

## THE IMPACT OF EU PROGRAMMES ON FINANCING HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN WESTERN BALKANS – EVIDENCE FROM KOSOVO

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**Abstract** The main goal of this paper is to analyse the financial effects of EU education and research programs on the development of higher education institutions in Western Balkan countries with a special emphasis given to Kosovo. To achieve the set goal, we have used the integrative review method. The Western Balkan HEIs do not have sufficient financial capacity to develop new curricula, new study programmes and research projects. They must therefore make use of EU education and research programmes to cover this gap. The evidence provided in the paper supports the idea that HEIs of the countries with low economic development, political challenges and lack of institutional capabilities will have a difficult time funding such undertakings without the assistance of EU programmes. Thus, these programs have a great impact on financing these educational institutions effectively. Therefore, their impact on the funding of universities in this region should be elaborated. It should be noted that there is little research which elaborate the impact of these programs on funding Western Balkan HEIs. These are key findings of the paper.

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**Keywords**

EU programmes, higher education institutions, western Balkans, Kosovo, financing.

## 1 Introduction

EU programs are very important for the development of various institutions because they aim to facilitate cooperation between the institutions of countries around the world. These programmes can be in areas such as education, research, innovation, culture and health. Education is essential to developing a more inclusive, cohesive and competitive Europe in all aspects of human activity. Higher education and its links with research and innovation play a crucial role in individual and societal development and in providing not only the highly skilled human capital but also the engaged citizens that Europe needs to create jobs, to encourage economic growth, and to foster prosperity.

Higher education institutions (HEIs) are crucial partners in delivering upon the EU's strategy to drive forward and maintain sustainable growth. Sustained and substantive investment is required in order to transform education into a driver of development. Authorities in countries remain responsible for the methods by which higher education is organised and delivered in their countries. EU activities are designed to bring an additional international dimension to studying, teaching, researching or making policy in higher education. The objectives of EU programs are not only to create new opportunities for people in higher education to learn from one another across national borders but also to work together on joint projects to develop good learning and teaching strategies and methods, undertake excellent research and promote innovation<sup>1</sup>.

It should be emphasized that EU programs have greatly influenced the overall development of the education and financial system of this troubled region of Europe. As with all the EU Member States, the Western Balkans participate in the Bologna Process, and their higher education systems have undergone related reforms. However, the full benefit of these reforms may not yet have been realized. According to Ozturk (2001) no economic development is possible without good education system. A balanced education system promotes not only economic development, but productivity, and therefore promotes increased individual income per capita. Its influence is noticeable at the micro level of an individual family. Therefore, it can be concluded that the Western Balkan countries do not have a

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<sup>1</sup> European Commission, Education and Training: About higher education policy. Accessible at: [https://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/higher-education/about-higher-education-policy\\_en/](https://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/higher-education/about-higher-education-policy_en/), 20. 11. 2019.

balanced education system. The EU's research funding programmes tend to be beyond the reach of all except for the strongest institutions, due to the high competition and a lack of capacity and resources.

Qorraj (2018) emphasizes that EU programmes are very important for the beneficiary countries and especially the countries of the Western Balkans. First, because these countries lack sufficient financial support for HEIs from local institutions, EU programs will contribute to bridging this financial gap. Second, because these countries do not have enough experience with the system of Bologna, the EU Programs Framework will create opportunities for components such as new curricula, joint programmes and upgrading of existing programs.

A large number of donors are providing support to the education sector in Kosovo. Since 1999 the EU has been and still is an important donor supporting the Kosovo education system. Also, other Kosovo-friendly countries, through their respective governments, have supported the recovery of the education system. These countries include the United States, Germany, Britain, Austria, Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden, and Switzerland. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe-OSCE and UNICEF also have been significant donors.<sup>2</sup> Presently, it is critical for these donors to provide programs that will develop and enhance the skills of Kosovo entrepreneurs. At the same time, and equally as important, the Kosovo government must take the necessary steps to insure the improvement of entrepreneurs' skills and abilities, aligning them to the needs and challenges of the emerging market economy. These steps must include providing and improving education. Moreover, the whole education system should be reformed and be made more efficient (Prasnikar et al., 2010: 145).

