

**Assessment Report**  
**on the application of the Private Provider of Higher Education**  
**ESLG College, Pristina**  
**for institutional reaccreditation**

**\*\* August 2016 \*\***

**Assessment expert team consisting of**

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  - Ms. Olena Rusnak, European Students' Union (EU)
- accompanied during the site visit on behalf of the Kosovo Accreditation Agency by
- Ms. Furtuna Mehmeti, Acting Director of KAA

**Information Basis of the Assessment Report:**

- ESLG College Self-Evaluation Report, Pristina, September 30, 2015
- ESLG College Staff List as validated by KAA, 25.07.2016
- External ESLG Evaluation Reports 2013 & 2015
- Site visit of the expert panel, August 12, 2016
- Additional material asked for by the experts & supplied by ESLG via KAA, 14.08.2016
- Comments by ESLG on the Draft Report, transmitted by mail via KAA on 20.08.2016

**Aims and Objectives:**

- The purpose of this report is to enable the Kosovo Accreditation Agency and the Ministerial and/or Political Authorities concerned to come to a decision regarding the institutional reaccreditation of the Private Provider of Higher Education ESLG College, Pristina [henceforth addressed as ESLG College]. The undersigned experts will assess the documentation mentioned above in the light of their experiences gained in the German, English, and French university systems. References to benchmarks and good practices mainly refer to these university systems.

- This report will contain a number of recommendations concerning the general structure, organization, and work processes of ESLG College: they are the personal opinion of the authors and are formulated with the background experiences mentioned above in mind. They reflect what the authors regard as good or standard practices in a number of mainly Western European education systems, without wanting to prejudice the different boundary conditions of tertiary education in the Kosovo in any way. Therefore, the final decision on the College's application for institutional reaccreditation will have to be made by the relevant authorities concerned.

- This report could not have been written without the support of the staff of the KAA in the first place, and also of a number of helpful face-to-face contacts in ESLG College. In particular, the experts would like to stress the extraordinary quality and informative value of the Self-Evaluation Report, which certainly could serve as an example for other PBHEs. While the authors are most grateful for the support thus received, they would like to stress that the arguments and conclusions of this report are their own responsibility exclusively.

- NB: recommendations in the text are printed *in italics* or are contained in separate boxes.

### Introduction, preliminary impressions

The ESLG College was established in 2009, and was accredited for the first time in July 2010, as the ESLG Institute, for the following study programs: 1) Law LLB, and 2) Law and Real Estate and Infrastructure Management (BA), initially for a one-year period. Further accreditations followed in 2011, and 2013. ESLG College, in its only centre in Kosovo, offers the following programs:

- Law (LLB)
- Law and Real Estate and Infrastructure Management (BA)
- Law and Real Estate and Infrastructure Management (MA)
- Energy Management (BA)
- European Economic Law (LLM)

The Expert Team visited ESLG's somewhat suburban Pristina site on August 12, 2016, and, after being given a brief introduction to the history of ESLG, its evolutionary development, its specific relations with its Slovenian and Norwegian cooperation partners, the special niche it occupied in the Kosovo education market, and its thus pointed, appropriately limited variety of programs, had detailed discussions first of all in the morning with the Dean and representatives of the Management responsible for quality assurance and finance, followed by discussions in the afternoon with a number of the academic teaching staff, and finally representatives of the students on all relevant questions concerning the running of the College. The experts noted in particular the professionalism of the staff and the College's professed market-driven approach centering on the Kosovo building and real estate sector and allied management professions including efficient energy management; this professionalism was clearly mirrored in the expectations and down-to-earth realistic attitudes of the students who knew what they wanted and what to ask from the educational program they undertook.

