

D 6.1 SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

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WP 6: Sustainability

WP Leader: SVEHERC

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1. Summary

The overall goal of the WBNET project is to introduce joint short study programs in the higher education institutions (HEIs) of the Western Balkans (WB) in the area of ICT. This will be done through:

- Registration of 4 Centers for short-study programs in WB
- Creation of a curriculum of short study programs in the technical-technological field and registration of a short study program with competent national bodies;
- Implementation of a short study program.

The role of the Centres will be to:

- Analyse the labour market situation and identification of the needs of employers in order to identify the problem - lack of knowledge and skills to perform a specific job that corresponds to higher education in terms of type and level of competence and complexity;
- Creation of a curriculum for short study programs in the technical-technological field, a designed set of subjects and practice/training aimed at ensuring the acquisition of narrower and functionally related knowledge and skills, in order to train participants to perform specific work that corresponds to higher education in terms of type and level of competence and complexity;
- Registration of a short study program with competent national bodies;
- Implementation of a short study program;
- Keeping records of completed short study programs and issued certificates in accordance with national laws.

Within the framework of the project, a joint program of short studies in the field of multimedia engineering and computing would be implemented. The study programs would be implemented in a combined way (online - teaching, live - taking exams and professional practice). Teaching would be conducted by teachers from partner institutions WB and EU HEIs, as well as experts from the business sector.

Increasing cooperation between HEIs WB and EU and cooperation between HEIs and economic companies is the prerequisite for long sustainability of the project. The focus is on the exchange of experience, transfer of knowledge and exchange of best practices between EU and WB HEIs and the introduction of dual education.

Each company will be able to participate in the creation of a short study program and create content with the teachers of the HEI, according to the requirements of the required jobs. Companies and HEIs will sign contracts on the implementation of training and professional practice. Short study programs will be available to anyone who wants to acquire additional skills for specific jobs. Companies will be able to send employees to them, whom they think should undergo additional training.

At the end of the program, participants will not receive a diploma or a special title, but the confirmation of successful completion will be a certificate.

The WBNET project will also actively promote flexible learning pathways, enabling participants to combine short study programs with regular higher education or professional career development. Special attention will be given to social inclusion by providing opportunities for underrepresented groups, including women in the ict sector, rural populations, and persons with disabilities.

In addition, a strategic plan will be developed to expand short study programs across the entire western balkan region, with a focus on creating a network of excellence that will promote cross-border cooperation, joint certifications, and exchange programs for students and staff.

2. Introduction

The main ambition of the project is to enhance synergies between higher education community and labour market in Kosovo and B&H. The project overall goal clearly defines the project main beneficiaries and stakeholders, i.e. target groups which are the following:

- A. Students of participating WB HEIs
- B. Academic staff of participating WB HEIs
- C. Universities in surroundings,
- D. Industrial and business institutions in partner countries including techno-parks, business incubators, foundations for the development of innovative businesses and start-ups, and similar.
- E. Individuals willing to up-skill themselves

It is expected that the project will have impact on target groups in short and long term:

Students of participating universities:

- A. Short-term impact: obtained/improved knowledge and skills in computing and multimedia engineering, digital and soft skills (indicators: number of trained students through Centres
 - *indicators*: number of enrolled students in Centres.
- B. Long-term impact: increased employability
 - *indicators*: % of students employed during 1 year after graduation).

Academic staff of participating WB HEIs:

- A. Short-term impact: enhanced skills and competences in curriculum development, innovative pedagogy and subject matter
 - *indicators*: number of trained staff.
- B. Long-term impact: enhanced career opportunities
 - *indicators*: % of university academic staff with improved positions.

To further strengthen the impact of the project, special initiatives will be introduced aimed at creating sustainable bridges between higher education institutions and the private sector. These initiatives will include organizing regular networking events, job fairs, and professional practice weeks at the centers.

In order to maximize benefits for students, a mentoring program will be established where experienced professionals from the ICT industry will provide guidance to students enrolled in short study programs.

The project will also support the creation of pilot projects and practical tasks designed in cooperation with companies, enabling students to work on real industry challenges as part of their educational experience.

By implementing these activities, the project will enhance employability, entrepreneurship skills, and practical knowledge of students, while simultaneously strengthening the innovative potential of participating universities.

Four WB HEIs involved in the project:

A. Short-term impact: innovative curriculum

- *indicators*: number of courses.

B. Long-term impact: increased academic offer; improved cooperation with local communities; improved cooperation between consortium members; attractiveness of consortium members

- *indicators*: number of enrolled students, number of trained externals; positions of participating universities in national/international rankings.

Industrial and business communities in WB countries:

C. Short-term impact: improved knowledge and skills in programming and multimedia of their employed staff

- *indicators*: number of trained employees.

For the successful implementation of all project objectives, it is crucial to track the ongoing implementation and account for the feedback from all partners involved in order to measure and estimate the impact of the project.

Impact measurement is held on the basis of two parameters:

- outputs, i.e. direct effects of an action,
- outcomes, i.e. short and mid-term changes.

The effects of the WBNET will be defined on the basis of constant project monitoring, evaluation of its progress and delivered results, reporting and audit.

To provide the project consortium with quality standards, criteria and mechanisms, which will assure that the action is delivered in a consistent and high-quality way, and the deliverables comply with the project objectives, it is necessary to frame the quality management system, quality assurance procedures and quality control.

The internal project management is based on the transparency and accountability of all project partners, guided by the Grant Agreement, partnership agreement, Erasmus+ Programme Guide and the present project management handbook. The high quality of the project implementation and its activities is a prerequisite for the sustainability of the project after its end.