The main purposes of this paper are as follows: (i) elaboration of the main obstacles to the development of HEIs in Kosovo; (ii) analysis of the methods of financing public and private institutions of higher education; and (iii) analysis of EU programs and their financial impact on the development of HEIs.

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<sup>2</sup> The Balkan Forum (2017) "Current State of Education in Countries of The Balkan Region". Accessible at: [https://thebalkanforum.org/file/repository/Education\\_Briefing\\_ENG\\_FINAL.pdf](https://thebalkanforum.org/file/repository/Education_Briefing_ENG_FINAL.pdf), Accessed: 19. 2. 2020.

## 2 Theoretical background

According to Jusufi and Bellaqa (2019), the Western Balkans consist of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, North Macedonia, Montenegro and Kosovo. Kosovo, as is true with the other countries listed, has had a difficult past and has suffered economic collapse and ethnic hatred. Together with the Kosovar society, Kosovo's higher education system has been going through a long process of transition. It has evolved from a completely destroyed and deeply politicized system in the late nineties, to a system striving to provide quality teaching to its students and to integrate into the European Higher Education Area. Kosovo's population is 1.8 million. This population is one of the youngest in Europe, with 45 percent under 25 years of age and more than a quarter not yet 15. From 2005 to 2014, Kosovo's higher education system has increased student access to academic services from 12 to 55 students per 1,000 inhabitants. During this period there was a structural transformation (increased student access to higher education) in the higher education system (Rexhaj, 2016: 29).

The higher education sector is regulated by the Law on Higher Education of 2011 (Friedrich Ebert Foundation, 2018:49). In Kosovo, higher education is provided at universities, private institutions of higher education, such as colleges and research institutes. The higher education system in Kosovo generally is faced with two main problems. The first problem concerns challenges still lingering as a consequence of the Milosevic repressive regime, when the University of Prishtina in Albanian operated informally and as a parallel education system. This decade of isolation and discrimination damaged the higher education system in Kosovo in several ways, particularly with regard to funding, academic and scientific development and in other structural ways, such as staff recruitment, publications, research activities, etc. As a result of this oppression and discrimination, young and competent lecturers, researchers and assistants are missing.

The second serious problem has been the enormous and almost uncontrolled growth of private higher education providers. There are around 30 licensed private providers of higher education in Kosovo. This number is very high compared to other countries in the region, and the private programmes' delivery and quality of education are predominantly of poor standard (Baliqi, 2010: 46). Most of the private HEIs received only one-year licences and they are required to undergo the process

of accreditation every year, meaning that the number of accredited institutions varies yearly (Baketa, 2013: 7).

**Table 1: Education funding by sector**

% of GDP in education (EU 28) average	5.3%
% GDP in education (Kosovo)	4.70%
Kosovo expenditures in education sector	262.3
Kosovo government education budget (%)	16.50%
Pre-school expenditure	7.7 million Euro
Pre-university expenditure	178.6 million Euro
VET expenditure	25.2 million Euro
Pre-university expenditure	210.99
Higher education expenditure	50.76

Source: Muja, 2016

The University of Prishtina offers Bachelor, Master and Doctorate studies and the languages of instruction are Albanian and other official languages in Kosovo. The doors to the wider world opened, as the Kosovo education system made efforts to catch up with the new developments in the European context. The adoption of the Bologna Declaration was the first step taken by the University of Prishtina in order to keep the pace with the higher education in other European countries.

**Table 2: Number of higher education institutions (HEIs) in Western Balkan Countries**

Countries	Number of HEIs	Public HEIs	Private HEIs	Faculties	HEI per 100,000 population	Faculties per 100,000 population
Albania	39	16	23	119	1.3	4.1
Bosnia and Herzegovina	47	10	37	120	1.2	3.1
Kosovo	41	12	29	48	2.2	2.6
North Macedonia	16	5	11	126	0.8	6.1
Montenegro	12	1	11	45	2.1	7.2
Serbia	85	51	34	128	1.2	1.8
Western Balkans	240	95	145	586	1.3	3.2

Source: European Commission, 2016: 13<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Accessible at: <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/423956f6-c74a-11e6-a6db-01aa75ed71a1>, Accessed: 20. 2. 2020.

