on the strategy of development of the institution.

#### **d. Students experience with online learning**

At the University of Elbasan, we are currently experiencing the online learning process due to the COVID-19 situation, that has prohibited now, the normal teaching activity. 90% of UE students are having their online learning process, using platforms like Google Classroom, Zoom, Moodle, and Edumeeet. The use of these platforms was almost unknown for the students, but they were highly active in learning and perfectly use it. Each student has created their portfolio, for developing the course work and a database of the lectures and other materials.

#### **e. Future projects to do with online/distance education**

Currently, thanks to the capacity-building project and also investments, in UE, we have managed to develop IT laboratories in all faculties. These facilities will help to train the students in using different online learning platforms. Currently, thanks to TEAVET project (<https://teavet.org/>) we are going to provide a new Moodle course for VET training. Also, the implementation and infrastructure in the near future, of VALEU-X project.



# SECTION 4: Academic Survey Report

## Introduction

One of the initial tasks of the VALEU-X project was to analyse the Albanian higher education context with respect to virtual and collaborative learning. To achieve this purpose, a survey instrument was developed and implemented among VALEU-X partner universities in Albania. One section with 5 questions was also added to measure the effects of the current situation (due to COVID-19) on the ongoing education process in Albania (Annex II).

## Overview of the data collection instrument

The purpose of the survey was to identify the level of virtual and collaborative learning activity in the sampled universities. The survey instrument comprised of sections that questioned the demographics and academic experiences of survey participants as well as their specific experiences with virtual and collaborative teaching. Later sections of the survey asked participants' perspectives regarding the use of virtual and collaborative learning in their universities and Albanian higher education in general. The survey instrument was composed of 4 parts and 54 questions. Part 1 was about institutional and demographic data. Part 2, 3 and 4 comprised questions about online teaching and VM, digital learning resources and training, and actual situation due to COVID 19, respectively.

## The process used for administration of the survey

Although the ultimate population of this kind of a study was all the academic staff members in all Albanian universities, a decision was made to sample the project partner university staff members due to time concerns, accordingly, the survey population was decided to be the academic staff members of the VALEU-X project partners in Albania. The sampling methodology of this survey in this regard was purposive sampling, which is a subset of non-probability sampling. The number of academic staff members in these universities amount to 1,319. Considering that usable surveys from data collection are 273, the survey response rate was approximately 21%.

Data were collected during the last two weeks of April in 2020. University administrations were contacted with a cover letter by project offices in each university and they were requested to distribute the Google Docs survey link to all their staff members. Data collection ended on 28 April 2020 when the number of responses was 274. One survey was eliminated due to missing content on most questions. 270 surveys came from academic staff members while 3 surveys came from administrative and technical staff members, which were also kept in the data pool due to the possibility that these respondents have academic functions. The final number of analysed surveys was 273.

## Data analysis approach

Raw data were downloaded from the Google drive and a process of data cleaning and conversion followed the raw data receipt. Excel data were processed in SPSS package program and all responses are given in the respected tables in the findings section below.



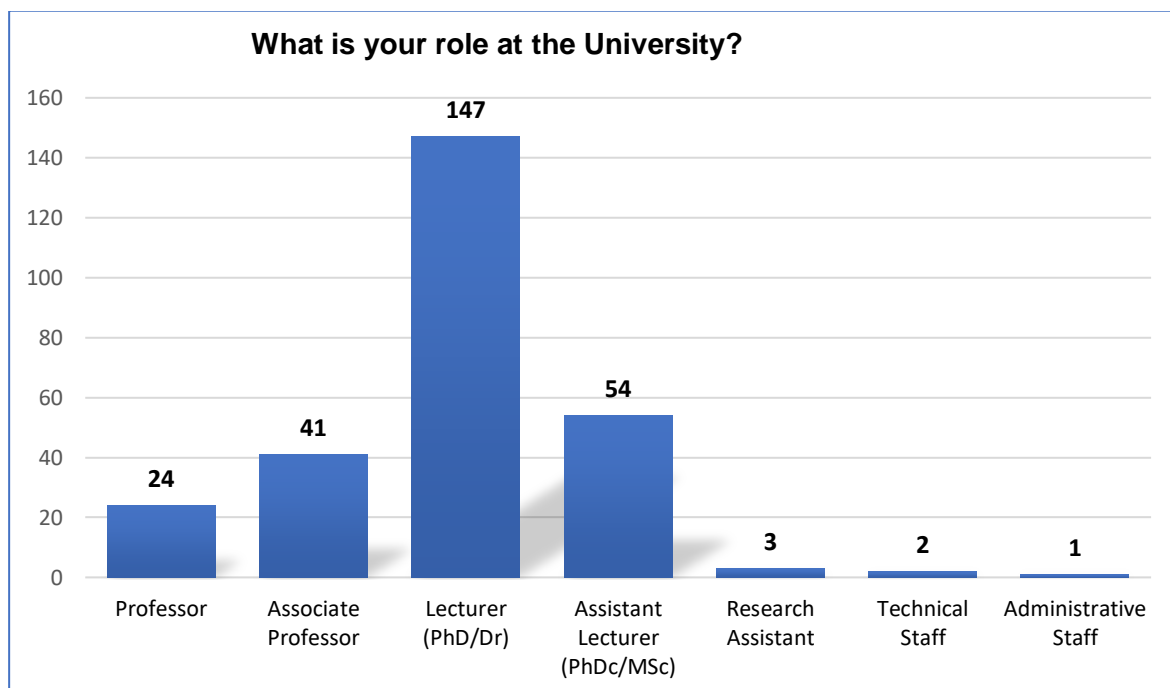
## The quality assurance mechanism

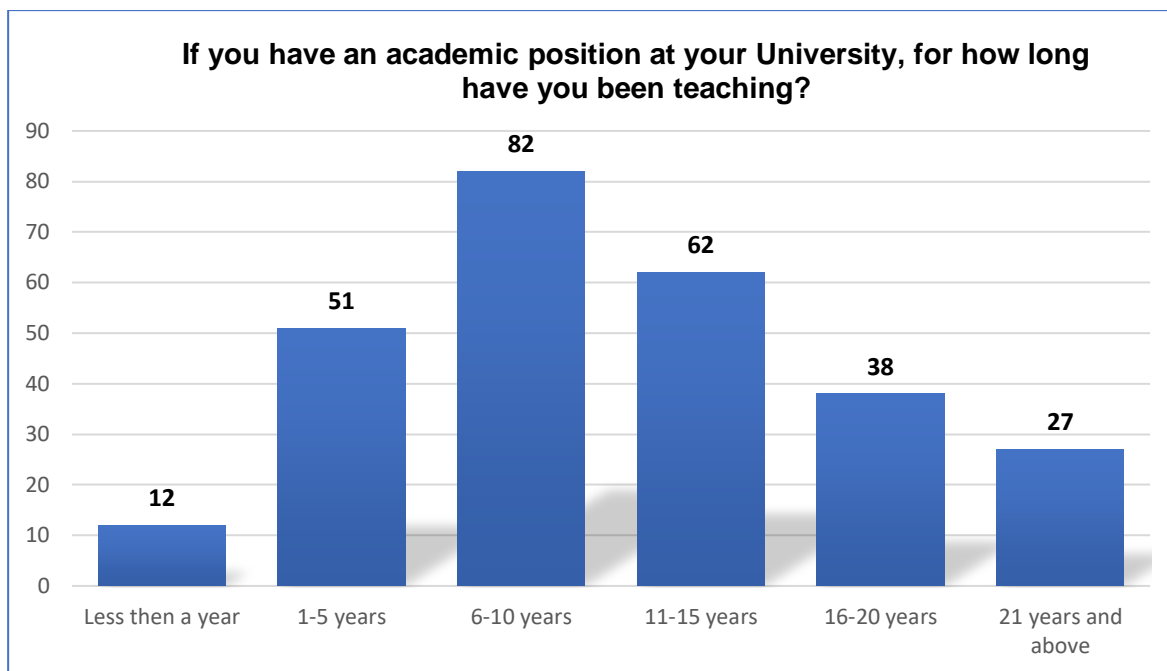
The confidentiality of survey respondents was assured through a cover letter to the respondents which indicated that no identity-related questions were asked and survey data were collected by one of the project partners to be used only for project reporting purposes. The data were kept in the hands of three project team members who analysed and reported survey findings to the related bodies in project implementation.

## 4.1. Key findings from the VALEU-X academic survey in Albania

### 4.1.1 Institutional and demographic data

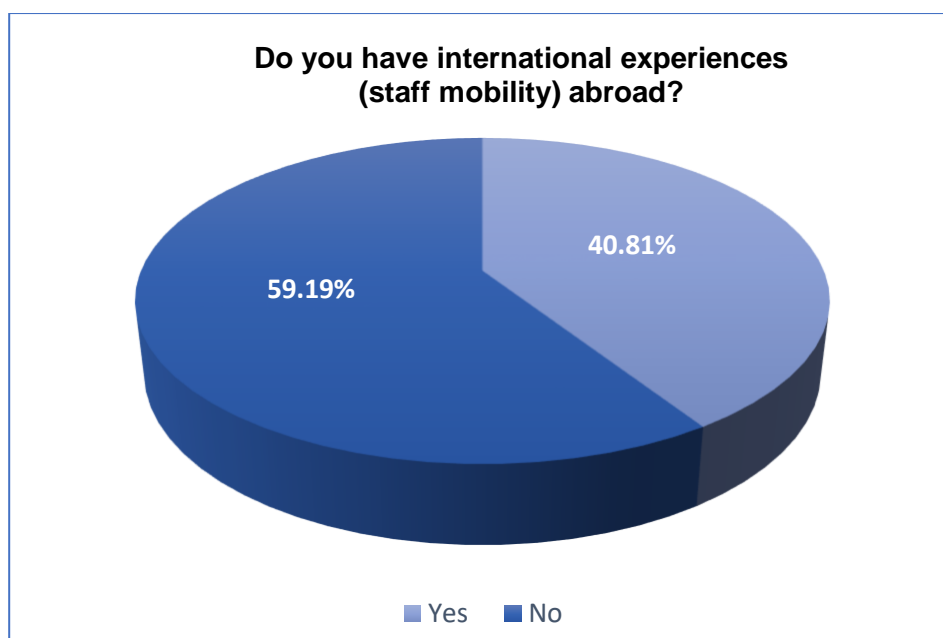
Responses were collected from all project partner universities, including a small number of responses received from the University of Tirana. Majority of the respondents were female academic staff members (65.8%) and come from the 30-39 age range (43.8). Out of 264 who responded their academic areas, 197 are coming from social science areas while the rest teach in other scientific areas. The following two charts demonstrate respondents' positions in their universities and their teaching experiences. Around half of the respondents work as assistant lecturers (54%) and most respondents have 5 years or more teaching experience.





### 4.1.2 International cooperation and project participation data

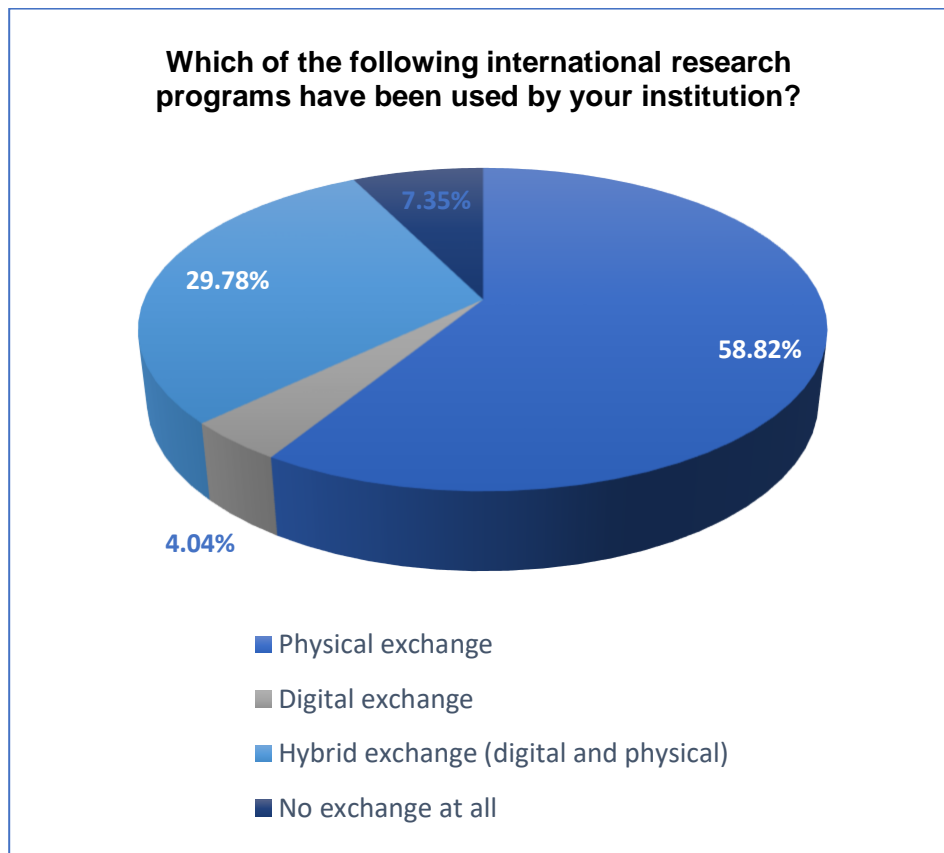
Respondents were asked about their experiences with international staff mobility. 59.19% of the respondents joined staff mobility programs before while 40.81% stated that they did not join these programs before.