It is of vital importance to ensure that the WBNET action receives substantial visibility. On the whole, the consortium must pay specific attention to the importance of dissemination, exploitation of results of the action and their visibility at a transnational level.

Under the publicity obligations, all partners are requested to inform the public, press and media of the action, which must, in conformity with all agreements, clearly and visibly indicate “with the support of the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union.

Main pivotal issue in the EU visibility strategy is the web presence. In this respect, a website for the WBNET must be created and maintained (at least during the project lifetime), as stipulated in the Grant Agreement. The website must be kept up-to-date with at least: a description of the project, the contact details of the coordinator, the list of beneficiaries, mention of the European Union's financial support with the relevant logo, and access to all results, when they become available.

To implement a project means to carry out activities proposed in the application form with the aim to achieve project objectives and deliver all intended results and outputs. It is of vital importance that all project members share the project vision, understand project objectives and plan, perform the tasks at their best and on time and are committed to implementing them. Aside from the implementation of the tasks, the processes of monitoring, reporting and communication play an integral part of the project management.

In general, project success depends on many internal and external factors. Some of the most important ones are a very well-organized project team and effective monitoring of the project progress and related expenditures. Overall management has to be taken over by the all project partners, who are responsible for the lead of the work package or assigned as a deliverable leader.

The project management has to be an efficient system and should always stay flexible to the current needs and changing circumstances, as the project is rarely implemented with no deviations from the initial plan. In all situations, the project partnership is to deliver quality results and outputs. Quality means meeting expectations described in the application and those agreed within the partnership.

The basic documents that are leading realization are:

- A. Grant Agreement,
- B. Project Management Plan,
- C. Quality Assurance Plan are
- D. Dissemination Plan.

3. Dissemination

Dissemination is very important for WBNET partners, and dissemination plan is agreed at the Kick-off-meeting. From the very beginning of the project each HEI established on its website notification about the project and project website is launched. Logo of the project is developed and used for communication through all media. Dissemination is going to be through all the media (TV, radio, internet, social-networks). Promo material (t-shirts, notebooks, flyers, USB, pens) will be provided on all WBHEIs and due the fact that all HEIs have excellent relations with local and state TV program producers, this is going to be a project that people talk about.

The dissemination will be organized on different levels (department, institutional, local, regional, national, and international), aimed at different target groups (academic staff, current and prospective students, universities in partner countries, industrial and business communities) and carried out during and post the project. Dissemination activities will be implemented in line with the Dissemination Plan developed during the Kick-off meeting. Dissemination work plan contains the list of specific project outcomes and outputs to be disseminated, dissemination levels, list of tools and channels linked to specific target groups and particular time period along with the list of indicators and evidences. The activities are led by Dissemination Board composed of the representative from each HEI, while associated partners will help. The Dissemination Board members are responsible for organizing dissemination activities in their HEIs as well as for compliance with the Dissemination work plan.

Different tools will be used to reach out project target groups:

- A. students at universities in WB countries: info sessions; partner's websites and social media; partner's media (i.e. newsletter, bulletins etc.); project website and social media; project newsletter;
- B. staff of participating universities: university-level meetings and presentations; information sessions; partner's websites; intranet (if applicable); partners' media (i.e. newsletter, bulletins etc.); project website and social media; project newsletter;
- C. industrial and business communities: information sessions; partner's and project websites and social media; project presentations at events of different level (local, national, international conferences); publications; project newsletter; associated partners with their channels (websites, newsletters, meetings etc).

Dissemination of the project will encompass both ongoing activities during the whole life of the project (such as project website population, continuous posting in project social media groups, publication of announcement and news on partners' websites and social media, project presentation at events of different level, biannual newsletters etc) and dedicated activities and events. The latter will be a series of information sessions held at universities in partner countries with the main aim to inform target groups and wide public about the project and its

results, and Final Conference. A number of project activities envisaged will contribute to project dissemination to both target groups and wide audience: desk and field study, home multiplier training, intensive school in engineering management. The current project will also become a good basis for joint scientific and methodological work with its results published in national and international prints. For dissemination purposes promotional materials will be developed, printed and distributed all of them supplied with the acknowledgement of EU funding

Different promo materials are going to be created for the different events, in order to maximize visibility of the project and its aims and results. The promo-material kits are de

On all promo -materials, logo of the European Commission and of the project is going to be used. Project website, as central communication place, will be filled with all planed deliverables, plus photos. It will be linked to websites off all partners,

Social networks of partners are going to be used for strong dissemination.

The project website (<https://WBNET.atuss.edu.rs/>) will provide up-to-date and comprehensive information about the project as well as the progress of activities. To ensure a unique visual identification of the project, a project logo is designed. Through the implementation of promotions and campaigns aimed at promoting the results of the project, its additional values, perspectives of further development and raising general awareness, the results of the project will be placed in depth, which will maximize the target group. A special emphasis will be placed on the student experiences.

Websites of the all partners are linked to project website. All partners will regularly provide information for dissemination on website. Social networks of partners and stakeholders are going to be used for day-to-day communication. These portals should contain information relevant to the project WBNET that the higher education institution uses.

All WB HEIs will analyse key issues related to missing skills in their countries and analyse, modernize/develop and implement short study curricula related to missing skills, prepare and put in use teaching materials. Every HEI will de facto gain visibility in partner and program countries and beyond, thanks to the implemented dissemination and communication actions. At the same time, e-publications and online resources will ensure that the project results are disseminated beyond the duration of the project.

Furthermore, by creating an e-knowledge platform that should ensure the constant synergy of project results with all target groups on the one hand and the synergy of partners I make a decision on the other. The dissemination process will be based on an intensive digital campaign aimed both at the partner countries in the project and at the region in general. Each segment of the digital campaign will be part of a large system that will reach the widest target groups.

