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D 7.2. STEPS PROGRAMME DELIVERY

WP7 - STEPS PROGRAMME DELIVERY



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Deliverable 7.2. Steps Programme Delivery

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Approved on behalf of STEPS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The implementation and delivery of the MSc STEPS study program in the partner countries is the result of previously delivered tasks and activities of the project. The MSc STEPS study program was created during the project, and its implementation and delivery procedures were carried out according to established and prescribed regulations specific to each HEIs in the partner countries.

1 GUIDELINES

- Briefly describe the activities and procedures related to the delivery of MSc STEPS programs at higher education institutions of partner countries, including:
 - ✓ *Procedure for announcing and conducting the competition for enrollment of students in MSc STEPS at higher education institutions of partner countries,*
 - ✓ *Procedures for enrollment and admission of students to the MSc STEPS at higher education institutions in partner countries,*
 - ✓ *Procedures for hiring teachers for MSc STEPS at higher education institutions in partner countries,*
 - ✓ *Procedures for organizing and conducting classes at the MSc STEPS at higher education institutions in partner countries,*
 - ✓ *Procedures for organizing and conducting exam deadlines for MSc STEPS at higher education institutions of partner countries,*
 - ✓ *Procedures related to applications and mentoring of master's theses at MSc STEPS at HEIs of partner countries,*
 - ✓ *Procedures related to reporting.*

- Please provide all documents related to the MSc STEPS programme delivery at your University (scanned PDF file), depending on your internal procedures, with translation of the document or document title. Supporting documents for the STEPS programme delivery can be, for example:
 - ✓ *Documents related to initiating the competition procedure for enrollment of students in the MSc STEPS (e.g. Decisions of the Scientific-Teaching Council/Senate)*
 - ✓ *Documents related to the competition, admission and enrollment of students (e.g. competition for student enrollment, ranking list of admitted students, reports on student enrollment in MSc STEPS, etc.),*
 - ✓ *Documents related to teacher engagement (e.g. decisions, competitions, report on teacher engagement at the MSc STEPS),*
 - ✓ *Documents related to classes and exams (e.g. class schedule, schedule of exam deadlines, reports and analysis of student pass rates at the MSc STEPS)*
 - ✓ *Documents related to master's theses (e.g. master's theses, appointment of mentors and commissions, etc.)*
 - ✓ *Final semester/annual reports on the implementation of the teaching process at the MSc STEPS*

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1. *Aims and objectives of STEPS project*

The main objective of the project is the implementation of a modern MSc programme on “Sustainable food production systems”, compliant with the Bologna convention. Food culture and sociology, agriculture and rural development, food engineering, quality and safety, environmental footprints, economics, management and governance will be combined in a flexible and modular educational programme, designed and developed in the light of the European initiative for the transition to circular economy. Partner countries HEIs will be supported in order to help them provide an education aligned to the needs of the labour market and society. Laboratories will be equipped with experimental devices, computers and software. Scientific staff of the HEIs involved in the consortium will have the opportunity to enrich their scientific background and be familiarized with modern educational methodologies and ICT tools, in order to practice student-based approaches, and provide teaching based on learning outcomes.

3 STEPS PROGRAMME DELIVERY IN PARTNER COUNTRIES HEIs

After the development and establishment of the MSc STEPS study program, and conducted trainings for teaching and research staff, all higher education institutions (HEIs) in partner countries launched for the first time (pilot version) procedures for the implementation and delivery of the MSc STEPS program. These procedures were carried out during the project according to the established and prescribed regulations specific to all HEIs in the partner countries. They consisted mainly of initiating institutional procedures for announcing competitions for student enrollment, procedures for enrollment and admission of students, engagement of teaching and research staff. conducting compulsory and elective courses, organizing classes, organizing and conducting exams at the MSc STEPS, planning and starting work on master's theses. All listed activities of implementation and delivery of the MSc STEPS study program at HEIs in partner countries are separately described and supported by documents that have been updated (uploaded) to STEPS Google Drive whit provided link in the Chapter 7 of this report (deliverable).