### I Mission Statement

The general mission statement of the College (SER pp 6et seq.) is reasonably brief, but clearly structured: under the overarching values of commitment to excellence, integrity, accountability, effectiveness, and teamwork the College aims at the provision of an outstanding education for a reasonably small, but also quite lucrative niche in the Kosovo economy: building and estate management, which generates ca. 25 % of GDP at the moment, can absorb the

overall majority of the College's graduates, and provides practical knowledge inputs by means of advice to the College, cooperation and internship agreements, and demands for specific research projects. In this context, one can certainly state that the College – with reference to KAA's guidelines – has not only the *potential for innovation*, but makes rather good use of that potential no doubt: the present expert has been a member of the very first KAA accreditation panel, and in comparison to what he saw a good half dozen years ago, the College has made very substantial progress, without very wisely leaving the overall market niche inside which it once started.

In order to implement its mission in practice, the College's activities are governed by the following strategic goals, divided into a number of sub-goals each:

STRATEGIC GOAL 1: Develop unique study programs in the sectors that contribute mostly to GDP growth or where the employment has been mostly generated or has the biggest potential to generate employment in the future.

STRATEGIC GOAL 2: Develop full-time academic staff of the highest quality in teaching and research

STRATEGIC GOAL 3: Develop research capacity at College ESLG

STRATEGIC GOAL 4: Advancing the quality assurance system

STRATEGIC GOAL 5: Advance international cooperation

STRATEGIC GOAL 6: Furthering Cooperation with Private Sector and Community.

There is a six-page comprehensive tabular overview in the SER (pp15 et seq.) demonstrating to what extent, by what means and projects, and in what timeframe the strategic goals have already been or are still in the process of being fulfilled. The impression conveyed is that of a respectable piece of work; some questions, however, are left open, viz.:

Outcome 1.4 – international academic cooperation & dual degree programs: the experts take note of the successful cooperative links with the European Faculty of Law at Nova Gorica and NTNU; however, they would earnestly recommend to also approach/consult with the programs of the University of Reading's Henley Business School and its Real Estate and Planning Faculty - <http://www.henley.ac.uk/school/page/rep-faculty-and-staff/> - or of the University of Reading itself (BSc or MSc in Real Estate viz. Real Estate and Planning - <https://www.reading.ac.uk/Ready-to-Study/study/Subject-area/real-estate-and-planning-ug>) - in spite of their rather high-strung fee demands.

Outcome 5.1 – Memoranda of cooperation with international universities and colleges (presumably beyond NTNU and Graceland) – the experts would suggest an enlargement of the catchment area in the direction of Western Europe and/or the EU in general. For example, there are a dozen BA programs in “Immobilienmanagement” in Baden-Württemberg alone – cf. <http://www.studieren-studium.com/studium/studieren/Immobilienmanagement-Baden+W%C3%BCrtemberg> - and

the website of the German Facility Management Association lists another 16 or so - <http://www.gefma.de/studiengaenge.html>

Outcome 6.1/6.3 Memoranda of Cooperation with the private sector & places of internship – the College is on a good track here, but the experts wonder whether the number of established cooperations and internships is already sufficient or should still be increased. It might be a good idea to ask the students themselves on this point in conjunction with quality assessment exercises; as the majority of them seem to have a working background already, they might come up with interesting suggestions leading the College beyond the already existing internship agreements.

The experts were agreeably impressed by the way the College presented mission statement, strategic goals and subgoals, implementation processes, and outcomes in the SER. What they missed, however, was a proper separate development plan which would also open medium-term and long-term perspectives on the College's development. The experts took note of the development concept contained in the SER pp 44 et seq.; however, in their view a development plan should go further and should take into account the changing socioeconomic framework of the College's work, the possible development of the Labour market and of the demand for the College's graduates, the goals to be realistically formulated on that basis ( SER pp 44 et seq. could serve as a good starting point ), the personnel and finance resources needed to fulfil the strategic goals of the development plan, and the interests of the outside community (public and private potential employers alike). *The College should therefore use the next two years or so to formulate a Development Plan as a separate strategic document; this should not only reflect academic and managerial interests, but also the interests of the students, and perhaps even more so the advice of potential employers. Finally, it should be agreed to by the Senate and the Management Board.*