Newly formed laboratories and training centers will represent the basis for acquiring much-needed practical knowledge and skills for teachers and students as well as for professionals from the economy. By promoting the training of dedicated LLL (long life learning)

professionals, conditions will be created for their popularization and raising the awareness of employees about the importance and possibilities of informal education and lifelong learning.

The promotion of these results to different target groups will affect the popularity of what was done and, in the final result and provide better position of the enrolled students on the labour market. In order to evaluate the success of dissemination, surveys for feedback will be conducted periodically. The surveys will be conducted once by the end of the study cycle. Additionally, partners will analyze attendance at in-person events, such as round tables. Experience from EU partners in using best pedagogical methodology will help to create the intensive transfer of knowledge in relation to higher education and the economy, the strengthening of strategic regional partners, among educational and business entities, innovations in the teaching and production process and a better position of institutions on the market.

The successful implementation of these activities will ultimately influence the general awareness of society regarding the benefits that can be reached from attending short study cycles.

Sustainability itself is reflected through its social dimensions, economic and use value. In this way, space is created for the synergy of educational institutions from different fields in the development of new products, new study programs, new short study cycles and generally new values. Practically, the results of WBNET are the result of synergy and as such open space for the development of long-term strategic partnerships and synergy between different areas of science, work and life. This can even lead to launching new start-up companies.

Measures that can be taken:

- A. conduct interviews with teachers and students that are participating in short study cycles *in order to promote examples of good practice.*
- B. Such activities should be promoted through social platforms as well as HEI websites.
- C. Promote new/Modernized syllabuses for short study cycles through the year – before each new study year

3.1 University of Mitrovica (UPKM), BE004

As part of the WBNET project, UPKM actively participates as a partner with the aim of establishing and implementing joint short study programs in the field of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). As part of its role, UPKM carries out a range of dissemination activities at the local, regional, and international levels to ensure the visibility and long-term sustainability of the project results.

UPKM employs various strategies and channels to make the project outcomes visible to the wider academic, professional, and general public. Project information is regularly published through the official channels of the faculty and the university – website, social media platforms, and newsletters. The dissemination goals at UPKM are primarily achieved through info days intended for current and prospective students, as well as promotional events for training programs, accompanied by the distribution of brochures, leaflets, and booklets containing all

relevant information about the project and intended for all interested stakeholders. Additionally, information about the WBNET project is published in local electronic and printed media. Special focus is placed on project participants and raising awareness among the broader public about the potential benefits of the achieved results.

At the UPKM level, internal dissemination is carried out through regular updates shared with the academic community via departmental, faculty, and university-level meetings regarding the progress and outcomes of the project.

Information about the WBNET project is also disseminated through the University Office for International Cooperation, as well as through participation in national and international conferences, education fairs, and thematic panels. Project representatives from among the teaching and administrative staff regularly present the goals and results of the project at events such as Open Days, Green Week, and international visits, with the aim of involving as many students, industry partners, and other stakeholders as possible. UPKM also regularly takes part in local and national education and career fairs, where it promotes short study programs as a new opportunity for professional development in the field of multimedia engineering and computing.

UPKM actively integrates the WBNET project into other initiatives and projects it conducts, especially those focused on the development of professional short programs, collaboration with industry, and dual education. Special emphasis is placed on connecting with other Erasmus+ and Horizon projects dealing with digital skills and educational innovation.

The long-term sustainability of the project is ensured through the integration of the developed short study programs into UPKM's existing academic offer, as well as by strengthening cooperation with industry and European higher education institutions. The Center for Short Study Programs, which will be established within the framework of the project, will continue with labor market analysis, the development of new courses, and the organization of professional internships for participants, as well as the exchange of teaching staff and industry experts with the aim of continuously improving the programs. These activities will directly contribute to increasing the employability and competencies of young professionals.

Through continuous cooperation with industry partners and EU institutions, as well as openness to new partnerships, UPKM plans to preserve and expand the impact of the WBNET project, positioning itself as a local leader in the field of applied ICT education through flexible and market-oriented learning formats. In this way, UPKM reaffirms its commitment to the modernization of higher education and its active role in creating sustainable models of education based on labor market needs and international cooperation.

3.2 Akademija Strukovnih Studija Kosovsko Metohijska, Leposavić (AASKM), BE005

AASKM as one of the partners within the WBNET project, actively participates in implementing the dissemination strategy at the local, regional, and international levels. The goal of dissemination is to ensure the continuous visibility of the activities of the Center for Short Study

Programs and to promote the project results to all relevant target groups – students, academic staff, the business sector, and the wider community.

Dissemination at AASKM is carried out through a combination of traditional and modern media tools. A dedicated section for the WBNET project has been created on the official website of the academy, where information about planned and implemented activities is regularly published, along with resources such as brochures, reports, and event announcements. Additionally, the academy actively uses social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn) to engage a wider audience by sharing multimedia content such as photos, videos, and infographics.

AASKM organizes information sessions, presentations, and open days to inform students, teachers, and local partners about the benefits of short study programs. Special attention is given to promotion through local and regional media – TV and radio broadcasts, newspaper articles, and interviews with academic representatives and students involved in the project. Promotional materials (brochures, flyers, posters, USB drives, t-shirts, and pens) are distributed during events and on campus.

Internal dissemination is carried out through regular meetings of teaching and administrative staff, where project progress is discussed and future activities are planned. An internal bulletin containing key updates is prepared and shared with employees and students. The academy also organizes thematic workshops to raise awareness of the project's objectives and strengthen internal collaboration.