4 STEPS PROGRAMME DELIVERY IN ALBANIA

4.1. STEPS programme delivery at the Agricultural University of Tirana (AUT-P1)

The Master of Science “Sustainable food production systems”, with profiles: “Engineering, Quality and Food Safety” and “Management of Food Production Systems” is a new study program and has been developed and delivered during the lifetime of the project. The first phase was the preparation of all the documentation for the application to the **Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth of Albania** to get the license for the opening of this study program. After getting their approval, the implementation began by application for this study program by all the students that were interested in this program. The announcement was done on the websites of both universities and social media. (<https://ubt.edu.al/1-vit-master-shkencor-falas-per-studentet-qe-zgjedhin-degen-sistemet-e-qendrueshme-te-prodhimit-te-ushqimeve/>). The application of the students for the enrollment in the Master of Science, “Sustainable Food Production System” was done from 05.10-18.10.2022.

The evaluation of the student’s document was done by the AD HOC commission of the Faculty of Biotechnology and Food and the list of winners was signed by the Dean in the first week of November 2022. This study program can apply for admission, to students that have a Bachelor's Diploma in Agriculture and Veterinary Science, Biology, Food Science, Food/ Industrial Chemistry, Environment Science, Economics, Management/Marketing Science, etc. The number of applicants in this study program is determined according to the capacity that an HEI has and is approved by the **Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth of Albania**.

The evaluation of the students was done, according to their average grade, as required by the Regulation of this study program and other requirements mentioned above.

After the approval from the Ministry for the enrollment of the students is done and the first year of the Master of Science in “Sustainable Food Production System” began on 07.11.2022.

The timetable of the lecture/seminar and laboratory was delivered to all the enrolled students. All the staff engaged in this study program have or are preparing the didactic material and uploading it to the LMS platform. At the end of the first semester, all the student will take their first exams. In the fourth semester as described in the curricula, the students will develop a master thesis that will be presented in front of a jury from both Universities. After they have fulfilled all the obligations for this study program, they will receive their diploma signed by both Rectors of the Universities. All the documentation mentioned in this paragraph is uploaded in the STEPS G DRIVE Deliverable 7.2

4.2. STEPS programme delivery at the European University of Tirana (EUT-P2)

EUT and AUT have opened a joint programme, offered jointly by both institutions. After successful completion of the study programme students will earn a double diploma Master of Science in ‘Sustainable Food Production Systems’, with profiles: 1. Engineering, Quality and Food Safety (offered mainly by AUT); and 2. Management of Food Production Systems (offered mainly by EUT). The program combines theory with practice in each of the courses and at the end of the programme, students must defend their master thesis, as the final obligation of the study programme.

The procedure for opening of the new study programme and enrolment of the students is the same as described in the section 4.1 *STEPS programme delivery at the AUT*. The components of the study programme are offered at the responsible institution premises. In the first semester, students attend three courses at the premises of AUT and two courses at the premises of EUT, respectively: 1. Governance, policies and legislation in the agri-food sector and 2. Food Ethics (*STEPS EUT Schedule*). The objectives of the study programme, organization, workload, exams, and other aspects are described in the Regulation of the Study Programme, which is accessible by the students. The syllabus of each course is delivered to the students at the beginning of the semester, where students can find information on the course (objectives, learning outcomes, content, information on the lecturer, evaluation forms and periods, attendance obligation and mandatory and recommended literature.

The promotion of the new study program was done through:

1. newspaper article (<https://liberale.al/uet-master-i-ri-ne-sistemet-e-qendrueshme-te-prodhimit-te-ushqimeve/?fbclid=IwAR2Fnogphn8Nv1scXH-R9k0eLDXPy0tn9d2WGrdAnL3w9rLo10EPp4r5Vnk>),
2. EUT social media (<https://www.facebook.com/UniversitetiEuropianiTiranes>; <https://www.facebook.com/UniversitetiEuropianiTiranes/photos/pcb.6437808932902555/6437806959569419/>)
3. EUT Career and Admission Office.