The adoption of the Bologna Declaration and its implementation by some faculties of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) are considered to have been the major changes that took place during past years. These two steps were the first moves in years that the University of Prishtina made towards new qualitative changes (Tahirsylaj, 2008: 7–9). Indeed, after more than a decade of “market oriented” reforms based upon the Bologna process, the University of Prishtina neither compares nor competes with universities from other European countries. It remains predominantly a teaching institution where little research is undertaken by faculty members. Learning workplace competencies have not advanced significantly as the diplomas earned, and the knowledge and skills learned in the university, do not match those demanded by the modern economy and are not really competitive in the European market (Selenica, 2017: 104).

Taking into consideration the current level of education and its low impact on entrepreneurship, vocational education and training could help young generations adapt to the labour market and entrepreneurship activities. Considering these factors, in addition to future challenges and opportunities such as engagement on regional and EU market, involvement on EU projects requires an increase in the educational and knowledge background on the part of Kosovo entrepreneurs in order to adapt to a ‘creative destruction’ of the global market (Qorraaj, 2017: 141).

**Table 3: Number of higher education institutions (HEI) in public and private sector according to the fields of study**

Study Field	Public	Private
Education	9.2%	0.0%
Human arts	10.8%	6.4%
Social science, business and law	48.1%	63.7%
Natural sciences, math. and computer science	5.5%	10.2%
Engineering, production and construction	14.0%	7.5%
Agriculture and veterinary medicine	2.6%	0.0%
Health and well-being	6.9%	7.7%
Services	2.8%	4.5%

Source: Friedrich Ebert Foundation, 2018: 51<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Accessible at: <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/kosovo/15185-20190220.pdf>, Accessed: 20. 2. 2020.

It should be noted that the Serbian part of the previous University of Pristina was relocated in 1999 and reactivated in Northern Kosovo-North Mitrovica in 2001 (Forum 2015 and Kosovo Education Center, 2006: 12). Besides ethnic separation and corruption, higher education is also being abused politically. Securing a job in the University as a lecturer is almost impossible for an applicant that does not belong to one of the stronger political parties. Although there has been an increase in the number of study programs offered by the University, there is a discrepancy between labour market demands and those higher education programs. One of the reasons for the lack of coordination between HEIs and the labour market is the lack of communication between the actors in these two fields. Although the legal framework for higher education foresees the development of mechanisms for performance-based financing for HEIs, Kosovo has not yet developed a methodology for such funding (Friedrich Ebert Foundation, 2018: 51).

### **3 Higher education funding**

The financing of public HEIs in Kosovo is regulated in accordance with the Law on Higher Education in Kosovo. These institutions may receive funding from the following sources: allocations made by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology and the Council for Research; tuition and other fees paid by students; income from commercial and other services; donations, gifts and endowments; and, contracts with local, international, public or private bodies involved in teaching, research and consultancy activities.

Public universities subject to the Higher Education Law have established governance structures to operate autonomously. Since 2011, financing in higher education has increased steadily from € 34.63 million in 2011, to € 37.62 million in 2012, to € 41.02 million in 2013, and to € 50.76 million in 2015. Financing has increased both as a nominal amount, and also as a percentage of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and government budget. In 2014, this financing amounted to 0.91 percent of GDP, thus approximating the EU average of 1.13 percent. Despite increased financing for higher education, the growth of scientific activities of research and development at these universities has remained stagnant.

The private higher education sector is mostly self-financed, mainly by student fees. The newly drafted Law on Higher Education foresees the possibility of funding the private sector from the Kosovo budget. The actual financing framework for public HEIs in Kosovo is using the same approach, which determines mostly input-based funding. For the moment, only public HEIs receive public funds. Private HEIs are permitted to determine tuition fees and spend money based on their statutes and development strategy (European Commission, 2017: 9–10).