AASKM actively participates in national and international conferences, educational fairs, and professional panels, where project results are presented. These activities help build partnerships and enable the exchange of good practices with other institutions and stakeholders.

Moreover, the academy plans to use an e-platform for disseminating knowledge and good practices, which will ensure long-term storage and sharing of project results, teaching materials, and publications. Dissemination will be further enhanced by involving alumni in promotional activities – through testimonials, success stories, and guest lectures.

AASKM's role in the dissemination of the WBNET project is multifaceted – in addition to promoting results, it contributes to building long-term relations with the business sector and public institutions, increasing the visibility of the institution, and raising awareness of the importance of short study programs in improving employability and digital skills.

3.3 Sveučilište Hercegovina (SVEHERC), BE006

The dissemination of the project at the university of Hercegovina is already in full swing and will continue to be carried out through various channels and activities to achieve broad visibility and impact on all relevant groups. The university has been actively engaged from the start in informing students, academic staff, and industry about the project through its official websites, social media, newsletters, and other communication channels. Through these platforms,

project activities and results are regularly updated, allowing constant information dissemination to all interested parties.

For students, the university organizes information sessions and uses its social networks and website as the main tools for dissemination, providing access to the latest information about projects, participation opportunities, and achieved results. In addition, all promotional materials such as brochures, posters, usb sticks, t-shirts, and leaflets are distributed within the campus, encouraging student engagement and ensuring they are well-informed about the significance of the project.

For academic staff, the university regularly organizes meetings and presentations at the institutional level. In addition, news and materials related to the project are shared through intranet and internal communication channels. Staff members are also included in various forms of collaboration with colleagues from partner institutions through online platforms, enabling easier exchange of experiences and knowledge.

The university of Hercegovina also actively collaborates with industrial and business sectors. University representatives regularly participate in relevant industry events, conferences, and seminars where they present the project's results and exchange experiences with colleagues from other sectors. Using media, including local television, radio, and online channels, the project is promoted among the wider public, achieving greater visibility and raising awareness about its results.

In addition to these activities, the dissemination of the project at the university of Hercegovina is carried out at the national and international levels through the organization of different events such as final conferences, workshops, and study visits. In all these activities, the project is promoted in collaboration with partner institutions to ensure broad distribution of information about its results and significance.

All partners in the project, including the university of Hercegovina, continually update the content on the project's common website, which serves as a central location for all information. In addition, the partners' social networks are used for daily communication with target groups and to spread news about the project activities. Through these tools, information about the results of the project is constantly available and regularly shared with the public.

To ensure the long-term visibility of the project, the university of Hercegovina is actively developing an e-scientific platform that will provide access to all materials, research, and recommendations related to the project even after its completion. This platform enables continuous collaboration and interaction with target groups and partners, ensuring long-term impact and sustainability of the project results.

All promotional materials, clearly marked with the European Union as a funding body, further strengthen the visibility of the project and ensure that the achieved results can be utilized even after the project's end. The university of Hercegovina also promotes the importance of lifelong learning, providing students, academic staff, and the business community with opportunities for further education and improved competitiveness in the labor market. Through continuous

evaluations and feedback, the university monitors the effectiveness of its dissemination activities, allowing for further improvements and expansion of the project's impact.

These activities contribute to strengthening strategic partnerships and collaboration between academic, industrial, and business sectors, creating a space for the development of new educational programs, study cycles, and opportunities for innovation. In this way, the university of Hercegovina's project does not only contribute to the development of new skills but also creates the foundation for long-term strategic partnerships that will have a positive impact on society and the labor market.

3.4 Univerzitet u Bihaću (UNBI), BE007

Increasing the visibility of the Center for short study programs in the public, in order to attract potential participants, partners and the wider community.

UNBI's strategy for disseminating information:

- Online presence - Regular updating of the center's website with current programs, appointments and applications.
- Active use of social networks (Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn) to present the program, students, and success stories.
- Use of digital advertising (Google Ads, social networks) aimed at young people and employees who want additional training.

Cooperation with the media:

- Publishing articles and interviews in local newspapers, portals and on radio/TV.
- Sending press releases on the occasion of important events or the launch of new programs.

Direct promotion:

- Organization of "Open Days" and public presentations.
- Participation in education and career fairs.
- Visits to secondary schools and universities.

Partnerships:

- Cooperation with companies that can refer their employees to additional training.
- Liaison with other educational institutions for joint projects.

Alumni Network:

- Highlighting the success of former students as a motivation for future ones.
- Involving alumni in promotion through testimonials, video materials and recommendations.

4. Academic plan for the project life and beyond

The overall goal of the WBNET project is to introduce short study programs in the higher education institutions (heis) of the Western Balkans (WB), through the establishment of the Centres for Short Study Programs, on 4 universities in the region West Balkan. That means that project is directly in line with a Digital Strategy. The project's main contribution to the priorities of the call is its focus on building capacity and raising the quality of education in the light of employability. The proposed project is in line with the Regional Priority "Digital transformation" and "Sustainable growth and jobs" for the Region 1 (Western Balkan) and to the call "Capacity Building in the field of Higher Education: Strand 2".

The faculty, when it receives information that a certain profile is missing, needs at least five years to accredit a certain study program. These short programs will shorten that time and in a way are a "shortcut" to matching the needs of the market and the education system. Also, It is important to note that enrollment quotas at higher education institutions do not follow market demand, i.e. They cannot meet the current and future needs of the software industry.

Short study programs will be designed to connect the education system and the labor market. This implies that faculties will offer short study programs to the market and establish closer contact with companies. The idea is that the HEI, in accordance with the needs of the market, creates study programs that will provide the exact knowledge and skills needed to work in certain companies. The one who completes this program will have the exact knowledge needed at that moment by a particular company.

