



Working Package 5
Evaluation of the project

Deliverable 5.2

Impact report

October 2014

**U3M-AL PROJECT - DEVELOPING THIRD MISSION ACTIVITIES IN
ALBANIAN UNIVERSITIES**

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1 INTRODUCTION

Albania with a population of 2.774 million (2013) and a GDP of \$12.90 billion has recently (2010) become a middle income country. Since 2008 it has maintained positive, albeit declining, growth rates; the estimated GDP growth, in 2013, is 0.7 %.

The decline, due mainly to the difficult external environment which hit hard the construction sector, one that had the highest contribution to growth, was widespread across all economic sectors with the exception of agriculture, which is a main source of employment in rural areas and contributes 21% to the country's GDP.

In common with other European countries, the economic growth and social development of Albania depends on the qualification of the workforce and its skills to contribute to innovation and job creation at national and regional level.

Universities are key players in regaining economic growth and have an important role on improving social cohesion. Their mission is, nowadays, all embracing and includes:

- **Educate citizens**, train researchers / professionals / innovators / entrepreneurs, hence supplying the high qualified HR that Europe needs to boost competitiveness.
- Diverse objectives in basic and collaborative research
- Foster interdisciplinary research skills and expertise
- Develop international cooperation building upon institutional historical and cultural links – strengths and capacities
- Play on their embeddedness in cities and regions as components of social and economic development. Reaffirm themselves as focal points for dialogue and knowledge exchange with society.

The last point, commonly referred as the third mission, is the key concern of the present project, which aims at contributing to the reinforcement of the role of the universities in the social and economic development of Albania, one of the national priorities as stated in the Higher Education Strategy and in the Action Plan defined by the Albanian authorities. At the same time the project emphasizes the benefit to the universities of exchange of ideas and research generation that cooperation with the stakeholders brings about.

The project U3M-AL specifically addresses technology transfer, continuing education and social engagement as typical 3M activities to attain the mentioned objective. The final aim being to establish Regional Development Centers in each Albanian partner university so creating a network that at

system level addresses TT, CE and Social Engagement in Albania, counting with the support of policy makers and the productive and services sectors. The centers should generate enough income to be sustainable in the long run.

Indeed this project fits extremely well into the EU 2020 strategy and the concept that lead to the development of the Smart Specialization initiatives inside the EU.

2 OBJECTIVE AND METHODOLOGY

The objective of this report is to assess the impact of the project U3M-AL taking into consideration the initial situation, its evolution after the completion of each step of the project and the degree of achievement of the set objectives. After an all embracing analysis, the changes at each partner university in Albania will be detailed. Particular attention will be paid to the involvement of the region.

The starting point in Albania, in what concerns the role played by and importance of the universities for the economic development, is perhaps different and more challenging than in some other European countries. This is due to several reasons historical, cultural and economic, which are out of the scope of the present report. However it is interesting to point out that with 43% under the age of 24, Albania has one of the youngest populations among European countries. This is a strength that should be counted upon and fully used in the enhancement of the social and economic development of the country and in making universities more responsive to the social and economic needs, namely at regional level.

However this young population will need adequate jobs, if it is to stay in Albania and contribute to the country development. Lack of employment will lead to migration so depriving Albania from the expected positive impact on economic and social growth.

Achieving the objective of having universities fully engaged in economic and social development of any country or region depends fundamentally on the degree of trust and cooperation with other social and economic agents. That achievement is a two way process to which partners contribute, believe in and share the results. The corner stone is, though, recognition of the advantages of cooperation which depends on the understanding the respective roles and on the trust among partners.

Building, in society and inside universities, the belief that the 3M mission is of great importance, for economic development and social cohesion, is not an easy task. In many European countries, it has taken years to awake the stakeholders, university and society, represented by the productive sector, municipalities and governmental organizations, to the relevance of the 3M

mission and the need for close cooperation and engagement to produce the beneficial results for all involved.

Inside universities 3M activities were not, still in some cases are not, considered as important or valid to be part of the University mission or used to construct a vision. At the same time, the regional stakeholders did not (do not) see universities as real assets to development, outside educating and training the human capital. Changing this state of affairs takes time, ingenuity and resources.

The U3M-AL project aims at supporting Albanian universities in their role of contributing in a relevant and recognized way to the social and economic growth of the country and at promoting the needed dialogue with the stakeholders, namely regional industry, employers and public authorities.

The first step was then the identification, inside every Albanian partner university, of the state of affairs in what concerns the third mission. Specifically, the project, addresses technology transfer, continuing education and social engagement as the main 3M activities.

The final aim being to establish **sustainable** Regional Development Centers in each Albanian partner university so creating a network that at system level addresses Technology Transfer, Continuing Education and Social Engagement. To foster that objective the project uses the existing know-how in reputed EU partner universities, which although operating in different environment and conditions may serve as illustrating examples of how to. Those examples, cannot (should not) be copied but, will serve to promote the exchange of ideas and experiences.