In another question, respondents were asked about the international exchange programs used their institutions. Physical exchange programs comprise 58.82% of the responses while digital

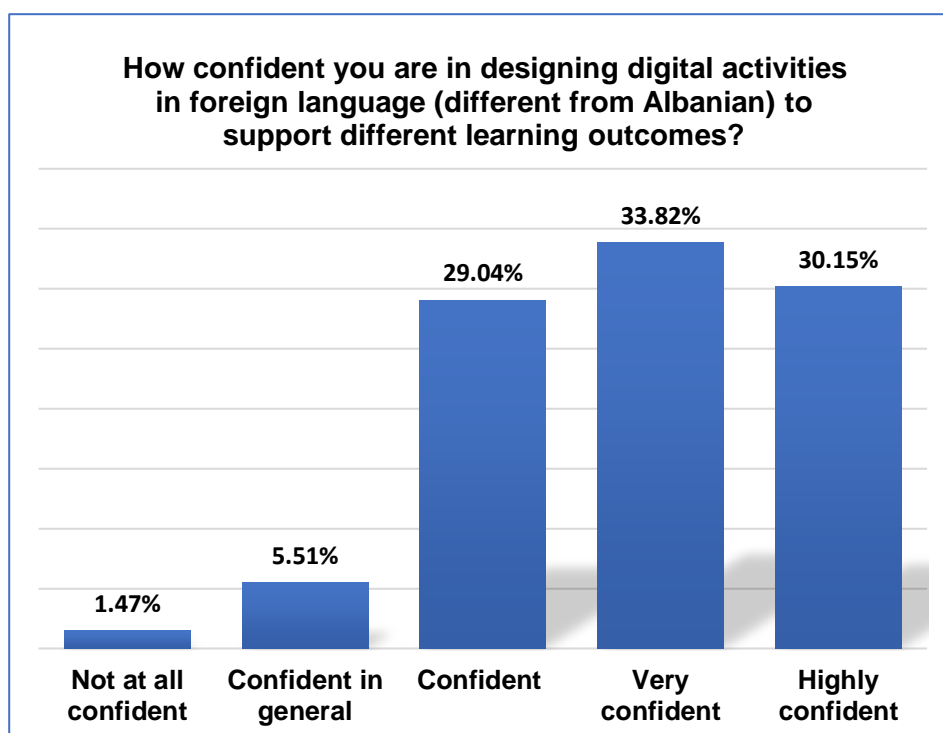
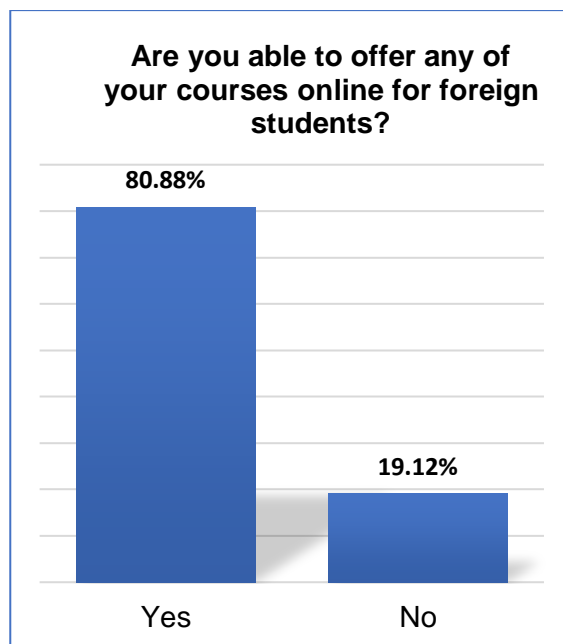


exchange programs make up 4.04% of the responses. Most international programs in the sampled universities are physical or hybrid programs according to the data.



### 4.1.3 Online teaching and VM related data

This section comprises data about respondents' perspectives on online teaching and VM. Findings indicate that overwhelming majority of respondents (80.9%) indicate that they are capable of teaching online courses to foreign students and they are confident about their ability to; design digital activities in foreign languages (92.9%).



Findings further indicate that majority of respondents support students to become active digital/virtual learners (95.9%); teach in a live online environment e.g. Webinar/Zoom/Microsoft teams/Google meet platform (95.2%); assess digital tools or resources which are accessible for all of his/her students, in Albania or abroad (87.1%); and use online resources from well-known international e-libraries (65.7%).



The rest of the questions in this section correspond to the perspectives about the characteristics of online teaching and VM. In all of these questions, more than half of the respondents agree that:

- There exists an ICT supported learning environment with virtual components in their institutions.
- Their institutions have cooperation between at least two higher education institutions internationally.
- “Training with ICT equipment” and “more contacts with international higher education institutions” are the two main points to realize VM in their institutions.
- They; “plan around the technologies that are familiar to them”; “look for relevant national and international examples or materials online”; “consider how students could use their own digital devices”; and “check if students have the digital skills they need” when they plan a learning session to include the use of digital technologies.
- “Knowledge about supporting and supervising students in online courses” is one of the main missing aspects of designing a proper online course for them.
- “Finding quality learning resources to suit the topic taught” and, “finding and adapting learning resources to meet students' needs” are the two main approaches for them to choose and use digital resources for online learning.
- “Presentation of work by the learners in a digital medium” is the most common digital activity normally takes place in their face-to-face classes.
- “Checking to see if the learners have the devices they need for any new activity” is the most primary activity they do to ensure students can access the digital learning opportunities offered.
- “Providing text alternatives to visual media” and “checking if the students have equitable access to devices” are the two main measures they take to support digital inclusion.
- “Covering everything that's in the note”, “choosing images and layouts to make online lecturing visually engaging” and “using different examples and international case studies” are the most common approaches to designing online lectures for their national or international students;
- “Facilitating online discussions (text-based)”, “teaching different online environments e.g. webinar, text-based, video”, and “scheduling online teaching in order to fulfil participants' expectations” represent the most common approaches to teaching in online or blended settings.
- “Live discussions (audio/chat)” and “collaboration on presentations or projects” are the most common online activities they set for students.
- “Contributing to a live wiki or blog” is one of the main activities they cannot do without proper training.
- “Ability to practice basic digital skills”, “developing good digital study habits e.g. note-making” and “building a positive digital presence and identity” are some of the most important necessities of online learning for students.
- “Developing digital practice abilities further” best represents their approach to developing online teaching as an educator; and,
- “Reading an international article about digital learning” is the most common online teaching-related activity they did during the past academic year.

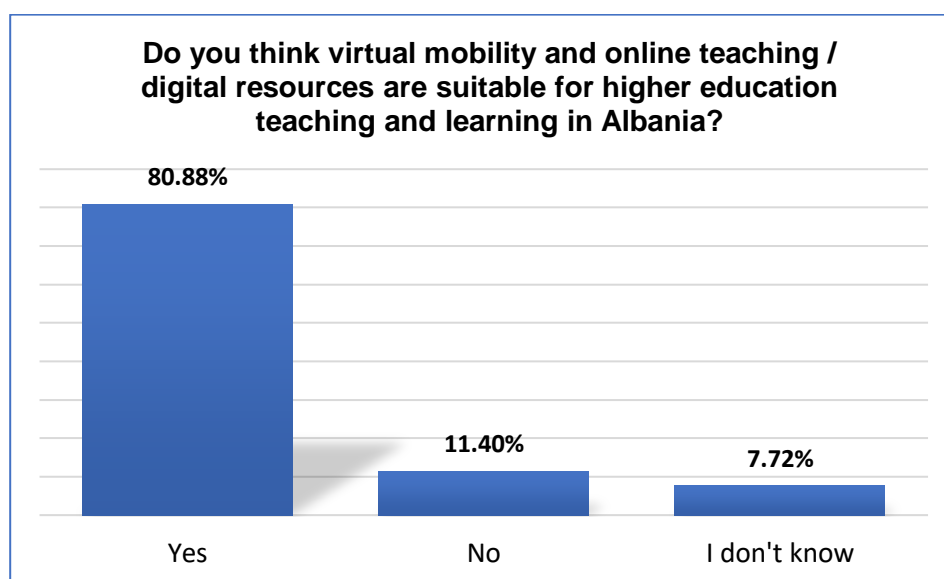


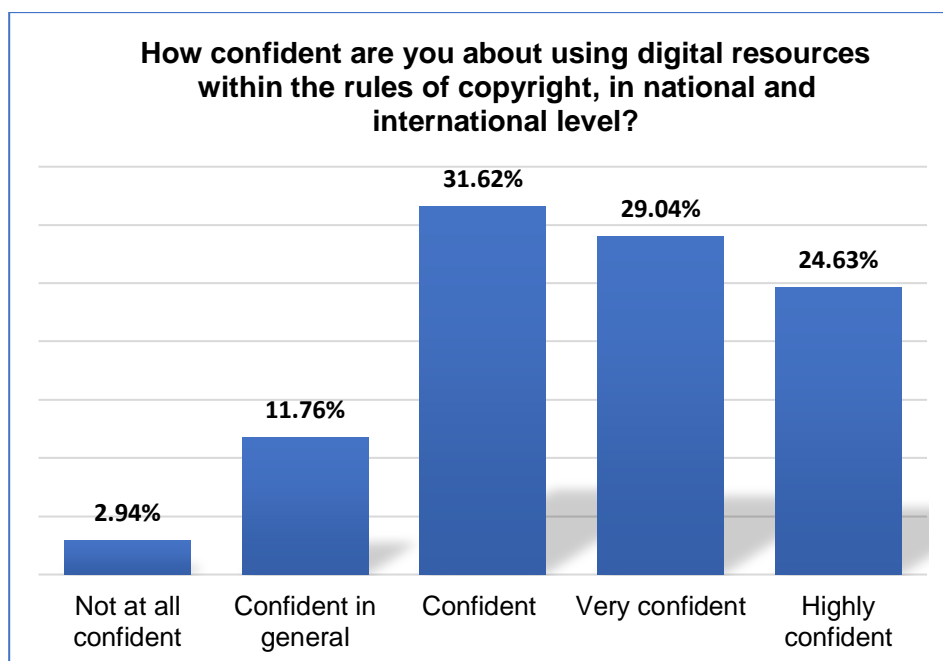


#### 4.1.4 Data related to digital learning resources and training

Data in this section relate to respondents' perspectives on digital learning resources and training. Questions in this section measure the extent to which resources for online teaching are adequate, relevant, and utilized well by the respondents. When asked about the kind of resources used before COVID-19 situation, respondents indicated that they mostly used an image (55%) and web-supported multimedia (42%) before. Since all education was moved to online platforms due to pandemic interruption, use of all categories of resources can be expected to increase in time. During the transition between face-to-face to online teaching, respondents stress the importance of technical support (74%). The answers to the question "Whether the respondent is using online resources from his/her international colleagues in the teaching and learning practice" corroborate other findings on the use of resources where a larger group of respondents (47.1%) are using online resources due to COVID-19 situation.

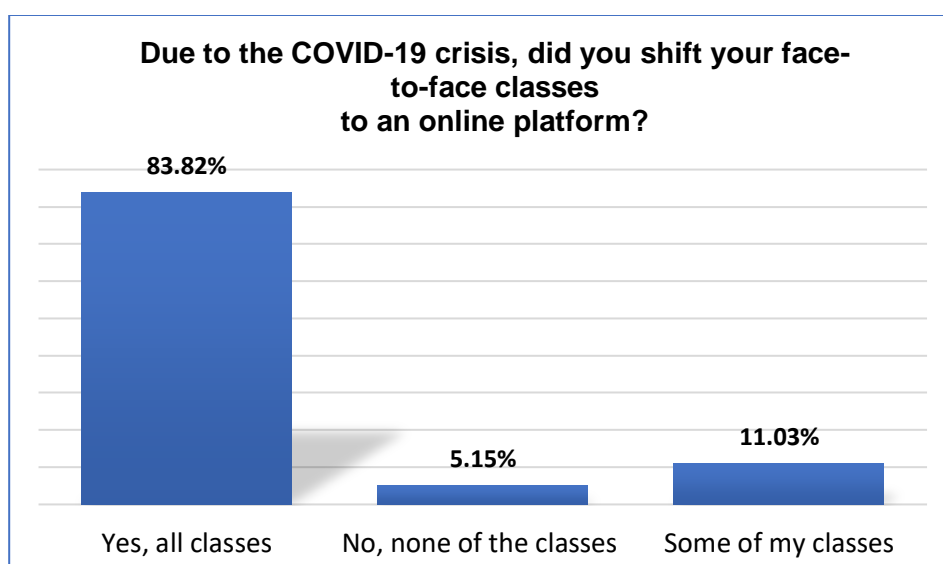
Overall, by looking at the agreeing majority, respondents think that digital resources are suitable for online teaching in Albania (80.9%), these resources are enough to deliver online courses (80.6%) and they feel confident to use these resources (85.2%).