The WBNET project, also, aims to improve the process of international cooperation and cooperation with the economy of heis in WB countries through the development of centers for short study programs, networking with EU heis and the economic sector.

Resources, as a prerequisite for work and development of higher education, have been the target or covered topic of many previously carried out reform projects, with a common outcome analysis - higher education in WB countries is inadequately financed and low on the priority list.

Measures:

- Continuously analyse market needs in the light of missing workers skills
- Creating and upgrading network with economy stakeholders and citizens in order to better serve market needs
- Designing new/modernized short study cycles based on analyses
- Procurement of equipment in accordance with the short study cycles needs,
- Designing modern program of professional practices
- Creating learning materials in accordance with the new/innovated short study courses
- Establishing new laboratories if needed

4.1 University of Mitrovica (UPKM), BE004

One of the key outcomes of the project is the establishment of the Center for Short Study Programs, which will continue to operate beyond the project's completion. This Center will monitor labor market trends, develop new courses aligned with current technological advancements, and organize professional internships in cooperation with industry partners. In addition, special focus will be placed on the exchange of teaching staff and the involvement of industry experts in course delivery, ensuring a high level of practical application and continuous curriculum improvement.

A potential pillar of sustainability may be the integration of the developed short study programs into the official academic offer of the university. These programs could be accredited by relevant national authorities and structured to meet labor market demands while maintaining academic standards, including the use of the ECTS system to enable mobility and the recognition of learning outcomes. Such programs will allow students and young professionals to gain fast and practical training for specific jobs, thereby directly addressing the gap between formal education and labor market needs.

In the coming years, UPKM plans to actively link the results of the WBNET project with other national and international initiatives, educational innovations, and teaching method improvements. In this way, the project outcomes will not be treated as isolated achievements, but as part of the university's broader development strategy in the field of flexible and market-oriented education.

Maintaining communication with students and alumni through employability tracking networks, along with the continuous collection of feedback, will play a crucial role in preserving project momentum. This feedback loop will help ensure that the quality of education remains dynamic and responsive to real user needs.

Promotion of the programs through public events, participation in education and career fairs, and communication via university channels will be key tools in expanding the project's visibility and attracting new generations of participants. In this way, the project results will become recognizable and accessible to a wider audience.

Potentially, after the successful completion of the project, the university and relevant faculties may develop a plan to formally include short study programs in their strategic documents, provide administrative and financial support for the Center for Short Study Programs, and continue to strengthen cooperation with industry and international partners.

4.2 Akademija Strukovnih Studija Kosovsko Metohijska, Leposavić (AASKM), BE005

The academic plan for the WBNET project represents a key component of ensuring the long-term impact and integration of short study programs into the higher education systems of the Western Balkans. This plan provides a structured framework for the implementation,

institutionalization, and future development of short study programs at the partner institutions, aligned with labor market needs and technological progress.

Short study programs developed through WBNET are intended to address the fundamental mismatch between higher education offerings and the fast-changing requirements of the labor market, particularly in the ICT sector. Traditional accreditation procedures for new study programs in the region can take up to five years, whereas the SSP model enables a more agile and responsive educational format that supports both upskilling and reskilling in a relatively short timeframe.

The academic plan foresees the integration of SSPs into the official offer of partner HEIs, with clearly defined procedures for curriculum development, quality assurance, teaching methodology, student support, and learning outcomes assessment. A modular structure will be applied, allowing participants to build competencies progressively, and eventually connect SSPs with formal degree programs through recognition of prior learning and ECTS transfer.

During the project life, the academic plan includes:

- Development of a joint curriculum framework based on a comprehensive labor market analysis, regional priorities, and best practices from EU partners.
- Training of teaching staff in innovative teaching methodologies, including blended learning, microlearning, and project-based learning.
- Pilot implementation of SSPs, including online courses, in-person practical sessions, and company-based internships, supported by academic mentors and industry supervisors.
- Continuous monitoring and evaluation of academic content, teaching quality, and student satisfaction, in order to revise and improve the programs.

Beyond the project lifecycle, each HEI will take responsibility for maintaining and expanding SSPs through:

- Formal institutional recognition of the Centers for Short Study Programs as permanent organizational units embedded in faculty structures.
- Regular updates to the curriculum in collaboration with industry representatives and alumni to ensure continued relevance.
- Creation of flexible pathways for students to transition from SSPs to bachelor or master programs.
- Expansion into other thematic areas, including artificial intelligence, cyber security, green technologies, and digital business, depending on regional development priorities and institutional capacities.

HEIs will be encouraged to include SSPs in their annual strategic and academic development plans, which may also serve as a basis for national-level recognition and funding. Faculty councils and senates will be involved in approving and reviewing SSPs to ensure alignment with institutional missions and quality standards.

Furthermore, academic cooperation will be strengthened through staff and student exchanges, joint certification models, and virtual mobility initiatives. EU partners will continue to provide expertise and support through advisory roles and participation in future curriculum innovation projects.

In terms of sustainability, the academic plan promotes the long-term transformation of teaching and learning cultures in WB HEIs. By incorporating SSPs as legitimate and valuable education formats, HEIs will position themselves as agile, market-oriented, and inclusive institutions, ready to respond to the digital and green transition imperatives.

The academic plan for the WBNET project life and beyond serves as both a roadmap and a strategic commitment by all partner institutions to embed short study programs as a lasting innovation in the higher education landscape of the Western Balkans.