5. STEPS PROGRAMME DELIVERY IN KOSOVO

5.1. *STEPS programme delivery at the University Haxhi Zeka (UHZ-P3) and Universum College (UC-P4)*

After the completion of project activities on the design of the MSc STEPS program and courses (MSc STEPS (en) UHZ) and its establishment (Establishment of the MSc STEPS UHZ) at the University of Haxhi Zeka (Agribusiness Faculty), its implementation began after approved enrollment quota from a base for accreditation of study programs in the Republic of Kosovo is Law No.04/L-037/2011 on higher education, Administrative Instructions no. 9/2017 for accreditation of higher education institutions (HEIs) in the Republic of Kosovo, and the Law no. 05/L-031 on General Administrative Procedure. Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA) is an independent authority, which accredits and reaccredits public and private institutions of higher education in Kosovo for a limited time. The KAA has its Accreditation Manual, which reflects the provisions of the above-mentioned laws and regulations and is applicable for external quality assurance processes for accreditation and re-accreditation of higher education institutions as well as for accreditation and re-accreditation of bachelor and masters study programs (<https://unhz.eu/course/fakulteti-i-agrobiznesit/>). The decision for offering the new study program was greatly influenced by the UHZ participation in the implementation of the "STEPS project - MSc. in Sustainable Food Production Systems ", which is funded by the EU through the Erasmus+. After the end of the competition procedure, the usual chronological procedures followed, which consisted of ranking the registered candidates and determining the conditions for enrollment, notification, training for work on the Faculty Info-system, engagement of teachers to perform compulsory and elective courses, organization of the teaching process, organization of joint classes with UHZ based on the INTER-INSTITUTIONAL AGREEMENT UHZ - UC, organization of exams, analysis of student pass rate <https://unhz.eu/course/fakulteti-i-agrobiznesit/#>. At the end of this chronological procedure, as the expected outcome of the MSc STEPS program, there is the submission of master theses. According to the Rules of studies at the 2nd study cycle, <http://sems.unhz.eu/Home/LoadData> students can submit their master's thesis after the end of the first semester and later until the end of the next academic year (<http://sems.unhz.eu/>).

Consequently, the first application for the master's topic in the MSc STEPS program will be made in January 2023. These activities will continue with full intensity during the year 2022/23. The entire procedure related to the teaching process of the MSc STEPS course over two semesters, including analysis of the student's passability, described in detail in Report 1 and 2 on the implementation of teaching in MSc STEPS UHZ. All procedural documents related to the provision of the MSc STEPS program at the University of Haxhi Zeka. In October 2020, the University Haxhi Zeka has submitted a formal Application to the Kosovo Accreditation Agency for accreditation of the Master study program "Sustainable Food Production Systems". In January 2021 has been submitted the Self Evaluation report to the KAA. The evaluation of the study program by external experts took place on March 29th, 2021. The decision for accreditation of the Master's study program "Sustainable Food Production Systems" was taken on April 19th 2021. The senate of the University "Haxhi Zeka" on September 7th, 2021 has decided to do a public announcement for the enrolment of 25 students in the study program "Sustainable Food Production Systems" for the academic year 2021/2022. More than 50 students have applied to the Mater Program "Sustainable Food Production Systems" 25 students are enrolled in the study program. The study program has been implemented since October 2021 and is now continuing in the year 2022/23 where 25 students have been registered.

5.2. STEPS programme delivery at the Universum College (UC-P4)

Universum College gives particular importance to the academic and administrative staff. The goal is to always aim at assuring quality and contemporary service are offered to all of our students, and this care begins with the selection and recruitment process of the staff. The aim of the institution is to recruit qualified, experienced and well-known professionals in relevant fields, as well as provide our junior staff with ample opportunities to advance personally and professionally. To achieve these goals, Universum College has internal regulation which sets out the criteria and procedures for recruiting academic and administrative staff. Universum College employees a process of recruitment that is in complete compliance with local labour law. The same procedures are applicable and were used to recruit the additional staff for the Msc. In STEPS.