#### 4.1.5 Data related to the actual situation due to COVID 19

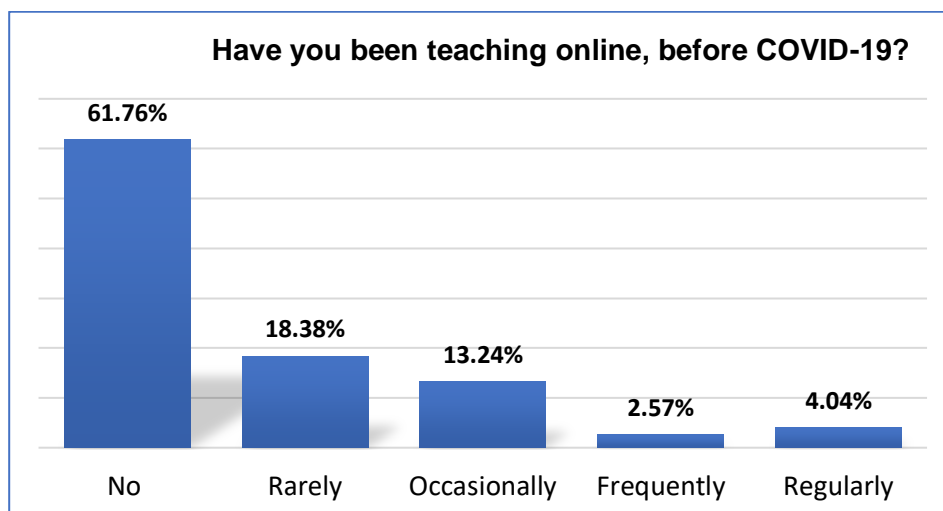
The purpose of the questions in this section was to analyse the currently arising situation with COVID-19 pandemic and its effects on higher education Albania from the perspectives of the research respondents. 83.8% of respondents indicate that they moved their courses online after COVID-19 interruption came about. Others did not take an immediate action possibly due to the nature of their course (i.e. lab-based courses).



When asked about their readiness to shift to online teaching, 64.7% said they were not ready for this kind of a transition while the rest indicated that they were ready and expecting this



shift. Similarly, majority of the respondents (61.8%) were not teaching online course before COVID-19 while rest were teaching online courses to a certain degree.



Furthermore, regarding the use of online resources, majority of respondents respond that they plan to use online quiz (68%) and voice-over slides (60%) after this point during their online teaching. Finally, an increasing number of respondents (at least occasionally or more often) are using online resources due to COVID-19 transition.

In later parts of the survey, respondents were asked about the challenges of moving to online teaching due to COVID-19 situation. Comments to this question provide significant insights into the experiences of the respondents. The challenges mentioned in the answers point to all aspects of online teaching from the educator's side, student's side, and the institution's side. Respondents mention about lack of skills and preparation of the educators as well as the slow adaptation of students to this model of formal learning. Also, comments identify several technical aspects of online teaching including problems with internet access, lack of student equipment at home and student learning environments. Finally, some respondents point to the psychological effects of online teaching such as lack of student motivation and necessary levels of student engagement in the learning process. The final question in the survey asked for respondents' perspectives on regulating online teaching in Albanian higher education curricula. Majority of comments include a positive approach to recognition of online teaching by Albanian higher education system. Accepting the reality of extraordinary conditions and immediate move to online teaching due to COVID-19, respondents set out a positive approach to continuing with online learning as part of university curricula and integrate online teaching and learning in the Albanian higher education system. Comments also include conditions and necessities of such an adaptation some being on the negative side suggesting that it is not the time for Albania for such a regulatory adaptation.



# CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

This report aims to analyse the Albanian higher education context, with the main focus on virtual and collaborative learning. The first section of the report gives an overview of the VALEU-X project. The second section was concentrated on desk research about e-learning and internationalization at home. The third part of the report gives information about e-learning perception and virtual internationalization development level in Albanian public and private universities. To achieve this purpose, a survey was developed and implemented among VALEU-X partner universities in Albania. The results of this survey are presented in the fourth section of the report. In this final section, we will summarise the main findings and recommendations for the next steps in the VALEU-Project.

## Conclusions

One of the main findings regarding international cooperation and project participation is the fact that 40.81% of participants have no experience with international staff mobility.

Majority of respondents (80.9%) indicate that they are capable of teaching online courses to foreign students and they are confident about their ability to design digital activities in foreign languages (92.9%). This is an optimistic result which somehow explains the necessity of HEI to use this ability of their staff for internationalization at home.

In overall, respondents think that digital resources are suitable for online teaching in Albania (80.9%), these resources are enough to deliver online courses (80.6%) and they feel confident to use these resources (85.2%). Nevertheless, being asked about the kind of resources used before COVID-19 situation, respondents indicated that they mostly used an image (55%) and web-supported multimedia (42%).

Being asked about the situation created due to COVID-19 and its effect on the traditional teaching process, 83.8% of respondents indicate that they moved their courses online after COVID-19 interruption came about. Nevertheless, 64.7% said they were not ready for this kind of a transition. This result indicates the fact that online learning was a 'last moment' solution during a high-risk situation but for most of them, would not be a choice if there were asked about online learning.

Finally, the main challenges during the process of virtual learning are related to lecturer skills, students adaptation to online learning, technical difficulties etc. This is mostly due to lack of experience with virtual learning for all actors of this process.



## Recommendations

HEI should take different decisions to **diversify the list of participants in international mobilities** in general. The focus should be on building an international scientific community. Through new contacts, networks can be established, and exchange experiences planned. Some of the mechanisms they can use are:

- Building up a scientific working community (PWC) for academic staff
- Building up an exchange network throughout administrative and academic staff intra- and interinstitutional
- Implementing Virtual Mobility as a daily teaching practice
- limitation in the number of mobilities in a year per person (equality of chances for everyone)
- decentralization of selection process of application for international mobilization to avoid subjectivity in this process (4 eyes principle of selection), etc.

HEIs also should **increase the number of MoUs** with international partners in order to increase the interest of their staff to participate in international projects and virtual mobilities.

- All Stakeholders have to be integrated: academic staff, administrative staff ...
- ECTS recognition has to be ensured and prepared on all institutional levels and at all partner universities
- Create a Blueprint of “How to MoU”, share and train it with all stakeholders

Being asked about the kind of resources used before COVID-19 situation, respondents indicated that they mostly used image and web-supported multimedia. The main recommendation in this aspect is the:

- Implementation of a didactical e-learning framework with professionalised support concepts and realistic and authentic cases
- Diversification and production of digital learning resources with documents, videos, online assessment and quizzes, e-lectures, didactical frameworks for case studies and digital collaboration
- An active online platform would be a good manner to manage and hold online learning. (Some of the partners in this project are using different online platforms due to COVID-19. A quality control process is necessary to certify the effectiveness of this platform).
- All partners have to be trained in the usage of an online collaboration platform and the production of e-learning materials for this platform

The approach toward **online learning** should change first of all, in **Albanian legal framework of HE**

- To ensure recognition of the same amount of ECTS obtained from online courses, at all partner institutions
- Offer online degrees for all participating institutions
- Raise awareness regarding Stakeholders, esp. from the Ministry of Education and decision makers
- Change the philosophy of HEI's by including online learning as part of the universities curriculum



- Online courses can apply as alternative classes to face-to-face one, even in a normal situation. Academic staffs that move with mobility programs can make online classes instead of make-up cases.
- HEIs need practical advises to review some of their main undergraduate and master programs curricula, in order to harmonize them with virtual learning concepts, methodologies and practical pedagogical aspects.

For the next steps of the VALEU-X project we highly recommend the following points:

- Staff and student training are a 'must' to increase the applicability of virtual teaching and learning in Albania. Modern academic practices are needed to increase students' engagement and enhance teaching and learning in virtual learning. In all cases, training and workshops should be accompanied with written materials and guidelines, in Albanian and English. A framework for online teaching like the VCL should be trained implemented. Therefore, the commitment and willingness of all teaching staff are needed.
- Administrative staff also needs training and workshops. Actually, they have less experience with internationalization experiences, compared with academic staff. Finally, HEI should increase the online teaching and learning training for staff and students and they also need to improve technical aspects based on the institutional level. Technical problems based on a personal level seems to be an ongoing challenge. Raising awareness and highlight the beneficial of Virtual Mobility to be recognized as an important practice.
- Building up a Scientific/Professional Working Community for all Stakeholders of the project is the central step to ensure further preparation and elaboration of the e-learning concept. Therefore, it is critical to have the commitment and readiness to work of all partners on an equal level.
- Building up and pilotage a VCL framework in Albanian HEI's. Therefore, the alignment of training – raising awareness and involvement of all stakeholders is needed. After aligning their courses to the didactical framework of the VCL through academic staff, first ideas and concepts must be discussed with administrative stakeholders to foster Virtual Mobility and the underlying concept. This process should from now on be accompanied by impact research. The recommendations of this report should be taken into consideration to showcase the potential of the intervention
- Foster the usage and implement VM as part of the formal curricula at Albanian HEI's. Therefore, the Ministry of Education in Albania and decision makers in the country and universities must be involved in the process of implementation. Recognition of ECTS and the implementation of online learning in the curriculum of Albanian HEI's are crucial steps to allow a sustainable implementation.



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# ANNEX I: Institutional Baseline Template

| Question prompt   | Response  |
|---|---|
| Name of Higher Education Institution and location / city  | European University of Tirana<br>Tirana/ Albania  |
| Any other campus sites  | N/A   |
| Campus: urban / rural   | Urban   |
| Year established  | 2006  |
| University ranking / Accolades in ALBANIA   | <b>6/40</b> according to Ranking web of universities (January, 2020): <a href="https://www.webometrics.info/en/Europe/Albania">https://www.webometrics.info/en/Europe/Albania</a>   |
| How many students by level:<br><input type="radio"/> Bachelor<br><input type="radio"/> Masters<br><input type="radio"/> PhD or Doctoral students/candidates<br><input type="radio"/> Further study students   | 2,903 students<br>1,739 students<br>47 students<br>N/A<br>4,689 students in Total   |
| How many students:<br><input type="radio"/> Full time<br><input type="radio"/> Part time  | 4,689 students<br>0 students  |
| Average age of students:<br>Percentage female/male:   | 21,5 years old<br>% 60 F / % 40 M   |
| What are the preferred terms used by your institution to define:<br><input type="radio"/> Online/distance learning<br><br><input type="radio"/> International online learning<br>(To help define use of terms locally)                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Online learning is the process of learning through different platforms such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Moodle (UET LMS), Google-Meet etc.</li> <li>• International online learning is following international courses/ training from home, through technology.</li> </ul> |
| (Approx.) percentage of students by mode of delivery:<br><input type="radio"/> Online only/ distance learning<br><input type="radio"/> Face-to-face (on-campus) students<br><input type="radio"/> Blended (face-to-face and online/distance learning) | <input type="radio"/> 0%<br><input type="radio"/> 100%<br><input type="radio"/> 0%  |
| If possible, including per level:<br><input type="radio"/> Bachelor<br><input type="radio"/> Masters<br><input type="radio"/> PhD or Doctoral students/candidates<br><input type="radio"/> Further study students                                     | 100% of the students attend face-to-face classes only (on campus) (this was before COVID-19 outbreak).  |
| <input type="radio"/> Do all subjects / courses offer some form of online / distance teaching and learning.<br><input type="radio"/> Are some courses or disciplinary   | All courses are delivered at campus (face-to-face), however for years we have been using a MOODLE platform (UET LMS) for all the courses, to support the face-to-face teaching and learning.<br><br>After the COVID-19 outbreak, almost all courses were  |