4.3 Sveučilište Hercegovina (SVEHERC), BE006

University Hercegovina has already established the center for short study programs, which operates in accordance with the adopted rulebook. The center has become a key point for connecting the education system with the labor market, enabling the creation of study programs that meet the industry's needs. Through this center, the university has organized and implemented three in-home trainings, aimed at advancing and training staff for specific skills required in the economy.

In line with the WBNET project, university Hercegovina continuously analyzes market needs and based on these analyses, develops new and updates existing short study programs. These programs ensure that students gain practical skills that are directly applicable to the labor market, with a particular focus on digital technologies and the software industry. The university has already procured the necessary equipment and equipped laboratories to support the implementation of these new programs.

The center for short study programs at university Hercegovina continues to develop modern learning materials and implement innovative professional practice programs. This approach enables students to engage in relevant industrial projects and build a strong professional network during their studies, significantly increasing their employability. Networking with higher education institutions in the eu and industrial partners enables the center's continued development and ensures constant alignment with market needs.

4.4 Univerzitet u Bihaću (UNBI), BE007

The teaching staff of the UNBI Faculty of Engineering will actively contribute to the development and continued work of the Center through:

- designing and timely updating of short study programs in accordance with the requirements of the labor market,
- mentoring students of these study programs,

- conducting professional trainings for students of other faculties and departments of the University of Bihać,
- conducting education in social inclusion projects by providing opportunities to underrepresented groups, including women, the population from rural areas, minorities and people with disabilities,
- participation in digital transformation projects through the digitization of courses and materials of short study programs, participation in projects for the procurement and inclusion of new technologies such as VR/AR simulations for easier learning of courses included in short study programs, and
- cooperation with the economy through the development of short study programs according to the needs of IT companies from the USK area, student internships, invited lectures by industry experts, and participation in joint EU and domestic projects.

Furthermore, the UNBI Center for Short Study Programs will strive to continuously contribute to development and survival through the following:

- Students of short study programs will practically participate in the development and implementation of their own project ideas, assist in the organization of workshops, engage in research tasks and program evaluations.
- The center will act as a space for the development of ideas and digital solutions, thus providing students with a springboard for the labor market, starting their own startup businesses or continuing their education.
- The University will use the Center to organize workshops, hackathons, thematic conferences, summer schools and career open days.
- Through the Center, the University will establish long-term partnerships with IT companies and business entities in the Una-Sana Canton and relevant institutions (e.g. the Cantonal Chamber of Commerce).

5. Sustainability goals

Companies that are involved in the consortium as associated partners are interested in establishing those centers for short study programs in order to use results for further exploitation on the wider academic and non-academic society. This is the reason why are chosen the most suitable non-academic partners to be in the consortium. During round tables and Interim and Final conference the wider group of stakeholders and decision makers are going to be invited. They will be informed about aims and goals of the project, achieved results and they will be involved in the discussion about results, about further activities to give suggestions, recommendations, because their needs are guidelines for sustainability of the project.

Through signing agreements of cooperation, based on each economy partner needs, the sustainability of each Centre is going to be provided and the benefits from opening new ones on other HEIs in the WB countries will benefit whole society. During the project life two round tables are set, one in B&H and one in Kosovo*, and also one Interim conference (Kosovo*) and one Final conference (B&H) in order to provide attention and visibility of the project.

Also, Monograph of the project will be delivered on the Final event to all stakeholders in order to provide project sustainability. The role of non-academic partners is here crucial.

5.1 University of Mitrovica (UPKM), BE004

One of the key sustainability goals of the WBNET project at UPKM is to focus activities on continuous collaboration with industrial partners. Recognizing the importance of industry for market-relevant educational programs, UPKM will continue to collaborate with companies from the consortium and broader industrial sectors to develop and improve courses that meet labor market needs. Signing cooperation agreements with economic partners will ensure financial and operational support for maintaining the Center for Short Study Programs and enable the expansion of this model to other higher education institutions in the region. This process of collaboration and industry participation in the development of educational programs will play a crucial role in the long-term sustainability of the program, as it will provide constant feedback aligned with the needs of the economy.

To ensure greater accessibility and availability, UPKM will expand its offering of flexible educational models, including online courses and hybrid forms of teaching. This approach enables the expansion of the programs beyond the university's borders, providing learning opportunities to students and professionals from different parts of the region and beyond. The integration of digital technologies into educational processes allows for easier adaptation of courses to the rapid development of the industry and enables long-term expansion of program participants.

UPKM will focus on maintaining high flexibility in its courses, which will be continuously adapted to changes in the industry and the needs of employers. Through continuous labor

market analysis and industry trends, UPKM will ensure that teaching within the short study programs addresses the specific challenges faced by employees and entrepreneurs. This process of adapting courses to the labor market will enable the continuous development of the programs and ensure the long-term relevance of the education. Furthermore, UPKM will continue to build and strengthen connections with national and international educational networks, including other higher education institutions, educational organizations, and platforms for the development of digital skills.

UPKM will develop a system for tracking the careers of its former students and course participants, as well as collecting feedback that will facilitate the improvement of educational programs and methods. The active participation of alumni in training, mentoring, and course evaluation will be key to maintaining and enhancing the quality of education.

5.2 Akademiya Strukovnih Studija Kosovsko Metohijska, Leposavić (AASKM), BE005

AASKM defines the long-term sustainability of the Center for Short Study Programs as one of its core strategic goals. Recognizing the significance of aligning higher education with labor market needs, AASKM is committed to maintaining and developing the Center well beyond the lifespan of the WBNET project.

A fundamental pillar of sustainability is the integration of developed short study programs into the academy's official academic offer. These programs will be continuously updated and, where applicable, accredited by relevant national authorities. Their modular and flexible format allows rapid adaptation to market demands, enabling participants to acquire practical knowledge and skills tailored to the current needs of employers.