Staff recruitment procedures are always made through public vacancies using many channels such as job portals, Universum College web site, social networking sites and newsletters. Before the call for a new staff, the department initially identify the need for new academic staff and sends the request to the Academic Council and later to the Executive Director to confirm the availability of funds for supporting the hiring. Upon receiving the confirmation by the Executive Director, the call for applications is opened. The application form clearly identifies the required qualifications based on the open position. Universum College tries to define the required qualification, experience, and specific field of expertise related to the open position in order to recruit the candidate with the characteristics that are more compatible with the position. In this way the college tends to create transparency and equal treatment of all applicants who are interested in the open position. To ensure that candidates are fully aware of their responsibilities, a full position description along with specific KPIs are provided to them. In addition, each responsibility along with the KPI is discussed in detail before signing the contract.

The right to apply have all those who consider that they meet the criteria presented in the call for the respective position. Once the applications from candidates are received, the screening process is done by the Human Resources Office followed by a technical online interview conducted by representatives of the same office. Shortlisted candidates are called for an on-campus interview. Depending on the position, either the Academic Council or the Executive Director (depends on the profile of the staff) assigns up to three individuals to interview the potential candidates A generalized recruitment process is presented below:

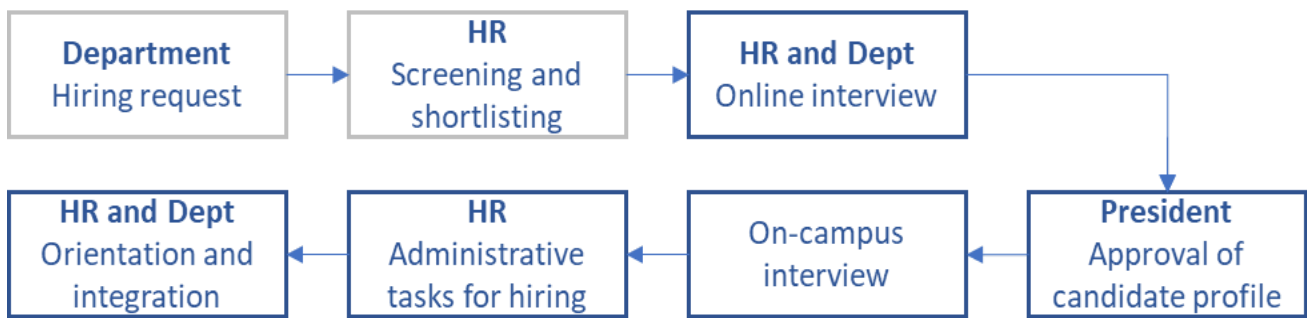


Figure 3: Recruitment process at Universum College

Academic staff consists of full-time and part-time staff. Among the basic criteria for recruitment of academic staff that are implemented are:

- I. Doctoral degree or equivalent;
- II. Demonstration of a high level of academic competence and scientific experience for the given position:
 - a. Active participation in national and international conferences.
 - b. Well-known artistic creations or works or public presentations.
 - c. Long-term experience in basic and applying research projects.
- III. iii. Appropriate educational and pedagogical skills
- IV. iv. Ability to supervise postgraduate thesis
- V. v. Other requirements based on specific position

A similar process and requirements are asked for the administrative staff, especially when key non-academic positions are advertised. We live under the assumption that the administrative staff plays as an important role as the academic staff, thus, we treat the recruitment process for both profiles with the highest care and priority.

Student Admission Requirements

Universum College employs strict and well defined admission requirements which are made publicly available to all the stakeholders through the webpage and promotional materials. Important aspects of such requirements are highlighted and reemphasized upon every conversation with interested high school graduate and or other potential students, whom have opted out to enroll in our study programs.

Some of the strict requirements, include successful completion of secondary education and undergraduate level at one of the licensed HEIs in Kosovo, or at an HEI that is recognized by NARIC in Kosovo. UC does not apply any exemption, and fully complies with legally binding provisions of the law on HEIs of the Republic of Kosovo.