## II Organisation and Management

The organizational layout of the College is not overly complicated, though the academic side with its many advisory or even full decision-making committees (cf. graph SER p.35) reminds one of the old saying of too many chiefs and not enough Indians. Still, taskwise each committee is well founded and its existence justifiable if one has the organigram of a larger faculty in mind. In the case of a college the size of ESLG College, one would however wonder whether decision-making could not be speeded up by transferring a larger number of tasks to an all-purpose committee ("*Hauptausschuss*") which perhaps would have two elected members each from the three groups – management, teaching staff, students – and the Dean as an ex officio chairperson, meeting every week or fortnight, looking after the more routine running of day-to-day affairs and relieving the other committees to ponder those existential questions on which qualified and substantial specialist advice is needed.

Also, it might be conceivable that the work areas of the vice-rectors could be collapsed from four into two – development & research, and study affairs & international cooperation. The expert had the pleasure to run one of the largest faculties of the University of Münster with some 9.000 – 10.000 students for nine years both in the capacity of Vice-Dean and Dean, and got along quite well with only one substitute. Yet – during the site visit the expert team heard no serious complaints concerning the decision-making structure from staff or students, so we may assume that the system works reasonably well, and if the College is interested in for whatever reason to keep it, it should not negatively prejudice further reaccreditation. Thus, without further ado we can attest to one of the KAA criteria for institutional accreditation: transparent decision-making structures for governance, management, administration, and academic matters.

The expert panel accept the College's additional explanation regarding the status of the Quality Assurance Office transmitted by mail on 20.08.2016. They hope that the College will succeed to elect a new academic head for that office at the beginning of the 2016/2017 academic year.

### **III Finance and Facilities**

#### **a) Finance**

The initial problem with College finance was that the SER pp 231 et seq. only contained the financial forecasts for 2016 – 2018, and not the accounts for the last two or three years. While according to the forecast the College will break even in this and the next year, and will make some five-digit profit in 2018, we did not know whether it has also broken even, made a profit, or made a loss in the preceding years. This was rectified by the additional information received by the expert panel on August 20, 2016. According to this, the College also made a smaller net profit during the last three years 2012 – 2015. Given its position in its specialized niche of the Kosovo education market, our assumption therefore is that the College will in principle be financially viable also over the next few years.

Further questions which arose in conjunction with the financial statement in the SER and taken up by the Draft Report have been cleared to the expert panel's satisfaction by the College's comments on the Draft Report.

#### **b) Facilities**

Facilities were inspected during the site visit (classrooms, computer pool, offices) and were generally found adequate for the present size of the College. What was not quite clear was whether the College provided a senior/junior common room (e.g. equipped with refreshment facilities) for breaks between lectures and classes.

#### **c) Library**

When visited, the physical library in terms of books on the shelves looked somewhat thin on the ground; however, the SER contained a 70+ page list of books in print as well as of electronic titles held on the College's website. Talking to staff and students in the afternoon ascertained that a majority of them preferred to work with electronic material anyway. The continuing electronisation of academic teaching thus belittles the traditional access

problem: ESLG students seem to prefer to have access to their course material in full or chapterwise as e-books or in a downloadable PDF format. As a consequence, the traditional library services would thus have to be augmented (and in the long run possibly be replaced) by *free* access to electronic libraries, data bases, publishing firms offering electronic versions of their product etc. Also, while access to electronic material could always be improved, the College might want to think about whether the physical Library should rather be turned into a Reference Library and a Textbook Collection; access to very specialized literature is probably more economical via the internet.