The sustainability of the Center will be ensured through regular labor market analysis and active engagement with stakeholders from the economy. AASKM will establish a dedicated team responsible for identifying workforce skills gaps and translating these into actionable training programs. This will include developing and modernizing curricula in collaboration with industry representatives, thus ensuring relevance and practical applicability.

To further strengthen the sustainability model, the Center will promote cooperation with the private sector through formalized partnerships. By signing cooperation agreements with companies, AASKM aims to facilitate the co-creation of course content, the hosting of professional internships, and the inclusion of industry experts in course delivery. These partnerships will not only enrich the learning experience but also provide channels for continuous feedback and improvement.

Alumni will also play a vital role in the sustainability strategy. Through the establishment of an alumni network, the academy will maintain long-term connections with former students, who can serve as ambassadors of the Center, participate in mentoring current students, and contribute to the further development of course offerings based on their real-world experience.

The academy will also integrate the Center's work into its broader institutional development strategy. Short study programs will become part of the academy's regular quality assurance

system, with periodic evaluations, feedback collection, and performance monitoring. These mechanisms will ensure the adaptability and continuous improvement of the programs.

To expand outreach and maintain high visibility, AASKM will organize regular events such as workshops, industry roundtables, open days, and student innovation competitions. These activities will help engage new generations of students, attract strategic partners, and promote lifelong learning.

The academy also plans to link the Center's work with national and international initiatives related to digital skills, entrepreneurship, and employment. By participating in Erasmus+, Horizon, and national funding programs, AASKM will further embed the Center into a broader network of innovation and development.

Ultimately, the sustainability of the Center at AASKM rests on five pillars: continuous alignment with market needs, institutional integration, industry cooperation, student engagement, and long-term planning. Through this holistic approach, the Center will remain a relevant, flexible, and impactful platform for professional development in the region.

5.3 Sveučilište Hercegovina (SVEHERC), BE006

Measures for the sustainability of the center at the University of Herzegovina:

- Teachers will actively contribute to the development and operation of the center for short study programs, through the creation of new programs, mentorship, implementation of trainings, and participation in projects.
- Students and participants will be actively involved in the work of the center, through practical work, research tasks, volunteering, and the development of their own projects.
- Students and participants will be further motivated to use the center's resources, by positioning the center as an incubator of ideas, innovations, a driving force, and a source of know-how skills.
- Internal grants and awards will be created for the best student projects developed within the center, to further encourage engagement and innovation.
- Regular workshops, hackathons, and thematic conferences will be organized within the center, to continuously develop new ideas and ensure the visibility of the work.
- Strategic partnerships will be established with local companies, institutions, and entrepreneurs, to connect education with the needs of the economy and ensure the long-term relevance of the center's activities.

5.4 Univerzitet u Bijaću (UNBI), BE007

The Center for Short Study Programs UNBI aims to ensure its long-term sustainability through an integrated approach that includes financial stability, quality of education, social inclusiveness, responsible management of resources and strategic development. The key sustainability goals are presented below:

1. Financial sustainability

- Diversification of income sources through school fees, partnerships with the economy, donations and project activities.
- Development of market-relevant programs that attract participants and meet the needs of the labor market.
- Efficient budget management with rational use of resources without compromising the quality of services.

2. Academic and program sustainability

- Continuous improvement of the curriculum in accordance with changes in industry, technology and educational standards.
- Involvement of experts from practice and business entities in the development and delivery of classes.
- Application of modern learning methods including e-learning, hybrid models and practical teaching.

3. Social sustainability

- Promotion of equal access to education through support for different target groups (unemployed, women, youth, marginalized groups).
- Developing a culture of lifelong learning through accessible, flexible and quality programs.
- Cooperation with the local community and relevant institutions in order to strengthen the social impact of the center.

4. Ecological sustainability

- Digitization of teaching materials and processes with the aim of reducing the use of paper and other consumables.
- Implementation of online and hybrid classes where possible, to reduce the carbon footprint.
- Raising environmental awareness through educational content that includes topics of sustainable development and social responsibility.

5. Strategic sustainability

- Creation of a long-term development strategy with clearly defined goals, performance indicators and monitoring plans.
- Continuous professional development of employees and strengthening of internal capacities.
- Building a recognizable identity of the center as a reliable, flexible and socially responsible partner in education.

6. Financial sustainability

The financial sustainability plan deals with the mechanisms each institution will implement in order to provide resources that are needed for seamless operation and necessary upgrades to the e-platforms used. It is essential that these mechanisms are implemented in a way that will make sure that they are in place even after the official end of the project. Listed below are mechanisms each institution will implement. Accurate and effective financial management is carried out under the lead of the coordinating institution (AASKM) and project coordinator. The total project budget is distributed among all participants according to signed GA. All spending are predicted in a most cost efficient way.

The financial sustainability plan includes the provision of financial resources for the further operation of the platforms and its constant improvement. The plan will be implemented through next segments:

- Promotion of cooperation with economy partners in the light of fast getting skills necessary on the labour market;
 - Meetings
 - Round tables,
 - Cluster meetings,
 - Conferences
- Cooperation with competent government bodies at the national and local level In order to foster and provide support for greater including potential students/partners from remote and rural areas,
- Providing funds from own revenues for developing new short study cycles or modernize existing to be in line with market demands;
 - Providing funds from online/face to face trainings/events organized by HEI for the needs of economy,
 - Consultations with all interested parties short study programs area,
- In kind support/contribution of HEI (use existing personnel resources, funds);
- Organize seminars, conferences and symposiums;
- Participation in other projects (national, Erasmus+, Eureka, Horizon, etc).