The following describes the student admission criteria at Universum College, which is also posted at our website. The normal minimum entry requirements for a candidate to be eligible for admission are set out in the General Entry Requirements contained in the Prospectus. However, the absolute minimum criteria for a student to be admitted depends on each academic program. In addition, in order to enroll in our programs, all applicants are required to bring the following documents: **(S9.1)**

- Birth certificate;
- Diploma and secondary school certificate
- Legalized documents issued by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology of the Republic of Kosovo for all those who have completed their education outside of the Republic of Kosovo;
- Submit the completed application form at Universum College
- Upon registration, students must submit the Universum English language placement results.

In order to disseminate all the relevant information to interested parties and future students, details about programs, study modules, academics and curricula are provided in several ways **(S9.2)**:

- Official Website of Universum College
- Hard and Soft Copy Promotion Material
- Social Media Channels
- In person meetings, with interested students or parties

Additionally, Universum College informs all the interested parties about the scholarship opportunities and qualifications in order to honor excellent students prior to admission. Scholarship opportunities are made publically available in all of our channels, as well as at Caree Offices at high school level. A range of scholarships opportunities is allocated for students who have:

- Unfavourable socio-economic conditions,
- Students with disabilities,
- Discriminated and/or marginalized groups
- Members of institutions serving the country (Police, Military, Veterans), and other individual negotiable cases.

6. STEPS PROGRAMME DELIVERY IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

6.1. STEPS programme delivery at University of Bihać (UNBI-P5)

After the completion of project activities on the design of the MSc STEPS program and courses ([MSc STEPS \(en\) UNBI](#)) and its establishment ([Establishment of the MSc STEPS UNBI](#)) at the University of Bihać (Biotechnical Faculty), its implementation began after approved enrollment quota from the Government of Una-Sana Canton (through the Cantonal Ministry - MESCO USK). After a positive response and approval of the enrollment quota, based on the Law on Higher Education of the USC and the Decision of the Government of the USC, the University of Bihać announced for the first time a competition for enrollment in the first year of MSc STEPS with two applications and an extended deadline for the student application. After the end of the competition procedure, the usual chronological procedures followed, which consisted of ranking the registered candidates and determining the conditions for enrollment, notification, training for work on the Faculty Info-system, engagement of teachers to perform compulsory and elective courses, organization of the teaching process, organization of joint classes with UNSA based on the INTER-INSTITUTIONAL AGREEMENT UNSA - UNBI, organization of exams, analysis of student pass rate. The total number of students enrolled in the first year of the STEPS program at UNBI in the academic year 2020/2021 was 12 (twelves). During the duration of the project, i.e. currently, UNBI enrolled one more generation of students in the STEPS program, 8 (eight) students in academic year 2022/2023.

At the end of this chronological procedure, as the expected outcome of the MSc STEPS program, there is the submission of master theses. [According to the Rules of studies at the 2nd study cycle](#), students can submit their master's thesis after the end of the first semester and later until the end of the next academic year. Accordingly, the first application for the master's thesis on the MSc STEPS program was made in the month of December 2021. These activities will continue with full intensity during 2022 and 2023. The entire procedure related to the process of teaching the MSc STEPS course during two semesters, including the analysis of the student's passing rate, is described in detail in the *1st and 2nd Report on the implementation of teaching at the MSc STEPS UNBI*.

All procedural documents related to the MSc STEPS program delivery at the University of Bihać and its implementation are uploaded to the STEPS Google Drive and are [available via the link in chapter 7 of this report](#).

6.2. STEPS programme delivery at University of Sarajevo (UNSA-P6)

After the academic staff of UNSA finished designing the master's program and courses of the STEPS Master's study "Sustainable food production systems", the process of formalizing the master's study at UNSA followed, that is, at its organizational unit, the Faculty of Agriculture and Food. The entire process was completed in April 2020, when the Senate of UNSA passed the Decision on the establishment and implementation of a new master's study program at the Faculty of Agriculture and Food (February 2020), which informed the Ministry of Education, Science and Youth of Sarajevo Canton, which gave its consent. The implementation of the Master's program began with the announcement of a public competition for the enrollment of students for the first year published by the University of Sarajevo with a defined quota (for all study programs/departments at all organizational units of UNSA), including the STEPS master study.