The budget for higher education remains quite small and insufficient for the implementation of necessary reforms. Expenditures in higher education constitute 2.85 percent of the total government costs, or 20.32 percent of the overall expenditure for the education sector. The budget of Higher Education Strategy is not reflected in the Medium-term Expenditure Framework and therefore there are gaps in financing objectives foreseen in this strategy. In 2014, the Government of Kosovo made a decision to reduce the tuition fee by 50 percent for public universities. Such decision has resulted in direct negative implications in the revenues of the University of Prishtina. It will hinder the normal functioning of the University of Prishtina and will harm the quality of studies offered (KEC, 2014: 13).

According to these theoretical evidences, it can be said that Kosovo's HEIs, both public and private, cannot function in a qualitative manner without financial support from EU programmes. The share of government spending on higher education within GDP is small, so these institutions cannot conduct research, scientific and teaching activities. The management capacities of universities need to be significantly increased in order to make them more efficient and more performance oriented. The European Commission, through its research framework programmes, should encourage HEIs to create models of full economic spending (The World Bank, 2008: 25–31).

#### **4 EU programs in the field of education**

As a unique *economic* and *political* union, the EU supports many countries with various programmes in the field of education and research. Every year many projects are submitted by European universities in order to receive support from these programmes. Some of the EU programmes in the field of education are worth mentioning:



- The Lifelong Learning Programme;
- The Youth in Action Programme;
- The Erasmus Mundus Programme - Erasmus+;
- Tempus;
- Alfa;
- Edulink;
- European Union Scholarship Scheme (European Commission, 2019: 6).

The European Communities' Funding Programmes are promoting changes, agreed upon from the supranational level to the national level, by supporting the development of common policies and activities in the field of education and training. The Lifelong Learning Programme is the largest programme for community action in the field of lifelong learning. Its general objective is to contribute through lifelong learning to the development of the Community as an advanced knowledge-based society (Širok and Košmrlj, 2012: 381–382).

The objectives of the lifelong learning programme or strategy in Kosovo can be summarized as follows. To insure that all people have access to learning and education in all periods of life, in all areas of life and in all environments, and most particularly in Kosovo's agriculture and rural development sector; to insure that all people in Kosovo are aware that they are entitled to learning and education as well as to enhance their co-responsibility for their learning and education; to insure that everybody in Kosovo has access to tailor-made learning, which means that education and training strategies must have the flexibility to be able to adapt to the learner's needs and requirements; to develop quality and flexible opportunities and circumstances for continuous learning, education and training as well as opportunities to choose among various efficient learning and teaching methods; and, to facilitate the implementation and use of knowledge, skills and learning as the fundamental source and driving force for the development of local and regional areas as well as development of social networks within them (University of Prishtina, 2016: 7–8).

The Youth in Action programme aims to inspire a sense of active European citizenship, solidarity and tolerance among Europeans from adolescence through adulthood. The programme promotes mobility within and beyond the EU's borders, and encourages the inclusion of all young people, regardless of their educational, social and cultural background. It helps young people acquire new competences, and provides them with opportunities for formal and informal learning with a European dimension (European Union, 2012: 12). A Youth Democracy Project is developed by a European partnership, allowing the pooling, at the European level, of ideas, experiences and methodologies from projects or activities at the local, regional, national or European levels, in order to improve young people's participation. A Youth Democracy Project has three phases:

- planning and preparation;
- implementation of the activity;
- evaluation (including reflection on a possible follow-up).

Non-formal learning principles and practices are reflected throughout the Project (European Commission, 2013: 40). Within Education, Employment and Social Policies Kosovo has benefited 12 million euro from this programme (Germany Trade & Invest, 2017: 21).

By way of example, the Erasmus programme was launched in 1987. This is an important programme because it enables mobility in Europe. The European Union's Erasmus+ programme is a funding scheme which supports activities in the fields of Education, Training, Youth and Sport. This programme consists of three so-called "Key Actions" and two additional actions. These activities are managed partly at the European level by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) and at the national level by National Agencies of the participating countries. The European Commission is responsible for ERASMUS+ policies and oversees the full implementation of the programme's activities. Briefly, it offers opportunities for:

- individuals who want to have mobility and set time abroad to attend various trainings including language training; and

- organizations that want to collaborate through joint projects in academic fields. These include various events related to vocational training and various studies and research.