The expert panel noted the further explanations of the College's electronic access policy given in the comment to the draft report; in principle, they were satisfactory. However, the College will have to make sure that the liberal access possibilities at present granted by NTNU under the SEEB project will somehow continue after that project comes to an end. And – the experts still wonder *whether it would be possible to run subject-specific introductory courses or one full-blown one semester module for all to introduce first years to e-based literature research, electronic download offers of books, articles, and papers on the homepages of the major research institutes, but also the major commercial suppliers, and further offers on the websites of international governmental and nongovernmental organisations, in order to generally increase computer literacy.*

#### IV Academic Staff

Before we take our cue from the KAA guidelines for experts in this case, some statistical information seems in order (basis: KAA staff list)

- Total no. of staff: 43, of which male: 32 and female: 11
- Male full-timers: 23, male part-timers: 9
- Female full-timers: 7, female part-timers: 4
- Male PhDs: 23, male Masters: 9
- Female PhDs: 4, female Masters 7

Altogether, the number of staff surpass the KAA minimum quotas for academic programs quite easily, and the proportion of full-time to part-time staff is more than appropriate in terms of the KAA criteria. Nevertheless, in the expert panel's opinion ESLG should continue to hire (more ?) part-time staff with practical experience, coming in for perhaps only a day or an afternoon from their everyday work to give a course on their profession or trade and also to provide a bridge for internships in their actual firm or with their actual employer.

What the figures also show, is that ESLG has travelled some way on the route to becoming an equal opportunities employer with about a quarter of the teaching staff female – but still some way away from KAA's requirement that there should be an equal proportion of women amongst the academic staff. As more female teaching staff are Masters rather than PhDs, there could be room for empowerment by the College not only by encouraging, but also by actively supporting female Masters to write their PhDs (and of course hoping that they will afterwards stay).

Such policy will help to further achieve and broaden the reasonably good quality rate already prevailing amongst the male staff with a ratio of ca. 2,5 PhDs per Master – which does not say anything, of course, about the quality of teaching or the research output. But still, it could be an indicator of the generally high quality level of staff, supported by transparent and quality-driven selection procedures for new staff as well as the cooperation with the Slovenian partners which includes not only the possibility to follow a PhD course there but also the possibility to qualify further within a *habilitation* process framework. And, as ESLG states itself in its SER (p. 112) – whenever possible the College will employ academic personnel “...with all three levels of education completed outside the country...”

To that extent, the SER contains a well-constructed staff development section (pp 112 et seq.) the main policy points of which are:

1. Sponsorships of habilitation for full-time faculty;
2. Sponsorships of PhD studies for full-time faculty and part-time faculty that wishes to become a full-time faculty member;
3. Training on formulation of learning outcomes;
4. Sponsorships of attendance to various scientific and professional conferences for both academic and administrative staff;
5. Provision of training for administrative staff on student care;
6. Provision of training on recruitment techniques for admission staff;
7. Provision of training on IT essentials for administrative staff;
8. Tuition fee waiver program for the administrative staff enrolled in the master program of College ESLG;

What the expert panel would suggest in this context to the College to look into would be the setting up of a student demonstrator/research assistant program for excellent Master students, who could form a bridge between the teaching staff and the undergraduates by accompanying modules, assisting in literature research, paper writing, intermediate term tests etc. And of course such a program could serve as an entry point for the selection of promising academic “apprentices”.

## V Students

The SER states that the College has 400 students (p. 119) both enrolled part-time and full-time. Management information in the morning of the site visit gave the overall student figure as nearer 600; the 400 represented the active students.

The ESLG students pay overall higher fees than students in an average private institution in Kosovo (according to students), however students do not seem to be dissatisfied with this fact since they are “ready to pay more for quality

education". Moreover, the ESLG College awards scholarships to students with the highest GPA grades (basis: SER, 121).

The expert team got a very convincing impression from the meeting with students since the latter demonstrated their strong attitude towards quality education, high motivation and dedication to study as well as awareness of their future perspectives and career opportunities.

Students underlined their study programmes make them feel more employable and prepared for the world of work.