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| areas more prevalent online than others?   | transferred to online teaching and learning environments. The digitalization of courses is being performed using MOODLE (UET LMS) and Microsoft TEAMS.   |
| Are students in ALBANIA looking for online courses/ programmes - In which level: BA, MA, PhD?<br>(please state)  | After Covid-19 outbreak, students of all levels appreciate the possibility to follow online courses. Being concerned from the risk of the academic year and courses postponement, students demonstrated a relatively high level of engagement in the online courses since the very beginning.  |
| How many academics involved in teaching delivery:<br>Please define by level (using familiar terms e.g.)<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="radio"/> Full Professor</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Associate Professor</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Assistant Professor</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Teacher Assistants (teachers without a PhD)</li> </ul> | All academic staff are involved in online teaching.<br><br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="radio"/> 25</li> <li><input type="radio"/> 20</li> <li><input type="radio"/> 48</li> <li><input type="radio"/> 50</li> </ul>  |
| Proportion of teaching staff who work<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="radio"/> Full time</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Part time</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="radio"/> % 85</li> <li><input type="radio"/> % 15</li> </ul>   |
| Do you have a National overarching professional standards framework you are working to for Higher Education? (please provide URL as appropriate)   | No.  |
| Do you have a university policy on Online/ distance learning?<br>(please provide URL as appropriate)   | There is no university policy on Online / distance learning; however due to the outbreak of COVID-19 we recognized the need of such a reference resource, and we are currently drafting an internal policy document.   |
| Do you have a university strategy on internationalization (internationalization abroad and at home)? (please provide URL as appropriate)   | Yes, UET has an internalization strategy which is updated in regular basis.<br><a href="http://uet.edu.al/new/internationalization/">http://uet.edu.al/new/internationalization/</a>   |
| Do you have a local institutional education strategy you are working to – what are the key areas of focus?<br>(please provide URL as appropriate)  | We have institutional documents too and there is no coordinated effort at local/regional level. The two main documents at institutional level are as following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="radio"/> Strategic Plan of Education 2015-2020</li> <li><input type="radio"/> Scientific Research Strategy 2017-2020</li> </ul> These documents are currently being revised and soon the new strategies for the next 5 years will be internally published. |
| What was the date/year of the first online course delivered?   | We started online courses with MOODLE on November 2016 for all our university. We didn't include any video or live streaming. We started teaching with full live streaming with Microsoft TEAMS on 16 <sup>th</sup> of March 2020, after the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak.   |
| Are there any staff incentives for providing online / distance education?  | Before COVID-19, no. After the pandemic outbreak, staff if 'highly motivated' to provide online / distance education due to the fear of losing their jobs. We expect that from now on digital teaching will definitively be part of the staff academic portfolio.  |



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| <p>Are teachers/academics motivated to learn new approaches to teaching and learning using ICT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What content/topics?</li> <li>○ Duration (one day, 2-day workshops, just a few hours)?</li> <li>○ Location (at the home university or together with colleagues from other universities)?</li> </ul> | <p>In general, yes - especially young academic staff. They participate in different ICT trainings during the academic year, organized by the IT Unit at UET.</p> <p>We organized every semester a training with all academic staff of how to use technology in teaching, with focus on MOODLE. Those trainings were 2 hours face to face and after that, they got additional training materials by emails and/or in the dedicated training section in MOODLE where is stored all training materials prepared for them. Starting on March 2020, we created some training groups for academic and administrative staff on TEAMS where we conducted live training. The videos are recorded on the STREAM platform and accessible 24 hour for them.</p> |
| <p>Do you have an E-Learning Centre or other Academic Development Centre to support teaching staff in design and delivery of online learning?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What types of support are provided/offered</li> <li>○ Do you have identified Online Education champions at your University</li> </ul>                | <p>We have IT support office which technically supports all professors and lectures during the online courses. We have done live training with the professors for the platforms we use. We also have prepared several video trainings and manuals and distributed them to the staff. All staff has direct live support when they need it. We supported them creating their subject teams on TEAMS and enrolling their students. We keep supporting teachers and students for any difficulties they are facing using these platforms.</p> <p>Young age academic staff (junior staff / MSC and PhD level mostly) are the real 'online education champions' at our university.</p>   |
| <p>What platforms, virtual environments or Learning Management Systems are used for standard provision of online learning at your institution?</p>  | <p>At our university we use Microsoft Teams, a customized version of MOODLE, Microsoft STREAM, Exchange online and Microsoft Azure to provide online courses</p>  |
| <p>Do you have an institutional repository for sharing online educational resources developed by the institution?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ If yes, what kind of content does the repository include</li> <li>○ Provide link?</li> </ul>   | <p>Yes, we have UET Learning Management System (UET LMS), a customized version of MOODLE. All professors and lectures upload their courses-materials in LMS in order to share them with students, since November 2016. <a href="https://lms.uet.edu.al/">https://lms.uet.edu.al/</a></p>  |
| <p>Do you collect / capture student satisfaction scores / percentages with their online/distance education course delivery</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ If yes, what were the percentages for last year?</li> </ul>   | <p>This is the first semester we are providing full live streaming online courses so at the end of the semester we will collect and analyze the student's satisfaction from this process.</p> <p>However, we have done some questionnaire on technology (Moodle) adoption at our university, for study purposes where we collected their perception on using Moodle (UET LMS), but it was not an official study. Even though some of the results, related with issues identified by students for the UET LMS usage level by professors, were delivered to the rector of the university.</p>   |
| <p>Are there any ongoing or future projects to do with online/distance education at your institution?</p>   | <p>UET is currently investing in IT Infrastructure to support all aspect of online learning and teaching, like servers, storage, licenses, etc. Additionally there are several relevant CBHE project being implemented at UET such</p>  |



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|   | <p>as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Virtual Albanian European Universities Exchange – VALEU-X (<a href="http://uet.edu.al/new/virtual-albanian-european-universities-exchange-valeu-x-2019-2021/">http://uet.edu.al/new/virtual-albanian-european-universities-exchange-valeu-x-2019-2021/</a>)</li> <li>○ Accelerating Western Balkans University Modernization by Incorporating Virtual Technologies – VTech@WBU (<a href="http://uet.edu.al/new/vtech-project/">http://uet.edu.al/new/vtech-project/</a>)</li> <li>○ Internationalization at Home: Embedding Approaches and Structures to Foster Internationalization at Western Balkans – INTERBA (<a href="http://uet.edu.al/new/interba/">http://uet.edu.al/new/interba/</a>)</li> </ul> |
| <p>Number of partners with whom you deliver online learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Nationally</li> <li>○ Internationally</li> <li>○ Details of courses which offer/deliver international online learning</li> </ul> | <p>Currently, we do not have any partner institution with which we deliver online learning.</p>  |
| <p>Ambition / plans to collaborate with international partners for online learning design and delivery</p>  | <p>In the future, we will see the possibility to offer dual courses/ training and workshops in distance, as well as online learning design and delivery.</p>   |
| <p>What ICT resources are available to staff and students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Any concerns with access to computers / iPad/ laptops at the institution</li> <li>○ ICT support on campus</li> </ul>              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Computers / laptops</li> <li>○ Laboratories</li> <li>○ Projectors</li> <li>○ Individual access at the UET LMS, Microsoft TEAMS, Microsoft STREAM.</li> <li>○ Online training sections for students and teachers</li> <li>○ Many PCs should be upgraded/replaced to support the software we use for academic purposes.</li> <li>○ Other new hardware and software licenses are needed to fully support the academic process of the university</li> </ul>   |
| <p>Please add anything else you feel is important to share about your university and online /distance learning</p>  | <p>We are planning to include the idea of online courses in our institutional regulation. The online teaching with Microsoft TEAMS is having a very high rate of adoption by our students. AT least 94% of students has used TEAMS at least once during March-April 2020.</p>  |

| Question prompt  | Response  |
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| Name of Higher Education Institution and location / city | EPOKA University<br>Tirana / Albania  |
| Any other campus sites                                   | No  |
| Campus: urban / rural                                    | Suburban  |
| Year established   | 2007-2008 AY  |
| University ranking / Accolades in ALBANIA                | Webometrics - 1 <sup>st</sup> (2018), 2 <sup>nd</sup> (2019), 1 <sup>st</sup> (2020)<br>U-Multirank – 6As |



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| <p>How many students by level:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Bachelor</li> <li>○ Masters</li> <li>○ PhD or Doctoral students/candidates</li> <li>○ Further study students</li> </ul>  | <p>Bachelor – 1610 students<br/>Masters – 623 students<br/>PhD or Doctoral – 32 students</p>   |
| <p>How many students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Full time</li> <li>○ Part time</li> </ul>   | <p>Full time – 2265 students<br/>Part time – 0 students</p>  |
| <p>Average age of students:<br/>Percentage female/male:</p>  | <p>Average age: 20,34 years old<br/>52.06% Female/ 47,94% Male</p>   |
| <p>What are the preferred terms used by your institution to define:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Online/distance learning</li> <li>○ International online learning</li> </ul> <p>(To help define use of terms locally)</p>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Remote Teaching</li> <li>- Online Teaching</li> </ul>   |
| <p>(Approx.) percentage of students by mode of delivery:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Online only/ distance learning</li> <li>○ Face-to-face (on-campus) students</li> <li>○ Blended (face-to-face and online/distance learning)</li> </ul> <p>If possible including per level:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Bachelor</li> <li>○ Masters</li> <li>○ PhD or Doctoral students/candidates</li> <li>○ Further study students</li> </ul> | <p>Normally the university offers only face-to-face (on-campus) teaching and learning activities.</p> <p>Currently, due to COVID-19 all the study programs at all levels have resumed to remote teaching via Microsoft Teams as well as Google Meet/Classroom.</p> |
| <p>Do all subjects / courses offer some form of online / distance teaching and learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Are some courses or disciplinary areas more prevalent online than others?</li> </ul>  | <p>All classes make use of useful platforms like LMS, Google Classroom, and recently Microsoft Teams, thus all classes involve some form of online teaching and learning experiences.</p>  |
| <p>Are students in ALBANIA looking for online courses/ programmes - In which level: BA, MA, PhD?<br/>(please state)</p>  | <p>Currently there is no significant demand for online study programs mainly due to governmental regulations for the recognition of such diplomas.</p>   |
| <p>How many academics involved in teaching delivery<br/>Please define by level (using familiar terms e.g.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Full Professor</li> <li>○ Associate Professor</li> <li>○ Assistant Professor</li> <li>○ Teacher Assistants (teachers without a PhD)</li> </ul>   | <p>10<br/>20<br/>55<br/>48</p>   |
| <p>Proportion of teaching staff who work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Full time</li> <li>○ Part time</li> </ul>  | <p>Full time – 62%<br/>Part time – 38%</p>   |



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| Do you have a National overarching professional standards framework you are working to for Higher Education? (please provide URL as appropriate)  | N/A  |
| Do you have a university policy on Online / distance learning? (please provide URL as appropriate)  | N/A  |
| Do you have a university strategy on internationalization internationalization abroad and at home)? (please provide URL as appropriate)   | EPOKA University Framework Strategy 2018-2022:<br><a href="http://epoka.edu.al/mat/2018%2012%2019_Framework%20Strategy%20and%20Action%20Plan%202018-2022.pdf">http://epoka.edu.al/mat/2018%2012%2019_Framework%20Strategy%20and%20Action%20Plan%202018-2022.pdf</a>  |
| Do you have a local institutional education strategy you are working to – what are the key areas of focus? (please provide URL as appropriate)  | EPOKA University Framework Strategy 2018-2022:<br><a href="http://epoka.edu.al/mat/2018%2012%2019_Framework%20Strategy%20and%20Action%20Plan%202018-2022.pdf">http://epoka.edu.al/mat/2018%2012%2019_Framework%20Strategy%20and%20Action%20Plan%202018-2022.pdf</a>  |
| What was the date/year of the first online course delivered?  | Mid-March, 2020  |
| Are there any staff incentives for providing online / distance education?   | Currently No.  |
| Are teachers/academics motivated to learn new approaches to teaching and learning using ICT<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What content/topics?</li> <li>○ Duration (one day, 2-day workshops, just a few hours)?</li> <li>○ Location (at the home university or together with colleagues from other universities)?</li> </ul> | Trainings for the use of LMS and EIS interactive system and other ICT platforms are held at the beginning of each academic year at EPOKA university.<br><br>Currently, smaller group trainings at Department level were organized for the use of Microsoft-Teams in teaching, meetings, preparation of assignments, quizzes and examinations and other technical issues. |
| Do you have an E-Learning Centre or other Academic Development Centre to support teaching staff in design and delivery of online learning?<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What types of support are provided/offered</li> <li>○ Do you have identified Online Education champions at your University</li> </ul>                | N/A  |
| What platforms, virtual environments or Learning Management Systems are used for standard provision of online learning at your institution?   | LMS, Google classroom/meet, and recently Microsoft Teams   |
| Do you have an institutional repository for sharing online educational resources developed by the institution?<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ If yes, what kind of content does the repository include</li> <li>○ Provide link?</li> </ul>   | Yes, the University has D-space repository.<br><br>Mainly it contains scientific articles, publications, and academic thesis.<br><br><a href="http://dspace.epoka.edu.al/">http://dspace.epoka.edu.al/</a>   |