Erasmus+ also supports teaching, research, networking and policy debate on EU topics. Erasmus+ supports the Eurydice network, which describes education systems in Europe and offers comparative analysis of national systems and policies from early childhood to adult education.<sup>5</sup> Kosovo has been an Erasmus+ partner state since 2015 through its Erasmus+ offices located both in Pristina and North Mitrovica.<sup>6</sup>

*International credit mobility (ICM):*

There are distinct budgets for different regions of the world that are divided between all the European countries. Programme-Country institutions make up bilateral partnerships with universities from Western Balkans countries and apply on behalf of their partners.

**Table 4: Number of Erasmus programmes in Kosovo**

	2015	2016	2017	2018
Proposals received involving Kosovo	87	80	94	110
Projects selected involving Kosovo	50	54	65	75
Students and staff moving to Europe	375	462	512	517
Students and staff moving to Kosovo	195	200	260	263
Percentage of regional budget	10.2	10.23	9.93	9.67

Source: European Commission, 2018

<sup>5</sup> European Commission (2019): Erasmus+. Accessible at [https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus-plus\\_en/](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus-plus_en/), 21.11.2019.

<sup>6</sup> European Union Office in Kosovo (2018): Erasmus opens many doors to you. Accessible at: [https://ceas.europa.eu/delegations/kosovo\\_tg/48306/Erasmus%20opens%20many%20doors%20to%20you](https://ceas.europa.eu/delegations/kosovo_tg/48306/Erasmus%20opens%20many%20doors%20to%20you), Accessed: 22. 2. 2020.

*Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees (EMJMDs):*

This particular programme awards EU-funded scholarships to Master students from around the world and covers the costs of both tuition and travel, along with a living allowance. The programmes last from one to two years during which students study in at least two different European countries, and obtain a joint, double degree, or multiple degree. Also, institutions from partner countries can be part of the consortia that deliver these programmes (though this is not obligatory) as full partners. This means that they officially award degrees, or as associated partners, where they participate in the programme in some kind of capacity, but do not award the actual joint degree.

**Table 5: Kosovo in EMJMD projects 2014–2018**

Kosovo in EMJMD projects	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Total
Total EMJMDs selected	11	32	27	39	44	153
Total proposals received	61	119	92	122	112	506
Proposals received involving Kosovo	0	0	0	0	0	0
EMJMDs selected involving Kosovo	0	0	0	0	0	0
Full partners from Kosovo in EMJMDs	0	0	0	0	0	0
Associates from Kosovo in EMJMDs	0	0	0	0	0	0

Source: European Commission, 2018: 17

*Capacity-building for Higher Education:*

This concerns the Erasmus+ Capacity Building in Higher Education action (CBHE) projects, which last from two to three years. These projects are aimed at modernisation and reforming HEIs, developing new curricula, improving governance and building relationships between enterprises and HEIs. Also, in cooperation with national authorities, they can address issues of a political nature and topics related to higher education reforms. It should be noted that around 11

<sup>7</sup> Accessible at: [https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/sites/erasmusplus2/files/erasmusplus\\_kosovo\\_2018.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/sites/erasmusplus2/files/erasmusplus_kosovo_2018.pdf), Accessed: 22. 2. 2020.

percent of the annual global budget for CBHE projects is dedicated for Western Balkan countries.

**Table 6: Kosovo in CBHE projects 2015–2018**

Kosovo in CBHE projects	2015	2016	2017	2018	Total
Proposals received in call overall	515	736	833	887	2971
Projects selected in call overall	138	147	149	147	581
Proposals received involving Kosovo	21	23	29	34	107
Projects selected involving Kosovo	6	4	4	6	20
Projects coordinated by Kosovo	2	0	1	2	5
Instances of participation from Kosovo	23	9	14	18	64

Source: European Commission, 2018: 2<sup>8</sup>

*Jean Monnet Activities:*

These activities aim at the development of EU studies worldwide. For over 25 years they have been supporting Modules, Chairs, and Centres of Excellence to promote excellence in teaching and research on the European integration process at the higher education level. It should be noted that these programmes enable policy debate within the academic world through networks and support a number of associations in the field of EU studies (European Commission, 2018: 1–2).

