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Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency

Erasmus+: Higher Education - International Capacity Building

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**Subject: Final Report Project nr. 573806-EPP-1-2016-1-RS-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP (2016-2777)**

Dear Mr. Antic,

Please find below the result of the assessment of the Final Technical Implementation Report and the Financial Statement of the above-mentioned Capacity Building in the field of Higher Education (CBHE) project.

As result of this assessment, and in accordance with the Grant Agreement and with the Guidelines for the Use of the Grant, your project implementation has been qualified as "**VERY GOOD**" (please refer to the Categories of qualification at the end of this letter). The comments below provide more detailed feedback on the content and financial outcome of the project.

### **1. Final Technical Implementation Report**

The Natrisk consortium has achieved the wider project objectives consisting in educating experts for Natural Disasters Risk Management (NDRM) in the Western Balkans (WB) partner countries (Serbia, Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina) through development and implementation of new master curricula in the field of NDRM and providing educational trainings for the public sector and citizens.

The project specific objectives have also been attained and, as main results, six accredited master curricula (3 in RS, 2 in BA, 1 in XK), one accredited specialist professional study programme (1 in XK) and one modernized master study programme (1 in RS) have been delivered.

Other important project results are the equipping of seven laboratories for studies in the field of NDRM in the WB region; the signing of 8 agreements for students' internships between WB HEIs and companies/public bodies in the field of NDRM; the creation of 4 handbooks in the field of NDRM and the delivery of 14 trainings for the civil sector.

The project also produced significant spin-off effects, such as the establishment of 2 International Relation Offices in two partners (KPU and UNID) and the publication by Springer of a monograph book titled "Natural Risk Management and Engineering – NatRisk Project", which will contribute to the visibility of the project.

The project remained relevant for the WB region by addressing the problems of the region in the field of NDRM, namely inadequate professional qualification and technological disciplines for education of human resources. The Natrisk project is also relevant to the objectives of the CBHE Action and is in line with the priorities of the EU policies by developing modern curricula in the field of environmental protection.

The accredited curricula are in line with the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) and the European Standards and Guidelines for ESGs for QA and based on integration of ICT in teaching and learning process, focusing on student centered learning and innovative teaching methods.

There were no deviations in the planned project methodology structured in 8 Work Packages and project activities were implemented as scheduled.

Project activities geared towards the development, accreditation and implementation of seven masters (6 new and 1 modernised) and one specialist professional programme in the field of NDRM. The number of students enrolled in the study programmes has met the foreseen indicators: 124 students in total (per university: UNI – 38, UNSA – 23, UBL – 15, KPU – 16, UNID – 10, UPKM – 10, TCASU - 12). In total 70 new courses were developed and 3 modernised out of a total of 91 courses offered in the study programmes.

Students and staff mobilities have been an important component of the project for trainings, internships and, in the case of Programme Country partners, for transfer of experience and knowledge. We consider a good practice that the participants in the mobilities were selected according to objective criteria so that the mobilities could be instrumental for the project realisation.

Further significant achievements of the project are the 8 agreements for students' internships signed between WB HEIs and organisations in the field of NDRM in the WB countries. We encourage the consortium to make the most out of these agreements to enrich the master curricula with the feedback and placements of NDRM organisations to the benefit of students.

The developed master curricular have a practical pedagogical approach. All master students carried out internships as a mandatory part of the curricula, specifically 37 Partner Country students benefited from the CBHE budget and the SMS budget to carry out their internships. 23 of these internships involved mobilities within the region, which contributes to reinforce the regional cooperation in the WB.

Laboratories in the WB Universities were updated with modern equipment in line with EU laboratories. We find that the "Report on harmonization of teaching environment with EU best practices", which also describes the purpose of purchased equipment and includes the list of purchased equipment, software and library units is a very transparent document on the use of the equipment and a good example for other projects.