As strengths of their education provider students identified close relationships with professors, interactive lecturing, debates with professors, quality education and good teaching staff; further, they stressed the uniqueness of the program and the novelty for Kosovo as well as the praxis elements built into the modules. The main weakness seemed to be the peripheral situation of the College at the edge of Pristina with very bad public transport connections.

Students have an opportunity to address professors directly or via email if they have any problems or they are seeking a feedback concerning their tasks or marks. If a student is dissatisfied with his/her mark, he/she has a right to appeal.

Students also can express their concerns filling in the questionnaires at the end of each course. What is still not clear is the procedure of conducting and analysing the questionnaires which certainly is an area of responsibility of the QA Office. As the direction of that office at the moment is somewhat *in limbo*, the expert panel asked itself who is responsible for analysing the results of course surveys and how do these results affect learning processes? We refer in this context to II last para. above.

What has been a point of concern of an expert is that students showed little understanding of the nature and importance of their representation. Despite the fact that SER gives us detailed information about student engagement in College affairs through participation in the Student Council, the Management Board of the College, the Senate, the International Advisory Board and in some committees (p. 122), students do not seem to be aware of how and by whom they are represented, how the Student Council fits in the organization structure and the management of the College, and what the role of the Student Council is in supporting students and upholding their rights. Obviously, this is mainly due to a communication problem amongst the students themselves; unfortunately, at least one of the expert panel members has made similar experiences in his own faculty, so here we may have a Europe-wide problem.

*The College should, therefore, endeavour to:*

- *provide support to students in understanding their role in academic affairs, and*
- *ensure that student representatives understand their responsibilities towards all students in the College.*



## **VI Research and Innovation**

**The research offered at the College has a firm concentration point: sustainable energy management in the Balkans in general and efficient energy buildings in Kosovo in particular. To be more precise (cf. SER pp 214 et seq.)**

- 1) Applicability and economic viability of advanced material technologies in Kosovo buildings;
- 2) Kosovo climate adapted low-energy envelope technologies;
- 3) Energy supply systems and services and
- 4) Use and implementation of these research areas in Kosovo climate;
- 5) Real estate valuation techniques and standards;
- 6) Real estate recording standards;

**The background for this orientation is that the long-term Energy Strategy of Kosovo seeks to achieve effective management of existing energy resources and protection of the environment simultaneously. The research plan of ESLG developed in cooperation with Norway's NTNU is focused on new ways and methods by which the Kosovo construction sector can incorporate sustainable architecture and sustainable refurbishment standards in its buildings, thereby raising the awareness of the construction sector for rational utilization of energy, promotion of energy efficiency in buildings, and promotion and development of new renewable energy technologies. The research plan focuses also on the development of new building materials and technologies that contribute to passive buildings or even zero emission buildings. An Energy Efficiency and Energy Management Research Centre is in the process of being set up again in cooperation with NTNU, while further research projects referring to the sustainable energy and environment in the Western Balkans framework are implemented in cooperation with the universities of Sarajevo and Zagreb. All this is to be crowned by a new *Journal of Energy Efficient Buildings and Energy Management* to be started by ESLG in 2017.**

**What one has to stress in this context is the topicality and socioeconomic usefulness of the ESLG research perspective as well as the international cooperative frameworks in which it is bedded; the impressive list of publications and of staff attendance in conferences, symposia, and seminars (SER pp 216 – 228) testifies to the fruitfulness of research in progress at ESLG. By sticking to their specialized niche in the academic subject market, ESLG confines itself to what it can do – and it does it well. The only omission in this context seems to be a European Union perspective, bearing in mind that with its Energy Efficiency directive of 2012 and its Renewable Energy directive of 2009 Brussels has set a firm and lasting framework which will also more and more influence the Western Balkan and Kosovo energy policies for decennia to come. In principle, this would ask for a new Master program in European Environmental Law; for a start, the MA in European Economic Law could be extended by a suitable specialization; for some primary info, cf. the distance**

learning program in European Environmental Law offered by the University of Koblenz – Landau - <https://www.uni-koblenz-landau.de/de/zfuw/eu-umweltrecht>