**Table 7: Kosovo in Jean Monnet 2014–2018**

Kosovo in Jean Monnet	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Total
Proposals received in call overall	493	879	1034	1177	1255	4838
Projects selected in call	212	260	270	238	235	1215
Applications from Kosovo	2	2	0	3	3	10
Selected projects from Kosovo	0	0	0	0	0	0
Networks involving partners from Kosovo	0	0	0	0	0	0

Source: European Commission, 2018: 2<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Accessible at: [https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/sites/erasmusplus2/files/erasmusplus\\_kosovo\\_2018.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/sites/erasmusplus2/files/erasmusplus_kosovo_2018.pdf), Accessed 23. 2. 2020.

<sup>9</sup> Accessible at: [https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/sites/erasmusplus2/files/erasmusplus\\_kosovo\\_2018.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/sites/erasmusplus2/files/erasmusplus_kosovo_2018.pdf), Accessed: 25. 2. 2020.

Tempus was born into a very different world than the world we know in 2020. An ‘EC Tempus Office’ was established in Brussels in 1990, to manage the first Call for Proposals and Tempus projects. This office worked in close cooperation with the Commission’s Task Force on Education, Human Resources, Training and Youth, which later became Directorate-General XXII. Belarus, Ukraine and the Russian Federation had already joined Tempus in 1993, stretching the Tempus map as far east as Vladivostok. Russia was to become the biggest Tempus Partner Country and still is to this day. Its regions are as active in the Programme as its capital. The declaration of independence of its constituent republics paved the way for a wave of Central Asian members. Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan joined in 1994, followed by Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia in 1995, and then by Tajikistan in 1996 and Turkmenistan in 1997. Mongolia participated under the TACIS Programme from 1995 to 2004. In the meantime, a fourth wave of EU enlargement would bring Austria, Sweden and Finland into the EU in 1995.

**Table 8: Number of Joint European Projects/ Joint Projects by Country**

Country	Tempus I	Tempus II	Tempus III	Tempus IV	Total
Albania	13	37	40	14	104
Bosnia and Herzegovina	-	18	54	13	85
North Macedonia	-	25	68	26	119
Kosovo	-	-	19	13	32
Montenegro	-	-	16	9	25
Serbia	-	-	76	35	111

Source: McCabe et al., 2011: 49<sup>10</sup>

During the period 1998–2000, EU leaders agreed to start the process of membership negotiations with ten countries of Central and Eastern Europe: Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia. The Mediterranean islands of Cyprus and Malta were also included (McCabe et al., 2011: 8–13). There are three types of Tempus projects: individual (up to 2007), structural (SM) and joint projects. The total budget for this call was around €51 million, with JEP projects able to gain funding ranging between €0.5 and €1.5 million. New projects under this call started at the end of 2008. Tempus is

<sup>10</sup> Accessible at:

[https://www.fct.unl.pt/sites/default/files/documentos/noticias/tempus20\\_a\\_retrospective\\_of\\_the\\_tempus\\_programme\\_over\\_the\\_past\\_20\\_years.pdf](https://www.fct.unl.pt/sites/default/files/documentos/noticias/tempus20_a_retrospective_of_the_tempus_programme_over_the_past_20_years.pdf). Accessed: 23. 2. 2020.

managed by the European Commission's education and culture, enlargement and aid departments. It is financed through three of the European Commission's external assistance instruments.<sup>11</sup>

Tempus projects in Kosovo have concretely supported the implementation of the higher education strategic objectives by establishing three-cycle study systems in compliance with the Bologna Process. These projects introduced procedures and experiences for the implementation of the ECTS. Tempus also introduced the provision of the Diploma Supplement, by strengthening the mobility of academics and students both within the Western Balkan Region and EU countries. This brings functionality to distance learning methodologies. Tempus projects in Kosovo promote interactive learning and teaching methods within the academic environment of this country.

It is important to note that some projects, such as Mechanical Engineering, have introduced a strong component of cooperation with industry. Even some projects have stimulated cooperation with the Local Economic Development and non-academic sector. Examples of this cooperation are Local Development or Entrepreneurship and the Master in Civil Society. One Project has addressed the LLL process such as Teacher Training. Still other projects have addressed University Management.