We find that the outputs produced by the project throughout the different work packages are of good quality, namely reports and catalogues of competences in the preparatory phase and catalogue of courses, Natrisk syllabi, handbooks for the civil sector training and documents on best practices in innovative teaching methods in the developing phase. These outputs are available on the project website and the Erasmus+ Project Results Platform.

Training of HEIs staff has been an important element in the achievement of the project results. 94 partner country HEIs staff have developed their capacities through the different trainings organised in the project.

The project has targeted stakeholders from the public and private sector in the field of NDRM by organising 14 short trainings (293 participants). We encourage the consortium to follow up and liaise with the participants of these trainings to capitalise on the project results.

Considering the aforementioned numbers, the planned indicators in the project have been met and, in some cases, even exceeded the expectations.

The partners of the consortium have experience working together in other projects, which has contributed to a seamless cooperation and fluent communication. We can conclude that, in general, the project has been

soundly managed. The consortium from the beginning set up the following management bodies: Steering Committee, Project Management Committee, Quality Assurance Committee. Regular meetings of the different committees and regular internal reporting, management guidelines, as well as a quality assurance mechanism, internal and external, have been put in place to manage the project. The inter-project coaching meeting is a good initiative for the monitoring and quality assurance of the project. However, we consider that the report produced after the meeting could have contained more information on exchange of ideas and practices, main points of discussion and conclusions.

We recognise that the coordinating institution, University of Nis, had a central role in the implementation of the different work packages and this is reflected in the budget execution, in the results and in the number of students and staff targeted by the project and a higher number of mobilities coming from the University of Nis. That said, a more balanced approach could have had a bigger impact on the capacity building of all the HEIs involved.

Although not all the Partner Country HEIs had a leading role in the work packages, all HEIs have contributed actively in the execution of the project. The role of the EU partners have been instrumental in the execution of the project.

The Natrisk project had a direct impact on different stakeholders: students, teaching staff, representatives of bodies and agencies in the field of NDRM. The project has also contributed to the internationalisation of the Partner HEIs, which have established 2 IROs (KPU and UNID) and adopted necessary procedures (mobility action plans, guidelines for student and staff exchange and strategy of internationalisation). 3 Partner HEIs have also obtained the Erasmus Charter for Higher Education.

Regarding promotion activities, apart from the project website, the consortium carried out an array of different promotional activities and events, including the production of promotion material. All the materials and outputs respect the EU visibility rules. We recommend keeping only the latest version of the documents uploaded on the project website.

As for the sustainability of the project results, we find that the operational and financial plan could have been more concrete regarding the operational and financial commitments from HEIs, governments and non-academic sector. We encourage the consortium to continue working on the sustainability of the project results.

Finally, we can conclude that the Special Mobility Strand has served the purpose and objectives of the project.

## **2. Financial Assessment**

Please note that the Agency's financial analysis is based exclusively on the documents that were submitted to the Agency. If after having considered our comments carefully you wish to contest the final amount of the grant, the amounts contested by you must be *identified individually and accompanied by the corresponding supporting documents*.

Each supporting document should be numbered and its reference number recorded in **a list detailing all the supporting documents provided with their respective amounts indicated, and showing as the result the total amount contested**. If there are several documents to justify a single cost, the total of the various amounts must be given. Absence of supporting documentation to justify the declared costs will mean that the corresponding amounts remain ineligible.

In order to be accepted for further review, your observations - presented as indicated above - must be **signed by the legal representative** of your institution and be sent by post or by email at the latest **within 60 calendar days following the dispatch of this letter**.

Following the Agency's analyses of your observations a second and final letter will be sent to you, finalising the assessment exercise. Further observations or appeals will *not* be accepted.

We will consider that the absence of any observations from you within the above-mentioned deadline of **60 days** is equivalent to your formal, unconditional and irrevocable agreement to the amounts mentioned in the Agency's assessment below.