6.1 University of Mitrovica (UPKM), BE004

The financial sustainability plan includes the provision of financial resources for the further operation of the Center and its constant improvement. The plan will be implemented through three segments:

1. Cooperation with competent government bodies at the national and local level. UPKM, as a state institution, cooperates with government bodies such as the competent Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, the Science Fund, the Innovation Fund and local self-government. Through cooperation, UPKM will provide financial and material resources for maintenance in improving the work of the Center.
2. Providing funds from own revenues. UPKM and its faculties will provide financial support for the operation of the Center after the end of the project.
3. Participation in other projects. financial sustainability could be provided through implementation scientific research projects financed by the state bodies or collaborative research projects with industry sector.
4. Specialized training for the industry. Companies from the industrial sector involved in the project can provide financial support in exchange for training specialized personnel, research, or joint innovations.

6.2 Akademija Strukovnih Studija Kosovsko Metohijska, Leposavić (AASKM), BE005

Ensuring the financial sustainability of the Center for Short Study Programs at AASKM is essential for its continued operation and development after the conclusion of the WBNET project. The academy has adopted a comprehensive approach based on diversification of income sources, strategic partnerships, efficient resource management, and integration into institutional financial planning.

One of the primary mechanisms for financial sustainability is the generation of own income through tuition and training fees. The academy will develop a pricing structure adapted to the economic capacity of target groups, including options for installment payments and scholarships for underrepresented groups such as women, youth from rural areas, and individuals with disabilities. The flexibility of short programs makes them accessible and appealing, thus enhancing their market attractiveness and enrollment potential.

AASKM will actively pursue partnerships with companies and employers, offering tailor-made training for their staff. These industry-specific programs will not only generate income but also reinforce the academy's relevance in the labor market. Employers will be encouraged to co-finance training programs, contribute to curriculum development, and offer internships to participants.

Another key source of funding will be participation in national and international projects. AASKM has the capacity and experience to engage in grant applications under Erasmus+, Horizon Europe, national innovation funds, and regional development programs. These projects will support the expansion of the Center's activities, including procurement of equipment, digital tools, and staff training.

The academy will also develop training and consultancy services targeting the wider community and SMEs. By organizing workshops, thematic conferences, and lifelong learning

programs, the Center can attract external participants and generate additional revenue streams.

To ensure long-term financial planning, AASKM will implement a set of financial performance indicators such as cost-recovery rates, revenue growth, number of partnerships, and return on investment. An annual financial report will be prepared, outlining income, expenditures, and strategic financial goals for the following year.

Regular financial audits and transparent reporting will be applied to build trust among partners, students, and donors. The goal is to develop a self-sustaining model that supports innovation and continuous improvement without exclusive reliance on external funding.

In the long term, the financial sustainability of the Center at AASKM will be guaranteed by integrating its operations into the core strategic documents of the academy, establishing permanent financial mechanisms, and building strong ties with both the academic and business communities.

6.3 Sveučilište Hercegovina (SVEHERC), BE006

1. A portion of tuition fees will be systematically allocated for the development and functioning of the center, ensuring stable financial support.
2. The center will actively participate in future project activities of the university, with a special focus on projects related to digital transformation, innovation, and industry cooperation.
3. Internal grants and awards will be created for the best student projects developed within the center, to further encourage engagement and innovation.
4. Regular workshops, hackathons, and thematic conferences will be organized within the center, to continuously develop new ideas and ensure the visibility of the work.
5. Strategic partnerships will be established with local companies, institutions, and entrepreneurs, to connect education with the needs of the economy and ensure the long-term relevance of the center's activities.

6.4 Univerzitet u Bihaću (UNBI), BE007

For the sustainability of the Center and reduced maintenance costs, the existing space and personnel capacities of the University of Bihać will be used: laboratories and classrooms, IT equipment and server infrastructure of the University, as well as staff from the ranks of permanent employees and external collaborators.

The University of Bihać will endeavor to provide additional funds for the work of the Center through new project applications and grants that support lifelong learning, the development of digital competences and cooperation between education and business.

Financial sustainability is a key prerequisite for the long-term and stable operation of the Center for Short Study Programs. In order for the Center to continuously offer quality and relevant educational programs, it is necessary to provide stable and diversified sources of

funding, manage resources efficiently, and build a system that enables self-sustainability without exclusive reliance on external sources.

Key elements of financial sustainability:

1. Diversification of income sources

- Tuition and enrollment fees: Adapted to the paying power of the target group with the possibility of scholarships or payment in installments.
- Partnerships with the economy: Companies that finance the training of their employees or sponsor specific programs.
- Projects and grants: Participation in domestic and international projects that enable the financing of innovative educational activities.
- Training and consulting services: Additional income through the implementation of specialized training and educational workshops for third parties.

2. Efficient management of resources

- Rationalization of costs: Digitization of teaching and materials, sharing of resources with partner institutions and optimization of spatial capacities.
- Budget planning: Regular financial planning and analysis of costs and income while defining priority investment areas.
- Financial transparency: Reporting on income and expenses, in order to build trust with partners and beneficiaries.

3. Self-sustaining program models

- Development of programs that generate their own income through high occupancy and market attractiveness.
- Introducing a modular approach to learning, where participants pay only for the modules they need.
- Maintaining the quality and flexibility of the program, which increases user satisfaction and the chance for repeat enrollments or referrals.

4. Long-term financial planning

- Creation of multi-year financial plans in accordance with the development goals of the center.
- Setting clear financial performance indicators (eg cost coverage rate, revenue growth, number of sponsorships).
- Regular audit and evaluation of the financial strategy.