Two projects have been launched in the field of Quality Culture, covering the public and private Higher Education sector, a very important issue in the Higher Education scene of Kosovo. This is of great importance not only for Kosovo society but for academia. As the current climate for research is not very favourable, one Tempus project is addressing Research and Development Capacities and Education-Economy cooperation. In the future, strengthening the quality assurance system, the cooperation of HEIs with the labour market, as well as the development of lifelong learning, all will remain his priorities for Tempus projects (European Commission TEMPUS, 2010: 8).

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<sup>11</sup> European Commission: TEMPUS Fostering Entrepreneurship in Higher Education-FoSentHE. Available at: <http://web.fosenthe.efzg.hr/Home>. Accessed: 25. 2. 2020.

Horizon 2020 is the European Union Framework Programme for Research and Innovation from 2014 to 2020. It is the successor to the Seventh Research Framework Programme (FP7), in which EUCAR's members have participated in a large number of collaborative projects. Horizon 2020 offers a total budget of €77bn over seven years to three main pillars:

- excellent science;
- industrial leadership (including information and communication technologies, advanced materials, advanced manufacturing and processing);
- societal challenges including transport, energy, climate action and raw materials.<sup>12</sup>

The HORIZON 2020 program was launched in the Republic of Kosovo in 2013. Kosovars will be able to use this program by 2020. Horizon 2020 will bolster the EU's position as a world leader in science, attracting the best brains and helping our scientists collaborate and share ideas across Europe. In addition, it will help talented people and innovative firms boost Europe's competitiveness, creating jobs along the way, and contributing to a higher standard of living. Accordingly, it will benefit everyone (European Commission, 2014: 7).

Currently, all the Western Balkan countries are participating in this programme and almost each has benefited. However, these countries do not utilize this programme the same. According to the statistics, it seems that not all of the Western Balkans have achieved satisfactory results on EU funding programmes, especially when it comes to the most recent EU members. The EU encouraged these countries to increase their participation by providing the information sessions, training and workshops. Additionally, EU institutions offer other supportive activities such as effective training and Life-long learning programmes which can increase productivity, research, innovation, which taken together culminate in a competitive advantage.

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<sup>12</sup> European Council for Automotive R&D (2019): Horizon 2020. Accessible at <https://eucar.be/horizon2020/>, 25. 11. 2019.



**Table 9: Requested EU grants by country for education (2014–2018)**

Country	Eligible Proposals	Retained Proposals	Assistance	Applications
Serbia	38	4	6,807,244 €	42
Albania	6	0	1,490,656 €	6
North Macedonia	4	1	772,882 €	5
Montenegro	4	1	406,047 €	5
Bosnia and Herzegovina	3	0	351,438 €	3
Kosovo	1	0	3,500 €	1
Total	56	6	9,831,766 €	62

Source: Ajdarpašić and Qorraj, 2019: 6<sup>13</sup>

As a set of programmes, HORIZON 2020 is an attractive programme for the countries of the Western Balkans region as they also offer various possibilities for these six countries. HORIZON 2020 is a significant funding, which is quite favourable for all countries. By providing such opportunities, scientists' motivation is growing at the same time, which can affect the increase in the number of Western Balkan participants (Ajdarpašić and Qorraj, 2019: 4–5).

**Table 10: Number of participations in HORIZON 2020 (2014–2018)**

Country	Number of projects with the participants from a country	Beneficence (million €)
Serbia	307	53.9
Albania	35	2.4
North Macedonia	105	11.5
Montenegro	52	4.2
Bosnia and Herzegovina	45	3.1
Total	544	75.1

Source: Ajdarpašić and Qorraj, 2019: 5<sup>14</sup>

### *H2020 - Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA):*

This programme provides grants for all stages of researchers' careers - be they doctoral candidates or highly experienced researchers. Also, this programme encourages interdisciplinary, transnational and intersectional mobility. There are five types of MSCA:

<sup>13</sup> Accessible at: [https://hrcak.srce.hr/index.php?show=clanak&id\\_clanak\\_jezik=324050](https://hrcak.srce.hr/index.php?show=clanak&id_clanak_jezik=324050), Accessed: 22. 1. 2020.