### **Summary**

Based on the above analysis, the total eligible costs were calculated as follows:

<b>BUDGET HEADINGS</b>	<b>AWARDED BUDGET (in €)</b>	<b>DECLARED EXPENSES (in €)</b>	<b>CONFIRMED EXPENSES (in €)</b>	<b>INELIGIBLE (in €)</b>	<b>ELIGIBLE (in €)</b>
<b>Staff Costs</b>	350.700,00	385.267,00	385.267,00	0,00	385.267,00
<b>Travel Costs</b>	80.510,00	72.750,00	72.750,00	0,00	72.750,00
<b>Costs of Stay</b>	181.275,00	164.070,00	164.070,00	0,00	164.070,00
<b>Equipment Costs</b>	264.800,00	256.121,46	256.121,46	0,00	256.121,46
<b>Subcontracting Costs</b>	48.000,00	29.184,39	29.184,39	0,00	29.184,39
<b>Special Mobility Strand</b>	320.461,00	271.738,00	271.738,00	0,00	271.738,00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1.245.746,00</b>	<b>1.179.130,85</b>	<b>1.179.130,85</b>	<b>0,00</b>	<b>1.179.130,85</b>

Declared co-financing: **€ 3.039,56**

According to Article I.3 of the Grant Agreement, the Executive Agency shall reimburse **100%** of the eligible actual costs and eligible unit costs. Therefore, the amount of the final grant is **€ 1.179.130,85**.

Consequently, you may expect a payment of **€ 57.959,45**. This amount represents the amount of the final grant of **€ 1.179.130,85** minus the amount of pre-financing already paid of **€ 1.121.171,40**.

I would like to draw your attention to the fact that, in addition to the means of redress referred to in the agreement, the following means are available for challenging this decision.

If you believe that this decision is affected by an error or irregularity, you may request a review of the Agency's decision, clearly stating the reasons for disagreement, preferably within one month of receiving this letter, by writing to the following address:

Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency  
 Mr Ralf RAHDERS  
 Unit A4 - Erasmus+: Higher Education - International Capacity Building  
 J-59 04/033  
 1, Avenue du Bourget  
 BE-1049 Brussels  
[FACEA-EPLUS-CBHE-PROJECTS@ec.europa.eu](mailto:FACEA-EPLUS-CBHE-PROJECTS@ec.europa.eu)

If you believe there has been a maladministration you may also lodge a complaint to the European Ombudsman in accordance with and under the conditions laid down in Article 228 TFEU within two years of becoming aware of the facts on which the complaint is based (see <http://www.ombudsman.europa.eu>).

Yours sincerely,



Ralf RAHDERS  
Head of Unit

Cc (by email): milan.gocic@gaf.ni.ac.rs

**Very good (at least 75 pts out of 100):** The consortium has achieved its objectives and delivered the expected results in full, as outlined in the Grant agreement. All the results and outputs are of very good quality. No major concerns or areas of weakness have been identified during the project implementation phase. Impact on partner countries institutions and/or Higher education systems, sustainability and exploitation of results are fully addressed.

**Good (between 74 and 60 pts out of 100):** To a large extent, the consortium has fulfilled its objectives and delivered (most of) its expected results as outlined in the Grant agreement. Most of the results and outputs are of good quality. Some concerns or areas of weaknesses may have been identified in the project implementation and/or its final results. Impact on partner countries institutions and/or Higher education systems, sustainability and exploitation of results are satisfactorily addressed.

**Fair (between 59 and 50 pts):** The consortium has fulfilled some of its objectives and delivered some of its expected results outlined in the Grant agreement. The quality of some results and outputs are acceptable. Weaknesses and concerns have been identified in the project's implementation and/or delivering of its final results. Impact on partner countries institutions and/or Higher education systems, sustainability and exploitation of results are not satisfactorily addressed.

**Weak (less than 50 pts out of 100):** The consortium has not fulfilled its objectives in terms of project implementation and/or delivery of expected results as outlined in the Grant agreement. This may apply to the low quality of most of the results and outputs, serious weaknesses in the project's implementation, lack of impact on partner countries institutions and/or Higher education systems, and /or sustainability and exploitation of results not addressed.