After the end of the competition procedure, the usual chronological procedures followed, which consisted of ranking the registered candidates and determining the conditions for enrollment, notification, training for work on the ECTS system of the faculty/university, engagement of teachers to perform compulsory and optional subjects, organization of the teaching process.

The specificity of this study program is the organization of joint teaching activities with UNBI based on the UNSA - UNBI inter-institutional agreement, which for the first generation was organized online due to the Covid19 pandemic. The total number of students enrolled in the first year of the STEPS program in the academic year 2020/2021 was 6 (six). During the duration of the project, UNSA enrolled two more generations of students in the STEPS program, five students in academic year 2021/2022 and eight students in academic year 2022/2023. Students of the first generation of the STEPS master's program (academic 2020/2021) are in the phase of preparing their master's theses and the first students with master's degrees are expected soon. Students in the STEPS master's program attend 4 semesters. In the first semester, they take and pass 6 compulsory courses, and in the next two semesters (II and III) 6 elective courses each. The IV semester is intended for the preparation of a master's thesis.

The entire procedure of the realization of the MSc was related to the teaching process of the MSc STEPS course during four semesters, including the analysis of students' passability, which is a mandatory part of the activities of the teaching staff and relevant services of the Faculty of Agriculture and Food of UNSA. All the procedural documentation related to the realization of the MSc STEPS program at the University of Sarajevo and its implementation has been placed on the STEPS Google Drive and is **available via the link in Chapter 7 of this report.**

7. PROCEDURAL DOCUMENTS RELATED TO THE STEPS PROGRAMME DELIVERY IN PC HEIs

1. All the documents related to the *STEPS programme delivery* at the AUT can be found on the following link: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1HzDkbnsQWRfdvcAWqjXuJBtaA1XzPol9?usp=share_link
2. All the documents related to the *STEPS programme delivery* at the EUT can be found on the following link: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1HzDkbnsQWRfdvcAWqjXuJBtaA1XzPol9?usp=share_link
3. All the documents related to the *STEPS programme delivery* at the UC can be found on the following link: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1VfoU2l3vf0isPlbQ3j5laFsKWF0A5Cx-?usp=share_link
4. All the documents related to the *STEPS programme delivery* at the UHZ can be found on the following link: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1VfoU2l3vf0isPlbQ3j5laFsKWF0A5Cx-?usp=share_link
5. All the documents related to the *STEPS programme delivery* at the UNBI can be found on the following link: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/18y9Kn6mfFrcpsZqslGjI939dqNnbR04T?usp=sharing>
6. All the documents related to the *STEPS programme delivery* at the UNSA can be found on the following link: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1klL20KkjRbv_Jw95cGJLmrT_Xt6cKvpY?usp=share_link

8. CONCLUSIONS

The implementation and delivery of the MSc STEPS study program in the partner countries is the result of previously set tasks and project activities. The MSc STEPS study program created during the project was delivered at all partner country HEIs in accordance with established and prescribed regulations and procedures specific to each higher education system in the partner countries. These procedures mainly consisted of the initiation of institutional activities such as the announcement of a competition for student enrollment, student enrollment and admission procedures, the engagement of teaching and scientific staff, the organization of classes and the implementation of compulsory and elective courses, the organization and implementation of MSc STEPS exams, planning and commencement of work in master's theses. When it comes to the delivery of the MSc STEPS study program, it is also important to point out that it was delivered to the partner countries as a joint national level. Thus, in Albania, AUT and EUT organized and delivered MSc STEPS as a joint program - double diploma. In Kosovo, UHZ and UC delivered a joint master of science degree, while in Bosnia and Herzegovina, UNSA and UNBI, on the basis of an inter-institutional agreement, organized and launched joint teaching, exchange of teaching staff and students, joint mentoring and research.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

Continue with the implementation, and ensure the sustainability of delivered MSc STEPS study programs in partner country HEIs. Based on the experience gained, try to organize a Joint Master Degree at the regional level in the future (Albania, Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina), which was originally planned in the project proposal, but which could not be realized due to several different and unpredictable reasons.