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| <p>Do you collect / capture student satisfaction scores / percentages with their online/distance education course delivery</p> <p>o If yes, what were the percentages for last year?</p>   | <p>Currently no, given that normally all courses are offered on campus.</p> <p>By the end of this semester such a survey will be conducted to compare the current state of remote teaching with the traditional ones and the level of satisfaction of the students regarding remote teaching.</p>  |
| <p>Are there any ongoing or future projects to do with online/distance education at your institution?</p>  | <p>1. Virtual Albanian European Exchange VALEU-X</p>   |
| <p>Number of partners with whom you deliver online learning</p> <p>o Nationally</p> <p>o Internationally</p> <p>o Details of courses which offer/deliver international online learning</p> | <p>N/A</p>   |
| <p>Ambition / plans to collaborate with international partners for online learning design and delivery</p>   | <p>N/A</p>   |
| <p>What ICT resources are available to staff and students:</p> <p>o Any concerns with access to computers / iPad/ laptops at the institution</p> <p>o ICT support on campus</p>            | <p>There is a variety of ICT resources available at EPOKA campus such as PCs, Laptops, Floor stand touch screen computers, Smart boards, Required Software for each study program as well as e-learning materials and textbooks.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No concern with access to computers and other electronic devices on campus.</li> <li>IT office and ICTC office are always at the support and guidance of staff and students on campus.</li> </ul>  |
| <p>Please add anything else you feel is important to share about your university and online /distance learning</p>   | <p>Currently a great job is done regarding switching from traditional teaching into remote teaching because of COVID-19. Given the noticeably short time for preparation for both staff and students, the switch was smooth and successful.</p> <p>The university is keen on innovation and we believe that even after we turn back to campus some of the courses might continue partially online.</p> <p>With further government regulations we believe that some courses might be fully provided online in cooperation with other international Universities and partner institutions.</p> |

| Question prompt  | Response   |
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| Name of Higher Education Institution and location / city | <p>“FAN S. Noli” University</p> <p>Main campus:</p> <p>Shetitorja “Rilindasit”</p> <p>Korçë, Albania</p> |
| Any other campus sites                                   | <p>Faculty of Natural and Human Sciences</p> <p>Ish-godina e Divizionit, Korçë / Albania</p>             |
| Campus: urban / rural                                    | <p>Urban</p>   |



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| Year established   | 1971- "High Institute of Agriculture"<br>1994- "Fan S. Noli" University  |
| University ranking / Accolades in ALBANIA  | 21.09.2017 – 30.09.2022- 5-year institutional accreditation from the Albanian Agency of HEI Accreditation and the British Agency of Accreditation.<br>The review ranked it among the first two public, and the first four public and non-public higher education institutions in Albania |
| How many students by level:<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Bachelor</li> <li>○ Masters</li> <li>○ PhD or Doctoral students/candidates</li> <li>○ Further study students</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 2364 bachelor students</li> <li>○ 821 professional and scientific master students</li> <li>○ 444 associate degree students</li> </ul> UNIKO also offers life-long learning modules to alumni and teachers-in-duty.                              |
| How many students:<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Full time</li> <li>○ Part time</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 3629</li> <li>○ 0</li> </ul>  |
| Average age of students:<br>Percentage female/male:  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 22.5 years old</li> <li>○ 58% female / 42% male</li> </ul>  |
| What are the preferred terms used by your institution to define:<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Online/distance learning</li> <li>○ International online learning</li> </ul> (To help define use of terms locally)  | 'online learning', 'blended learning', 'distance education' & 'digital education'  |
| (Approx.) percentage of students by mode of delivery:<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Online only/ distance learning</li> <li>○ Face-to-face (on-campus) students</li> <li>○ Blended (face-to-face and online/distance learning)</li> </ul> If possible including per level:<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Bachelor</li> <li>○ Masters</li> <li>○ PhD or Doctoral students/candidates</li> <li>○ Further study students</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 15</li> <li>○ 3629</li> <li>○ 0</li> </ul>  |
| Do all subjects / courses offer some form of online / distance teaching and learning<br><ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Are some courses or disciplinary areas more prevalent online than others?</li> </ul>  | UNIKO offers mainly on-campus teaching/learning. Cases of e-learning have only been part of partnership in international projects.   |
| Are students in ALBANIA looking for online courses/ programmes - In which level: BA, MA, PhD?<br>(please state)  | Students of the second cycle are more likely to attend online courses due to their need for time and place flexible teaching. Most of these students already work part-time, therefore they need a less strict course schedule.  |



|  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>How many academics involved in teaching delivery<br/>Please define by level (using familiar terms e.g.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Full Professor</li> <li>○ Associate Professor</li> <li>○ Assistant Professor</li> <li>○ Teacher Assistants (teachers without a PhD)</li> </ul> | <p>Full-time academic staff:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 4 – Full Professors</li> <li>○ 32 – Associate Professors</li> <li>○ 79 – Assistant Professors/ of which 5 PhD</li> <li>○ 4 - Docents</li> <li>○ 42- Teacher Assistants</li> </ul>   |
| <p>Proportion of teaching staff who work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Full time</li> <li>○ Part time</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ 161/55% full-time academic staff</li> <li>○ 131/45% part-time academic staff</li> </ul>  |
| <p>Do you have a National overarching professional standards framework you are working to for Higher Education? (please provide URL as appropriate)</p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ “The Quality Code”- Agency of Quality Assurance of Higher Education/<a href="http://www.ascal.al/kodi-i-cilesise">www.ascal.al/kodi-i-cilesise</a></li> <li>○ “National Development Strategy 2105-2020”<br/><a href="file:///C:/Users/Benita/Downloads/Strategjia%20SKZHI%20me%20ndryshime%20sipas%20porosise%20se%20mbledhies%20se%20KM%20(2).pdf">file:///C:/Users/Benita/Downloads/Strategjia%20SKZHI%20me%20ndryshime%20sipas%20porosise%20se%20mbledhies%20se%20KM%20(2).pdf</a></li> </ul>   |
| <p>Do you have a university policy on Online / distance learning?<br/>(please provide URL as appropriate)</p>  | <p>UNIKO operates on its Development Strategic Plan 2016-2020, whose main objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Human capacity building on the academic (teaching, learning and research) activity.</li> <li>• Improvement of the infrastructure available to the above.</li> <li>• Internationalization of the academic activity by enhancing research quality.</li> <li>• Collaboration with public and private institutions and sectors in project application.</li> </ul> <p>This development strategy outlines “online learning”, within the strategic internationalization educational plan by engaging new teaching and learning methodologies (e.g., “e-teaching”, “learning through ICT”, “blended learning”), by encouraging academic staff qualification in developing their teaching skills through ICT. It is also part of the research plan by supporting basic research and offering incentives for applied research able to contribute to the development of people and society.</p> |
| <p>Do you have a university strategy on internationalization (internationalization abroad and at home)?<br/>(please provide URL as appropriate)</p>  | <p>Internationalization is part of the UNIKO the Strategic Development Plan 2016-2020.<br/>Currently, the university is working on designing a strategic plan on internationalization which basically aims at enhancing and strengthening relations between UNIKO and different partners abroad.</p>  |
| <p>Do you have a local institutional education strategy you are working to – what are the key areas of focus?<br/>(please provide URL as appropriate)</p>  | <p>One of the priority areas defined in the Strategic Development Plan 2016-2020 of UNIKO is Education with a focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Improving the quality of the study programs, learning outcomes and the profiles of graduates</li> </ul>  |



|  |   |
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|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The opening and restructuring of new study programs to fulfil market demands</li> <li>○ Improving curricula based on learning outcomes</li> <li>○ Enhancing student support services to improve study and living conditions</li> <li>○ Improving teaching quality by engaging new methodologies and encouraging academic staff qualification in developing their teaching skills.</li> </ul>   |
| <p>What was the date/year of the first online course delivered?</p>  | <p>Two online modules have been delivered in the frame of capacity building international projects with students of the second cycle. Further to the developments regarding the COVID-19 and with a reference to the Ordinance of the Minister of Education, Sports and Youth as well as the Ordinance of the Minister of Health and Social Protection, which decided to interrupt the teaching process, and based on the legal framework in force and the Statute of UNIKO, the <i>University through the Senate Decision No. 180, dated 16.03.2020</i>, switched to digital teaching.</p>   |
| <p>Are there any staff incentives for providing online / distance education?</p> <p>Are teachers/academics motivated to learn new approaches to teaching and learning using ICT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What content/topics?</li> <li>○ Duration (one day, 2-day workshops, just a few hours)?</li> </ul> <p>Location (at the home university or together with colleagues from other universities)?</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Faculty is willing and committed to learn new approaches to teaching and learning using ICT, which is clearly manifested by their readiness to attend IT tutorials on digital teaching.</li> <li>○ The topics they show particular interest are related but not limited to:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- class presentations, video lecturing, e-quizzes, simulation tools, material sharing, audio tools, assessment, and vector graphics. 2-day workshops covering the topics mentioned above will fit the needs of our faculty.</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ Due to the faculty the premises of UNIKO seem to be the preferred location.</li> </ul> |
| <p>Do you have an E-Learning Centre or other Academic Development Centre to support teaching staff in design and delivery of online learning?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What types of support are provided/offered</li> <li>○ Do you have identified Online Education champions at your University</li> </ul>   | <p>No centres of this type are established at UNIKO.</p>  |



|   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>What platforms, virtual environments or Learning Management Systems are used for standard provision of online learning at your institution?</p> <p>Do you have an institutional repository for sharing online educational resources developed by the institution?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ If yes, what kind of content does the repository include / Provide link?</li> </ul> | <p>The last few weeks the university has been offering online education to meet the needs of the new social and health situation. It operates through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Moodle-LMS (<a href="https://moodle.unkorce.rash.al/">https://moodle.unkorce.rash.al/</a>),</li> <li>○ Edumeet (<a href="https://edumeet.unkorce.rash.al/">https://edumeet.unkorce.rash.al/</a>),</li> <li>○ Google classroom and Google meet <a href="https://meet.google.com/meet?pli=1">https://meet.google.com/ meet?pli=1</a>.</li> </ul> <p>Students of the second cycle are more likely to attend online courses due to their need for time and place flexible teaching. Most of these students already work part-time, therefore they need a less strict course schedule.</p> <p>UNIKO uses the ESSE3- Digital information System for the HEIs, mainly in terms of the digital student database for online communication with secretaries, academic evaluation, and information on the respective curriculum.</p> |
| <p>Do you collect / capture student satisfaction scores / percentages with their online/distance education course delivery</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ If yes, what were the percentages for last year?</li> </ul>   | <p>The quality of the online course delivery is being monitored by the Rectorate, through questionnaires with the students and teachers. However, it is only in its first steps.</p>  |
| <p>Are there any ongoing or future projects to do with online/distance education at your institution?</p>   | <p>N/A</p>  |
| <p>Number of partners with whom you deliver online learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Nationally</li> <li>○ Internationally</li> <li>○ Details of courses which offer/deliver international online learning</li> </ul>   | <p>N/A</p>  |
| <p>Ambition / plans to collaborate with international partners for online learning design and delivery</p>  | <p>N/A</p>  |
| <p>What ICT resources are available to staff and students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Any concerns with access to computers / iPad/ laptops at the institution</li> <li>○ ICT support on campus</li> </ul>  | <p>UNIKO has not established an e-learning centre yet.</p> <p>It has built an ITC infrastructure which links to the needs of the study programs.</p> <p>It offers 17 IT didactic and research laboratories, used for the improvement of the teaching and learning activities in the university.</p> <p>Their list and specifications are available on:</p>  |