Amidst all this praise, one critical point seems in order: concerning research the SER only looks into the future: which projects have already been completed, and what has been achieved ( in terms of publications, patents, awards etc. ) unfortunately remains in the dark. With reference to publications, project results can be gleaned in a laborious process from the list of publications SER pp. 217 et seq. – but it would be more helpful for the experts if project results could be found, under the head of the respective project, tabulated block-wise for easy access and comparison. The info contained under 10.4 (SER p.228) is just too thin for this purpose.

## **VII Quality Management**

In the view of the present expert, quality management has two pillars really: a) to enable students to write their papers, articles, and theses in an internationally comparable, well-documented and intersubjectively assessable form, and b) to make sure that academic teaching obeys internationally comparable standards literature- and contentwise, reflects the state of the art, is based on modern didactics, and (particularly in a private institution) gives the student as customer good value for the money she/he pays.

Ad a) Hopefully, this part of quality management is achieved by the rather meticulous regulations on BA and MA Diploma theses contained in the SER pp 55 et seq. What the expert panel could not find were regulations on cheating or copying and pasting. We are sure that these exist; so the next SER should print them next to the regulations on diploma theses. And – if they are not already contained in the curricula of the individual study programs – the College might think about introducing modules on academic writing for first-year students (perhaps also encompassing training in computer and internet literacy).

Ad b) The regulations on quality assurance (SER pp 124 et seq.) are voluminous and pointed, being based to a very large extent on peer-review processes. They cover self-assessment and external evaluation processes of the College *in toto* and of individual teaching programs, modules, and courses (cf. SER sections 8.3 and 8.4, p. 134). The experts particularly commend the inclusion of the students in all processes of quality assessment (sections 8.5 & 8.6, pp 135 et seq.). And they would like to stress – on the lines of section 8.6 last para. (p.136) – the mutual responsibilities for fairness, freedom of expression, empathy, morale, zeal, and work ethics both on the side of the assessed and on the side of the assessors, which can only exist in a situation of common trust. That such a situation develops more easily in smaller Colleges with more intensive small group teaching is one of the advantages which contribute to ESLG's success.

## IX Internationalisation

From its very inception the College follows a policy of internationalisation on the basis of its Slovenian, Norwegian, and U.S. American cooperation contacts. The outcome of this policy can be seen in a staff and student mobility which is comparatively more intensive than in other Kosovo PBHEs. However, with the exception of Graceland University Iowa international mobility concentrates on the Western Balkans on the one hand, and Norway on the other. We have already mentioned, further above, the University of Reading as one of the European centres of excellence in estate and facility management, and we can also point to a respectable collection of Estate Management Masters in the Netherlands – cf. <http://www.mastersportal.eu/study-options/268452161/real-estate-property-management-netherlands.html>. In other words, the experts' advice would be to branch out in the direction of Western Europe or the EU in general; in particular so after a possible relaxation of Schengen requirements and closer approach to EU Candidate status as recommended by the Commission in the spring of 2016 [but unfortunately still awaiting member states' approval in the autumn of this year].

## X Implementation of prior experts' recommendations

The SER has a longer list of earlier expert recommendations already having been implemented (pp 234 et seq.). Questions remain with regard to the following ongoing or unfinished projects:

- To sign agreements with other European Universities, particularly those with European Law programmes (No. 17)
- To develop an internship program in European Economic Law (No.19)

These two items remain on the “to do”- list for the next accreditation period. All the other recommendations made by earlier expert panels have been implemented.

### Recommendation to KAA:

bearing in mind that all the KAA criteria for reaccreditation are met

**Institutionally reaccredit the ESLG College for another five years**

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