<sup>14</sup> Accessible at: [https://hrcak.srce.hr/index.php?show=clanak&id\\_clanak\\_jezik=324050](https://hrcak.srce.hr/index.php?show=clanak&id_clanak_jezik=324050), Accessed: 23. 1. 2020.

- Co-funding of regional, national and international programmes that finance fellowships involving mobility to or from another country;
- Individual fellowships (IF): support for experienced researchers undertaking mobility between countries, optionally to the non-academic sector;
- Research networks (ITN): support for Innovative Training Networks;
- The European Researchers' Night (NIGHT);
- International and inter-sectorial cooperation through the Research and Innovation Staff Exchanges-RISE (European Movement in Albania, 2019: 18).

**Table 11: Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) results 2014–2018**

Country	RS	BiH	AL	NM	MNE	KS
Number of applicants	426	52	26	73	24	10
Number of researchers funded by MSCA	143	28	23	13	7	1
Number of Projects	24	6	1	2	1	1
Number of country organisations in MSCA	35	7	3	2	3	1
EU budget awarded to organisations (EUR million)	4.24	0.59	0.08	0.13	0.08	N/A
Success rate of applicants	12.34%	17.65%	13.64%	2.99%	14.29%	10%

Source: European Movement in Albania, 2019: 19<sup>15</sup>

In general, in HEIs researchers prepare very few international grant proposals, largely because they receive little or no support from their own institutions. Furthermore, most international collaborations are highly personalized and depend exclusively on the efforts and commitment of individual researchers. This limits their impact, their scale-up and sustainability prospects. Accordingly, based on these figures, facts and data, it can be said that the success rate results in EU programs for most of the Western Balkan countries international research cooperation is low (European Movement in Albania, 2019: 20).

<sup>15</sup> Accessible at: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1EQkauEvri03MFbthKblq-3o83gEgToNI/view>, Accessed 13. 2. 2020.

The EU has recommended better quality of education at all levels, independent functioning of HEIs, a new law on higher education that would meet international standards and more investment in research and innovation capacity at the national level in order to increase competitiveness and integration into the European Research Area (EU Information and Cultural Centre, 2018: 27).

#### **4 Conclusion**

Due to their fragile past, the countries of the Western Balkans have not yet completed the process of political and economic transition. From the theoretical evidence point of view, it can be understood that the inadequate educational system is one of the causes of economic and social stagnation of these countries. The HEIs of these countries do not provide adequate knowledge. Kosovo, in particular, is facing such a problem. While there has been some progress in modernizing studies, universities in Kosovo still lag far behind not only European but even regional universities. Overall, Kosovo's higher education system is not well-suited to respond to global developments and market needs.

HEIs cannot be expected to be efficient as long as they have a limited budget and a lack of funding for research. The EU, through education programmes, has supported and still supports these institutions in fulfilling a large number of obligations and tasks in the academic field. Exchange programmes in the field of education and science have enabled many students and researchers from Kosovo to gain new knowledge and experience in EU countries. However, the lack of free movement due to the non-liberalization of visas for the citizens of Kosovo, has made this exchange process very difficult. HEIs and the Ministry of Education cannot provide much financial support to Kosovo researchers and students. Consequently, EU financial support is vital for the development of science and education in Kosovo. However, HEIs need to increase their absorption capacity in order to benefit as much as possible from the programmes EU institutions have to offer.

Due to political and legal circumstances, Kosovo's education system has undergone improper development, especially during the 1990's. Therefore, in order for EU programmes to have a positive effect on the modernization of the education system, many projects and programmes aimed at modernizing curricula, increasing the level

of research and perfecting teaching techniques and methods in public and private universities, must be developed. It should be noted that there must be sufficient funds for mobility between the EU and the Western Balkan countries. Funds should also be provided for the mobility of academic staff. In general, only through different exchanges will it be possible to eliminate the negative and militant paradigms that unfortunately still exist in the Western Balkan's mentality. In conclusion, it can be said that the EU institutions and the Kosovo authorities should work together to achieve positive results in promoting reforms to modernize university education. Only by funding various programmes in the field of university education, science and entrepreneurship, can the EU effectively combat the negative phenomena and hostile paradigms in countries of this region.

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