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|---|---|
|   | <a href="https://www.unkorce.edu.al/sq/kerkimi-shkencor">https://www.unkorce.edu.al/sq/kerkimi-shkencor</a> .   |
| Please add anything else you feel is important to share about your university and online /distance learning | The average age of the full-time academic staff (43 years old) can be motivation incentive for the inclusion of online/blended/distance/ virtual learning in their daily teaching experience. |

| Question prompt   | Response   |
|---|--|
| Name of Higher Education Institution and location / city  | “Aleksandër Moisiu” University<br>Durrës /Albania  |
| Any other campus sites  |  |
| Campus: urban / rural   | Urban  |
| Year established  | 2006   |
| University ranking / Accolades in ALBANIA   | 9 <sup>th</sup> in Webometrics 2020  |
| How many students by level:<br><input type="radio"/> Bachelor<br><input type="radio"/> Masters<br><input type="radio"/> PhD or Doctoral students/candidates<br><input type="radio"/> Further study students   | 11,150 BA students<br>4,127 MA students<br>8 PhD students<br>2,269 professional studies students |
| How many students:<br><input type="radio"/> Full time<br><input type="radio"/> Part time  | Av. 22 years old<br>17,554 full time<br>1,535 part time  |
| Average age of students:<br>Percentage female/male:   | 57 % female / 43 % male  |
| What are the preferred terms used by your institution to define:<br><input type="radio"/> Online/distance learning<br><input type="radio"/> International online learning<br>(To help define use of terms locally)                                    | Distance learning  |
| (Approx.) percentage of students by mode of delivery:<br><input type="radio"/> Online only/ distance learning<br><input type="radio"/> Face-to-face (on-campus) students<br><input type="radio"/> Blended (face-to-face and online/distance learning) | All face to face<br><br>All levels   |
| If possible including per level:<br><input type="radio"/> Bachelor<br><input type="radio"/> Masters<br><input type="radio"/> PhD or Doctoral students/candidates<br><input type="radio"/> Further study students                                      |  |



|  |   |                        |               |                            |                |                         |                |                  |                 |
|--|---|------------------------|---------------|----------------------------|----------------|-------------------------|----------------|------------------|-----------------|
| <p>Do all subjects / courses offer some form of online / distance teaching and learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Are some courses or disciplinary areas more prevalent online than others?</li> </ul>  | <p>Some of the courses offer blended learning options.</p>  |                        |               |                            |                |                         |                |                  |                 |
| <p>Are students in ALBANIA looking for online courses/ programmes - In which level: BA, MA, PhD?<br/>(please state)</p>  | <p>Students are looking for online programs especially in MA and PhD levels.</p>  |                        |               |                            |                |                         |                |                  |                 |
| <p>How many academics involved in teaching delivery<br/>Please define by level (using familiar terms e.g.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Full Professor</li> <li>o Associate Professor</li> <li>o Assistant Professor</li> <li>o Teacher Assistants (teachers without a PhD)</li> </ul> | <table border="0"> <tr> <td>13 Full time Prof. Dr.</td> <td>+ 1 Part time</td> </tr> <tr> <td>41 Full time Prof. As. Dr.</td> <td>+ 14 Part time</td> </tr> <tr> <td>162 Full time Dr. / PhD</td> <td>+ 24 Part time</td> </tr> <tr> <td>85 Full time Msc</td> <td>+ 116 Part time</td> </tr> </table>  | 13 Full time Prof. Dr. | + 1 Part time | 41 Full time Prof. As. Dr. | + 14 Part time | 162 Full time Dr. / PhD | + 24 Part time | 85 Full time Msc | + 116 Part time |
| 13 Full time Prof. Dr.   | + 1 Part time   |                        |               |                            |                |                         |                |                  |                 |
| 41 Full time Prof. As. Dr.   | + 14 Part time  |                        |               |                            |                |                         |                |                  |                 |
| 162 Full time Dr. / PhD  | + 24 Part time  |                        |               |                            |                |                         |                |                  |                 |
| 85 Full time Msc   | + 116 Part time   |                        |               |                            |                |                         |                |                  |                 |
| <p>Proportion of teaching staff who work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Full time</li> <li>o Part time</li> </ul>  | <p>308 - 65%<br/>170 - 35%</p>  |                        |               |                            |                |                         |                |                  |                 |
| <p>Do you have a National overarching professional standards framework you are working to for Higher Education? (please provide URL as appropriate)</p>  | <p><a href="https://www.ascal.al/en/quality-assurance/quality-code">https://www.ascal.al/en/quality-assurance/quality-code</a></p>  |                        |               |                            |                |                         |                |                  |                 |
| <p>Do you have a university policy on Online / distance learning?<br/>(please provide URL as appropriate)</p>  | <p>No</p>   |                        |               |                            |                |                         |                |                  |                 |
| <p>Do you have a university strategy on internationalization (internationalization abroad and at home)?<br/>(please provide URL as appropriate)</p>  | <p>The internationalization strategy is under finalization. The strategy objectives are as follows:<br/>1. Internationalization of study programs, through the organization and provision of joint and / or dual degrees with foreign partner universities in the framework of certain study programs of common interest through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o programs that support academic and administrative staff exchanges;</li> <li>o programs that support the exchange of students of different study cycles for semester study periods (or longer) or for teaching internship periods;</li> <li>o joint activities and publications in the field of scientific research and / or innovation;</li> <li>o conferences, seminars, academic meetings, events, summer schools, etc. that promote capacity building as well as the quality of teaching and learning;</li> <li>o increasing the number of joint and / or double programs in English or other;</li> <li>o increasing the number of foreign students studying at this university;</li> <li>o providing study programs in English.</li> </ul> |                        |               |                            |                |                         |                |                  |                 |



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|---|--|
|   | <p>2. Development of cooperation and promotion of partnerships at local, national, Balkan and international level;<br/>UAMD is committed to developing cooperation and fostering partnerships at the local, national, Balkan and international levels. A considerable number of cooperation agreements have been signed with higher education institutions at home and abroad.</p> <p>3. Increase in number and quality of implementation of development projects in field of scientific research, technology, innovation, and technology transfer.</p> <p>4. Development and strengthening of the structures of the Directory of Project and Foreign Relations and the supporting ones, for the successful implementation of projects and intensification of foreign relations.</p> |
| <p>Do you have a local institutional education strategy you are working to – what are the key areas of focus?<br/>(please provide URL as appropriate)</p>   | <p>The educational strategy of 2016-2020</p>  <p>Plani strategjik i miratuar.pdf</p>  |
| <p>What was the date/year of the first online course delivered?</p>   | <p>March 2020</p>  |
| <p>Are there any staff incentives for providing online / distance education?</p>  | <p>No</p>  |
| <p>Are teachers/academics motivated to learn new approaches to teaching and learning using ICT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What content/topics?</li> <li>○ Duration (one day, 2-day workshops, just a few hours)?</li> <li>○ Location (at the home university or together with colleagues from other universities)?</li> </ul> | <p>Staff is motivated to learn more on blended learning and distance learning. Workshop would be a particularly good option.</p>   |
| <p>Do you have an E-Learning Centre or other Academic Development Centre to support teaching staff in design and delivery of online learning?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What types of support are provided/offered</li> <li>○ Do you have identified Online Education champions at your University</li> </ul>                | <p>Lifelong Learning Center offers training on Blended Learning, Digital Literacy etc.<br/>We have staff who are Moodle Certified Trainers.</p>  |
| <p>What platforms, virtual environments or Learning Management Systems are used for standard provision of online learning at your institution?</p>  | <p>Google Classroom, EZtalks, Moodle, Zoom</p>   |





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| <p>Do you have an institutional repository for sharing online educational resources developed by the institution?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ If yes, what kind of content does the repository include</li> <li>○ Providelink?</li> </ul> | <p>We are working on a personalized Learning Management System.</p>   |
| <p>Do you collect / capture student satisfaction scores / percentages with their online/distance education course delivery</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ If yes, what were the percentages for last year?</li> </ul>                        | <p>We have prepared a survey to see the satisfaction of our students with distance learning. 75 percent of them are satisfied.</p>  |
| <p>Are there any ongoing or future projects to do with online/distance education at your institution?</p>  | <p>Developing teacher competencies for a comprehensive vet system in Albania - TEAVET<br/>Accelerating Western Balkans University Modernization by Incorporating Virtual Technologies - VTECH</p> |
| <p>Number of partners with whom you deliver online learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Nationally</li> <li>○ Internationally</li> <li>○ Details of courses which offer/deliver international online learning:</li> </ul>                 | <p>0</p>  |
| <p>Ambition / plans to collaborate with international partners for online learning design and delivery</p>   | <p>We are trying to establish collaborations with other institutions in delivering online learning courses</p>  |
| <p>What ICT resources are available to staff and students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Any concerns with access to computers / iPad/ laptops at the institution</li> <li>○ ICT support on campus</li> </ul>                               | <p>We have labs for each faculty and specialist taking care of ICT issues on campus.</p>  |
| <p>Please add anything else you feel is important to share about your university and online /distance learning</p>   |   |

| Question prompt  | Response  |
|--|---|
| Name of Higher Education Institution and location / city | University of "Luigj Gurakuqi"<br>Shkoder / Albania, Rectorate: Sheshi "2 Prilli", Shkodra, Albania   |
| Any other campus sites                                   | Faculty of Social Sciences, Natural Sciences, Economics and Law: Street "Jeronim De Rada" 4, Shkodra, Albania;<br>Faculty of Foreign Languages: Street "Don Bosko"4001, Shkodra, Albania; Faculty of Education Sciences: Ish-Spitali Civil, |
| Campus: urban / rural                                    | Urban   |



|   |  |        |                  |     |     |     |  |        |  |    |  |
|---|--|--------|------------------|-----|-----|-----|--|--------|--|----|--|
| Year established  | 1957   |        |                  |     |     |     |  |        |  |    |  |
| University ranking /Accolades in ALBANIA  | 3 <sup>rd</sup> <a href="https://www.4icu.org/al/">https://www.4icu.org/al/</a><br>6 <sup>th</sup> (2006)<br>12 <sup>th</sup> <a href="https://www.webometrics.info/en/Europe/Albania">https://www.webometrics.info/en/Europe/Albania</a>  |        |                  |     |     |     |  |        |  |    |  |
| How many students by level:<br><input type="radio"/> Bachelor<br><input type="radio"/> Masters<br><input type="radio"/> PhD or Doctoral students/candidates<br><input type="radio"/> Further study students   | Bachelor: 4,227<br>Masters: 1,324<br>PhD or Doctoral students/candidates: 8  |        |                  |     |     |     |  |        |  |    |  |
| How many students:<br><input type="radio"/> Full time<br><input type="radio"/> Part time  | Full time: 5,559<br>Part time: 172   |        |                  |     |     |     |  |        |  |    |  |
| Average age of students:<br>Percentage female/male:   | 25-30<br>60% F/ 40% M  |        |                  |     |     |     |  |        |  |    |  |
| What are the preferred terms used by your institution to define:<br><input type="radio"/> Online/distance learning<br><input type="radio"/> International online learning<br>(To help define use of terms locally)  | Online learning  |        |                  |     |     |     |  |        |  |    |  |
| (Approx.) percentage of students by mode of delivery:<br><input type="radio"/> Online only/ distance learning<br><input type="radio"/> Face-to-face (on-campus) students<br><input type="radio"/> Blended (face-to-face and online/distance learning)<br>If possible including per level:<br><input type="radio"/> Bachelor<br><input type="radio"/> Masters<br><input type="radio"/> PhD or Doctoral students/candidates<br><input type="radio"/> Further study students | <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; text-align: center;">Before</td> <td style="width: 50%; text-align: center;">Nowadays: online</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">90%</td> <td style="text-align: center;">90%</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">10%</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">Master</td> <td></td> </tr> </table> | Before | Nowadays: online | 90% | 90% | 10% |  | Master |  |    |  |
| Before  | Nowadays: online   |        |                  |     |     |     |  |        |  |    |  |
| 90%   | 90%  |        |                  |     |     |     |  |        |  |    |  |
| 10%   |  |        |                  |     |     |     |  |        |  |    |  |
| Master  |  |        |                  |     |     |     |  |        |  |    |  |
| Do all subjects / courses offer some form of online / distance teaching and learning<br><input type="radio"/> Are some courses or disciplinary areas more prevalent online than others?   | ICT, Social work, Pedagogy, Foreign languages  |        |                  |     |     |     |  |        |  |    |  |
| Are students in ALBANIA looking for online courses/ programmes - In which level: BA, MA, PhD?<br>(please state)   | Usually Master. A few PhD (Italy)  |        |                  |     |     |     |  |        |  |    |  |
| How many academics involved in teaching delivery<br>Please define by level (using familiar terms e.g.)<br><input type="radio"/> Full Professor<br><input type="radio"/> Associate Professor<br><input type="radio"/> Assistant Professor<br><input type="radio"/> Teacher Assistants (teachers without a PhD)   | <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;"></td> <td style="width: 50%; text-align: center;">192</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">12</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">37</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">91</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">52</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>                |        | 192              | 12  |     | 37  |  | 91     |  | 52 |  |
|   | 192  |        |                  |     |     |     |  |        |  |    |  |
| 12  |  |        |                  |     |     |     |  |        |  |    |  |
| 37  |  |        |                  |     |     |     |  |        |  |    |  |
| 91  |  |        |                  |     |     |     |  |        |  |    |  |
| 52  |  |        |                  |     |     |     |  |        |  |    |  |



|  |   |
|--|---|
| Proportion of teaching staff who work<br><input type="radio"/> Full time<br><input type="radio"/> Part time                                      | 50.52%<br>49.48%  |
| Do you have a National overarching professional standards framework you are working to for Higher Education? (please provide URL as appropriate) | Yes<br><br><a href="https://www.ascal.al/media/documents/publikime/Kodi-Cilesise-se-Arsimit-te-Larte.pdf">https://www.ascal.al/media/documents/publikime/Kodi-Cilesise-se-Arsimit-te-Larte.pdf</a>  |
| Do you have a university policy on Online / distance learning? (please provide URL as appropriate)   | Part of Strategy of our University is integration of ICT in teaching / learning; to apply new and sustainable teaching methods, so as to improve the learning process, Learning Management System (LMS) is a virtual learning environment supported by the university, an environment on the web, designed to equip students and their lecturers with a range of tools and resources to facilitate the study and teaching both for students and teachers.<br><a href="https://unishk.edu.al/en/university/documents/strategy">https://unishk.edu.al/en/university/documents/strategy</a>  |
| Do you have a university strategy on internationalization internationalization abroad and at home)? (please provide URL as appropriate)          | Yes<br><br><a href="https://unishk.edu.al/en/university/documents/strategy">https://unishk.edu.al/en/university/documents/strategy</a>  |
| Do you have a local institutional education strategy you are working to – what are the key areas of focus? (please provide URL as appropriate)   | Yes.<br>Priority: 1. Teaching. USH seeks the assurance of a qualitative teaching and the greater involvement of both lecturers and students into the research process as well as the enhancement of the competitiveness of USH diplomas in the labour market.<br>Priority: 2. Research and Innovation. USH has as a main vision the production of a scientific research with high standards, able to compete nationally and internationally, primarily aiming the support of the university education on its three levels, but especially on its third level (the doctoral studies).<br>Priority: 3. Internationalisation. USH aims to increase its international reputation by providing high quality education and the impact of research that it conducts, and the services provided to the society. Through international research projects, student mobility, administration, and academic staff, it can contribute to enhancing the quality of university administration, teaching and research in all the fields covered by the university.<br><a href="https://unishk.edu.al/fileadmin/user_upload/2019-2020/strategjite/1.1_development_strategy_2017-21.pdf">https://unishk.edu.al/fileadmin/user_upload/2019-2020/strategjite/1.1_development_strategy_2017-21.pdf</a> |
| What was the date/year of the first online course delivered?   | 20 March 2020   |
| Are there any staff incentives for providing online / distance education?  | Yes, Colleges from department of Psychology of Social Work  |



|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>Are teachers/academics motivated to learn new approaches to teaching and learning using ICT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What content/topics?</li> <li>○ Duration (one day, 2-day workshops, just a few hours)?</li> <li>○ Location (at the home university or together with colleagues from other universities)?</li> </ul> | <p>Yes, they are very motivated, but we don't have the proper infrastructure.</p> <p>About use of digital platforms; methodology</p> <p>One day;</p> <p>At the home university</p>                                       |
| <p>Do you have an E-Learning Centre or other Academic Development Centre to support teaching staff in design and delivery of online learning?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What types of support are provided/offered</li> <li>○ Do you have identified Online Education champions at your University</li> </ul>                | <p>We have The Continuing Education Training Laboratory It may help to learn online in the future.</p> <p>Courses in Lifelong Learning</p> <p>YES</p>  |
| <p>What platforms, virtual environments or Learning Management Systems are used for standard provision of online learning at your institution?</p>  | <p>Moodle;<br/>Microsoft teams;<br/>Zoom;<br/>Google Classroom</p>   |
| <p>Do you have an institutional repository for sharing online educational resources developed by the institution?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ If yes, what kind of content does the repository include</li> <li>○ Provide link?</li> </ul>   | <p>Moodle<br/><a href="http://lms.unishk.edu.al/moodle/">http://lms.unishk.edu.al/moodle/</a></p>  |
| <p>Do you collect / capture student satisfaction scores / percentages with their online/distance education course delivery</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ If yes, what were the percentages for last year?</li> </ul>   | <p>Now 90/%</p>  |
| <p>Are there any ongoing or future projects to do with online/distance education at your institution?</p>   | <p>YES, an alternative way in all circumstances<br/>The Continuing Education Training Laboratory can help for the moments for online learning. In the future we think the create e new Lab only for online learning.</p> |
| <p>Number of partners with whom you deliver online learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Nationally</li> <li>○ Internationally</li> <li>○ Details of courses which offer/deliver international online learning</li> </ul>   | <p>Tirana, Elbasan, Korça<br/>Italy, Spain<br/>They are planned some courses in Social work branch with T@SK Project</p>   |
| <p>Ambition / plans to collaborate with international partners for online learning design and delivery</p>  | <p>Yes, we have planned to realize the complete the T@SK Project and to start new projects, as VALEU_X</p>   |



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| <p>What ICT resources are available to staff and students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Any concerns with access to computers / iPad/ laptops at the institution</li> <li>○ ICT support on campus</li> </ul> | <p>Computers</p> <p>ICT support on campus</p>  |
| <p>Please add anything else you feel is important to share about your university and online /distance learning</p>   | <p>In our University online /distance learning for Master student would be more necessary, especially since they work.</p> |

| Question prompt  | Response   |
|--|--|
| Name of Higher Education Institution and location / city   | University of Elbasan "Aleksandër Xhuvani"<br>Elbasan / Albania  |
| Any other campus sites   | No   |
| Campus: urban / rural  | Urban  |
| Year established   | 1991   |
| University ranking/ Accolades in ALBANIA   | Webmetrics: 13 <sup>th</sup><br>( <a href="https://www.webometrics.info/en/Europe/Albania">https://www.webometrics.info/en/Europe/Albania</a> )  |
| <p>How many students by level:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Bachelor</li> <li>○ Masters</li> <li>○ PhD or Doctoral students/candidates</li> <li>○ Further study students</li> </ul>  | <p>For the academic year 2019-2020:</p> <p>6877 Bachelor students</p> <p>1849 Masters students</p> <p>802 professional degrees students</p>  |
| <p>How many students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Fulltime</li> <li>○ Part time</li> </ul>  | <p>9528 full time students</p> <p>0 part time students</p>   |
| <p>Average age of students:</p> <p>Percentage female/male:</p>   | <p>Average age of students is 22 years old.</p> <p>62,76 % of the students are female</p>  |
| <p>What are the preferred terms used by your institution to define:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Online/distance learning</li> <li>○ International online learning</li> </ul> <p>(To help define use of terms locally)</p>   | <p>In University of Elbasan, these terms have these meanings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Online/Distance learning- a method of deliberating the teaching and learning process by correspondence, without the need of attending classes in the institution facilities.</li> <li>○ International online learning- courses offered in foreign language for international students through distance learning.</li> </ul>   |
| <p>(Approx.) percentage of students by mode of delivery:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Online only/ distance learning</li> <li>○ Face-to-face (on-campus) students</li> <li>○ Blended (face-to-face and online/distance learning)</li> </ul> <p>If possible including per level:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Bachelor</li> <li>○ Masters</li> <li>○ PhD or Doctoral students/candidates</li> <li>○ Further study students</li> </ul> | <p>The percentage of students at University of Elbasan by mode of delivery of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Online only/ distance learning is 0%</li> <li>○ Face-to-face (on-campus) students is 100%</li> <li>○ Blended (face-to-face and online/distance learning) is 2.1 %</li> </ul> <p>Per Level</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Bachelor</li> </ul> <p>Online only/ distance learning is 0%</p> <p>Face-to-face (on-campus) students is 100%</p> <p>Blended (face-to-face and online/distance learning) is 2.9 %</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Master</li> </ul> |



|  |  |
|--|--|
|  | <p>Online only/ distance learning is 0%</p> <p>Face-to-face (on-campus) students is 100%</p> <p>Blended (face-to-face and online/distance learning) is 0 %</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Professional degrees studies</li> </ul> <p>Online only/ distance learning is 0%</p> <p>Face-to-face (on-campus) students is 100%</p> <p>Blended (face-to-face and online/distance learning) is 0 %</p> |
| <p>Do all subjects / courses offer some form of online / distance teaching and learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Are some courses or disciplinary areas more prevalent online than others?</li> </ul>  | <p>There are courses that can be offered online or for distance teaching and learning, but our experience so far has been in class only. However, at the actual situation we are also offering for online teaching and learning all the courses of the department of Social Science based on our in-house equipment and software</p>   |
| <p>Are students in ALBANIA looking for online courses/ programmes - In which level: BA, MA,PhD?</p> <p>(please state)</p>  | <p>There has been trend in increase demand of online courses, mostly from students who are interested in MA or PhD studies</p>   |
| <p>How many academics involved in teaching delivery:</p> <p>Please define by level (using familiar terms e.g.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Full Professor</li> <li>o Associate Professor</li> <li>o Assistant Professor</li> <li>o Teacher Assistants (teachers without a PhD)</li> </ul> | <p>The number of the academic full-time staff involved in teaching delivery is divided as follow:</p> <p>Full professor: 12</p> <p>Associated professor: 61</p> <p>PhD: 96</p> <p>Docent: 13</p> <p>MSc: 52</p>  |
| <p>Proportion of teaching staff who work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Fulltime</li> <li>o Part time</li> </ul>   | <p>Proportion of teaching staff who work full time and part time is as follows:</p> <p>Full time staff: 237</p> <p>Part time staff: 503</p>  |
| <p>Do you have a National overarching professional standards framework you are working to for Higher Education? (please provide URL as appropriate)</p>  | <p>Yes, Ministry of Education Sports and Youth, has published the national strategy for science, technology and innovation 2017-2022, available at:</p> <p><a href="https://arsimi.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Vendimi-KM_710_01.12.2017_Strategjia-e-Kerkimit-Shkencor.pdf">https://arsimi.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Vendimi-KM_710_01.12.2017_Strategjia-e-Kerkimit-Shkencor.pdf</a></p>       |
| <p>Do you have a university policy on Online / distance learning?</p> <p>(please provide URL as appropriate)</p>   | <p>Currently no.</p>   |
| <p>Do you have a university strategy on internationalization (internationalization abroad and at home)? (please provide URL as appropriate)</p>  | <p>Yes, we do.</p> <p>The University has a strategy on internalization, mainly abroad. The strategy is available at:</p> <p><a href="http://uniel.edu.al/index.php/al/universiteti">http://uniel.edu.al/index.php/al/universiteti</a></p>  |



|   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>Do you have a local institutional education strategy you are working to – what are the key areas of focus?<br/>(please provide URL as appropriate)</p>   | <p>Yes, UE has a strategy that it is being implemented since 2016. This strategy has these key elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Students</li> <li>○ Curricula</li> <li>○ human resources</li> <li>○ internationalization</li> <li>○ funding</li> <li>○ cooperation</li> <li>○ infrastructure and Technology</li> </ul> <p>The strategy may be founded at:<br/><a href="http://uniel.edu.al/index.php/al/universiteti">http://uniel.edu.al/index.php/al/universiteti</a></p>                                       |
| <p>What was the date/year of the first online course delivered?</p>   | <p>The first online course was delivered in 11/11/2019.</p>   |
| <p>Are there any staff incentives for providing online / distance education?</p>  | <p>The academic staff is very eager to better improve the learning process and of course they also have shown a great interest in providing online teaching. This is also based on the latest experience, where all professors are providing online teaching, while in the mean time they are also learning and improving their tech skills in on/line learning</p>   |
| <p>Are teachers/academics motivated to learn new approaches to teaching and learning using ICT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What content/topics?</li> <li>○ Duration (one day, 2-day workshops, just a few hours)?</li> <li>○ Location (at the home university or together with colleagues from other universities)?</li> </ul> | <p>By so far, they have been very collaborative in new technology for online learning. Some of them have also taken tech courses form professional IT staff on using different platforms for online teaching.</p> <p>Content: trainings for Moodle, google classroom and zoom platforms</p> <p>Duration: three days</p> <p>Some of the trainings took place in Shkoder and Tirana in collaboration with two other universities. Also, there have been trainings at home university in collaboration with the IT and academic staff.</p> |
| <p>Do you have an E-Learning Centre or other Academic Development Centre to support teaching staff in design and delivery of online learning?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What types of support are provided/offered?</li> <li>○ Do you have identified Online Education champions at your University</li> </ul>               | <p>At the moment, we have only had one E-Learning centre for one department only.</p> <p>In house support from the IT staff.</p>  |
| <p>What platforms, virtual environments or Learning Management Systems are used for standard provision of online learning at your institution?</p>  | <p>As LMS platform we are using Moodle</p>  |
| <p>Do you have an institutional repository for sharing online educational resources developed by the institution?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ If yes, what kind of content does the repository include</li> <li>○ Providelink?</li> </ul>  | <p>We have two main systems in our university:<br/>First is Educational Management System, which is the main database of our university including student's assessments, Financial recordings, academic and administrative staff, courses, programs etc. The second system is for E-Learning based on Moodle platform, but available for one department only</p>  |



|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>Do you collect / capture student satisfaction scores / percentages with their online/distance education course delivery</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>o If yes, what were the percentages for last year?</li></ul>     | <p>We do have another platform for collecting student's satisfaction or holding other types of survey.</p> <p>This is our first year on implementing and using the LMS platform, so by far we have not such record</p>   |
| <p>Are there any ongoing or future projects to do with online/distance education at your institution?</p>   | <p>We are looking forward to expanding our capabilities in infrastructure and tech equipment's in order to offer the online teaching service to other interested departments and faculties</p>   |
| <p>Number of partners with whom you deliver online learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>o Nationally</li><li>o Internationally</li><li>o Details of courses which offer/deliver international online learning</li></ul> | <p>None</p>  |
| <p>Ambition / plans to collaborate with international partners for online learning design and delivery</p>  | <p>We are open to any new collaboration with national and international partners in order to better serve our students and exchange knowledge with other institutions and universities</p>   |
| <p>What ICT resources are available to staff and students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>o Any concerns with access to computers / iPad/ laptops at the institution</li><li>o ICT support on campus</li></ul>             | <p>We have labs for most the courses offered in our university</p> <p>Also, one our faculty has the latest technology WiFi for all the students and the academic staff</p> <p>We do have an IT department which takes care for any issue, maintenance and trainings needed</p> |
| <p>Please add anything else you feel is important to share about your university and online /distance learning</p>  |  |





# ANNEX II: Academic Survey

VALEU-X: Virtual Albanian European Universities Exchange.

Dear survey respondent,

The purpose of this survey is to identify the current state of virtual collaborative learning in the Albanian higher education context. This survey is conducted as part of an Erasmus+ Capacity Building Project (VALEU-X) implemented by a consortium of Albanian and European universities.

VALEU-X addresses the limited exposure of Albanian university students and academics to international experience in virtual collaborative learning. It proposes blending on-campus teaching activities with international Virtual Collaborative Learning (VCL) components as a Virtual Mobility element to introduce international perspectives in formal study programs within a holistic approach of Internationalization at Home.

The specific objectives of VALEU-X and of this study are defined as follows:

1. Qualification of academic staff at Albanian Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) on modern pedagogical and didactical methodologies for innovative virtual teaching and learning settings.
2. Supporting Albanian HEIs in adopting and implementing effective ICT-based internationalization at home activities and integrate Albanian HEIs in a global network for "Virtual Mobility".
3. Qualification of administrative staff at Albanian HEIs in adopting Virtual/Blended Mobility as part of their institutional internationalization strategy.

Considering your institutions' pre-COVID-19 and current status and activities of online teaching and virtual collaborative learning, we kindly request from you to answer the questions below and contribute to the development of this area in the Albanian higher education system. Your answers are valuable for this project's results and will be used only in project activities and reporting.

Thank you for your time and collaboration!

## PART 1: Institutional & Demographic questions

Which institution are you from?

- European University of Tirana (UET)
- Epoka University (EPOKA)
- University Fan s. Noli (UNIKO)
- Aleksandër Moisiu University of Durrës (UAMD)
- "Luigj Gurakuqi" University of Shkodra (UNISHK)
- University of Elbasan "Aleksander Xhuvani" (UEAXH)
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_



What is your role at the university?

- Professor
- Associate Professor
- Lecturer (PhD/Dr)
- Assistant Lecturer (PhDc, MSc)
- Research Asisstant
- Technical Staff
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

What is your discipline of teaching, if you have an academic position at your university?

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If you have an academic position at your university, for how long have you been teaching?

- Less than a year
- 1 - 5 years
- 6 - 10 years
- 11 - 15 years
- 16 - 20 years
- 21 years and above

What is you gender?

- Female
- Male
- Diverse

## PART 2: Virtual Mobility

Do you think virtual mobility and online teaching/digital resources are suitable for higher education teaching and learning in Albania?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

Have you been teaching online, before COVID-19?

- Yes, Regularly
- No
- Rarely

How confident would you say you are in using online resources from well-known international e-libraries?

- Highly confident
- Moderately confident
- Neither confident or not confident



- Slightly confident
- Not at all confident

Due to the COVID-19 health emergency, do you use more online resources (e-libraries)?

- Not at all
- Not so much
- Yes, most of the time
- Yes, all the time

Do you have international experiences (staff mobility) abroad?

- Yes
- No

Do you have experiences with international projects?

- Yes (If yes, how many? \_\_\_\_\_ )
- No (If not, why? \_\_\_\_\_ )

Which of the following international exchange programs have been used by your institution?

- Physical exchange
- Digital exchange
- Hybrid exchange (digital and physical)
- No exchange at all

Is there a possibility of recognition for Credit Points from Students gained through international exchange programs at your institution?

- Yes for digital and physical exchange activities
- Yes only for physical exchange activities
- Yes only for digital exchange activities
- There is no recognition

Do you have connection/ network with international staff (from your experiences abroad or from their experiences to your home university)?

- Few one (less than 5)
- Some (6-10)
- Many of my connections (more than 10)

How often do you contact / work with international contacts/networks regarding your teaching practices?

- International cooperation is daily part of my everyday working life
- Once a week or less I am cooperating with international partners
- Once a month or less there is contact and exchange
- Once a Semester I have some contact with international colleagues
- Less than one Semester there is contact with international colleagues

Do you use online resources from your international colleagues in your teaching and learning practice?



- Yes, regularly
- I have just started now as part of the COVID-19 massive shifting to online teaching
- No

If NO, please tell us why?

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In the following you see the main characteristics of Virtual Mobility. Please check all points which your institution can show:

- Cooperation of at least to Higher Education Institutes (international)
- Existence of an ICT supported learning environment with virtual components
- Recognition of Credit points gained through international exchange
- Integration of ICT in Education and Business processes

Regarding the last question: What would you need to realize all the mentioned points? (Please check all that apply)

- More Contacts to international Higher Education Institutes
  - Buy ICT Equipment
  - Training with ICT Equipment
  - Accreditation Training for international recognition of ECTS
  - Other Support
- 

## PART 3: Digital Learning Resources & Training

**How confident are you designing digital activities in foreign language (different from Albanian) to support different learning outcomes?**

- Highly confident
- Moderate confident
- Neither confident or not confident
- Slightly confident
- Not at all confident
- Not applicable

**Which of these options best describes how you plan a learning session to include the use of digital technologies?**

(Please select all that apply)

- I put in place any support I might need
- I plan around the technologies that are familiar to me
- I design digital activities to support the learning outcomes
- I have a range of digital activities I can deploy to meet learners' needs
- I am rushing into online teaching due to the COVID-19 restrictions

**When planning an online learning session or course, which of these do you do?**

(Please select all that apply)



- Look for relevant national and international examples or materials online
- Consider how students could use their own digital devices
- Check students have the digital skills they need
- Provide alternatives in case of any technical issues
- Try new technologies or approaches to challenge yourself
- Share your ideas online with other teaching professionals

**What would you need / what is missing to design a proper online course**

- Training Materials about “how to design” an online course didactically
- Training Materials about “how to design” an online course technically
- Knowledge about support and supervising students in online courses
- Experience in online teaching
- More students who are able to attend

**How confident are you about using digital resources within the rules of copyright, in national and international level?**

- Highly confident
- Moderately confident
- Neither confident or not confident
- Slightly confident
- Not at all confident
- Not applicable

**Which of the following best describes your approach to choosing and using digital resources for online-learning?**

(Please select all that apply).

- I provide digital learning resources when I have to
- I find quality learning resources to suit the topic I am teaching
- I find and adapt learning resources to meet my students’ needs
- I create my own learning resources, drawing on the best examples

**Which of these digital activities normally take place in your face to face classes?**

(Please select all that apply)

- Live polling/quizzing
- Live internet searches or missions
- Learners record ideas e.g. via padlet
- Learners make audio/video recording
- Learners present their work in a digital medium
- Learners collaborate on digital projects
- None of the above

**Which of these resource type have you produced for learners to use before COVID-19?**

(Please select all that apply)

- Online quiz
- Video clip



- Voice-over slides
- Image or animation
- Web page or multimedia object
- Simulation, app or game
- Other

**Which of this resource type have you produced/ are you planning to produce for learners to use during COVID-19?**

- (Please select all that apply)
- Online quiz
- Video clip
- Voice-over slides
- Image or animation
- Web page or multimedia object
- Simulation, app or game
- Other

**How confident are you in assessing digital tools or resources which are accessible for all your students, in Albania or abroad?**

- Highly confident
- Moderately confident
- Neither confident or not confident
- Slightly confident
- Not at all confident
- Not applicable

**Are you able to offer any of your courses online for foreign students?**

- Yes
- No

**How do you ensure students can access the digital learning opportunities you offer?**

(Please select all that apply).

- I assume they have the devices they need
- I assume they have the skills they need
- I signpost students to sources of support
- I check they have the devices they need for any new activity
- I check they have the skills they need for any new activity
- I design activities that let students showcase different digital skills

**Which of these measures have you taken to support digital inclusion?**

(Please select all that apply)

- Help learners to use assistive software or interfaces use legible fonts and colour contrasts
- Provide text alternatives to visual media
- Check students have equitable access to devices



- Design content to be mobile-friendly
- Signpost students to sources of digital support

**Which of the following best describes your approach to designing an online lecture for your national or international students?**

- I make sure I cover everything that's in the note
- I choose images and lay-outs to make it visually engaging
- I use graphics, transitions and interactive elements such as polling
- I use educational design principles and a range of presentation media
- I use different examples and international case studies

**How confident do you feel about teaching in a live online environment e.g. webinar platform?**

- Highly confident
- Moderately confident
- Neither confident or not confident
- Slightly confident
- Not at all confident
- Not applicable

**Due to COVID-19, did you shift your face-to-face classes to an online platform?**

- Yes, all classes
- No, none of the classes
- Some of my classes

**If you shifted your classes online due to Covid-19 pandemic, to what extent you think you were ready for this transition?**

- I was not ready, but it was mandatory to shift
- I was ready, I was expecting it
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Which of the following best describes your approach to teaching online (whether you are working in a fully online or in a blended setting)?**

Please select all that apply.

- I try to leave online teaching to the specialists
- I am comfortable facilitating online discussions (text-based)
- I can teach in any online environment e.g. webinar, text-based, video
- I use public media e.g. Facebook, blogs, alongside an online platform
- I am flexible in scheduling online teaching in order to fulfill participants expectations.

**Which of these online activities do you set for your students?**

(Please select all that apply).

- Live discussion (audio/chat)
- Asynchronous discussion (not live)
- Collate links or reference



- Collaborate on a presentation or project
- Review or annotate each other's work
- Contribute to a live wiki or blog
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Regarding the last question: which of the online activities would you practice but you can't because you need more training?**

- Live discussion (audio/chat)
- Asynchronous discussion (not live)
- Collate links or reference
- Collaborate on a presentation or project
- Review or annotate each other's work
- Contribute to a live wiki or blog
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

**How confident are you that you support students to become confident digital learners?**

(Please select all that apply).

- Highly confident
- Moderately confident
- Neither confident or not confident
- Slightly confident
- Not at all confident
- Not applicable

**Which of the following best represents your attitude to the digital skills students need for work?**

- Students discuss this with the careers/employability team/student support
- I make sure students practice basic digital skills
- I set students digital tasks that reflect workplace trends
- I make digital futures a key theme for discussion and assessment

**What are the most important needs of your students regarding digital learning environments?**

(Please select all that apply).

- Assess the credibility of online content
- Build a positive digital presence and identity
- Develop good digital study habits e.g. note-making
- Digitally record and reflect on their learning
- Learn a new software application
- Model appropriate responsible behavior online

**In which of the following activities would you need training / would you apply but can't because of a lack of training?**

(Please select all that apply).

- Use data to monitor learners' progress





- Assess the quality of work in different digital media
- Set up and facilitate online peer review
- Support learners to collate and reflect on work in an e-portfolio
- Give feedback as digital audio or annotations
- Assess student performance using a simulation or game

**Which of the following best represents your approach to developing your digital practice as an educator?**

- It is not a priority for me
- I learn to use the virtual learning environment and similar systems
- I look for opportunities to develop my digital practice further
- Digital education is central to my role and I enjoy sharing my expertise

**Which of the following have you done in the past year?**

(Please select all that apply).

- Attend an international live/online workshop on a digital topic
- Contribute to an international live/online event on a digital topic
- Talk to a mentor / head of department about your digital skills
- Record your teaching practice (photo/video) for reflection
- Read an international article about digital learning
- Share teaching materials online with other practitioners

**Do you think the current ICT possibilities and infrastructure at your institution are enough up to date to deliver proper online courses?**

- Yes
- No
- Moderate

**What kind of support you need from your institution to transit from face-to-face teaching to online teaching?**

- Technical Support
- Pedagogical Support
- Both of the above
- No support needed
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Do you have specific training needs that will enable you deliver online learning or Online International Learning at your university? For example, strategic training, technical training, etc.**

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## PART 4: Actual Situation / COVID19

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, most universities are closed and are quickly moving education online.

What are the activities now suspended that you would like to see not resumed?

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What are the activities now implemented in an emergency mode that you would like to maintain, further develop or even design from scratch in the future?

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What are some of the challenges you are facing with this quick shift from face-to-face classes to online platforms?

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What kind of trainings you think you need to improve your online teaching capabilities? (Please name at least 3 trainings you would need)

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Would you suggest online teaching to be regulated by law and incorporate it into university curricula in Albania?

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Thank You!



## Members of the Consortium

Technische Universitaet Dresden (TUD), Germany (coordinator)  
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Mediterranean Universities Union (UNIMED), Italy  
European University of Tirana (UET), Albania  
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