The establishment of the Research and Development Centers at each Albanian partner university is to be informed by the regional demands and must engage the various stakeholders, in this way contributing to the acknowledgment of the importance and mutual benefits of close collaboration.

The engagement of the various stakeholders is an important part of the project and the one with highest impact and potential. If it meets with success will have a lasting influence on the development of the process of mutual engagement, among universities, businesses, productive sector and governmental bodies with accrued advantages on behalf of wealth creation and social development.

The legal framework into which universities operate is, in some countries, a barrier to the development of such activities; hence this project examines the situation in Albania in order to find out if those barriers exist, on the one hand, and on the other hand how public policies may eliminate the identified barriers and support universities in becoming engines for economic growth and development at regional and national level.

Europe is a very diverse region, every country or group of countries experience different challenges when building a strong and productive relationship with the social and economic environment. Hence there is not a unique model or solution to the question. Bringing in the European experience in the form of other universities located in variety of environments and their models of interaction with stakeholders enables the partners to “compare notes” and learn from each other on achievements and mistakes, hence leapfrog in the building of trusting and strong partnerships among themselves and including the regions.

The project is coordinated by University of León (ULE), Spain. Involves seven public Albanian Universities: University of Gjirokastra (EÇUG), Polytechnic University of Tirana (PUT), Agricultural University of Tirana (AUT), University of Durres (UAMD), University of Korça (UNK), University of Shkodra (UNISHK), University of Vlora (UV) and the Ministry of Education and Science of Albania (MoES), plus other five institutions from 3 different countries in Europe, University of Turku (UTU), Finland, Sapienza University of Rome and Instituto Superiore Mario Boella (ISMB) both in Italy, Technical University of Valencia (UPV), and University Solutions (USSL) in Spain.

Given the nature of the project its full impact will only be seen far away in time, however it is already possible to see evidence of movement in the right direction. Hence the next chapter analyses the impact of each project phase, in every partner institution, the respective region and globally in Albania. The report has a last chapter on the future of the project and recommendations.

The main sources for this report were: all the documents related with the project development, from its inception to the final report; this information was complemented with attendance to the kick-of seminar plus visits to four RDCs in Albania universities. The program of these visits is included as Annex 1.

Furthermore, the presentations at the final seminar of each of the established Regional Development Centre in each of the Albanian partner universities, were made available and fully used in this report.

3 RESULTS

The project developed in three phases: starting with the characterization of the 3M activities in all partner universities and identification of the needs in the Albanian universities, it was followed by a training period both at the Albanian universities and partner Institutions outside Albania, after that, the design of Research and Development Centers at each university, ensued and lead to the respective establishment.

The implementation of activities during each phase constitutes deliverables which are appropriately documented. An important part of the project was the study on legal limitations for developing 3M activities in Albania carried out by the Ministry of Education and Science.

Coordination implemented throughout the project was achieved in an effective and efficient manner. Coordination meetings took place in Albania and Spain.

3.1 Impact from the experience of the EU Partners. Creating and managing an attractive interface with society

One impact of the project is the demonstration that there is not a unique model for the organization of university engagement and promotion of 3M activities; this was evidenced by deliverable **D1 - Mapping of 3M activities in partner universities**, in particular **D1.1 3M activities in EU partner universities**.

The age, dimension and location of the Universities, not only across Europe but within a given country, has a strong influence on the way universities address the need to promote the third mission and involve regional stakeholders in so doing. Good examples are the cases of the Sapienza University of Rome and the Polytechnic University of Turin.

Deliverable 1.1 also shows how the legal framework influences the choices of universities when engaging in Technology Transfer, Life Long Education and general Social Engagement.

In many countries interfacing with industry had/has to be done through the creation of specific organisations managed under the private law. This was due to historic and cultural reasons. In most European countries Universities are still legally considered as part of the central administration of the state. Such framework implies a considerable rigidity in the management of the relationship with partners outside the sphere of the state, not only in financial terms but also in relation with the management of human resources. Obviously such restrictions did hinder the business and industrial sector from seeking partnerships with universities. At the best they would look for individual collaborations. Although this is better than no interaction at all it leads, through lack of coordination, to a lower impact and subsequent waste in terms of possible synergies plus an unavoidable overlapping.

The project has shown how universities in Italy, Finland and Spain have found ways of dealing with those constraints. This information has the advantage of illustrating various solutions for problems which although occurring in different contexts have similar origins and consequently face obstacles which are alike.

Fine examples are the Istituto Superiore Mario Boella (ISMB) a joint venture of the Politecnico di Torino (UPT) and the Compagnia di San Paolo or the City of

Innovation, a science park, managed by the Innova Foundation, again an organization operating under private law which resulted from a partnership between the Polytechnic University of Valencia (UPV) and the Valencian Entreprise Confederation (CEV).

In this context a very important impact of the project has been the identification in Albania of the legal limitations for developing 3M activities. This was done via a study carried out under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Science and led to the setting up of a Strategic Development Fund specifically addressed to support the establishment of Regional Development Centres at the Albanian universities.

Another important conclusion of the mentioned study is that there are **NO legal barriers** to the development of 3M activities. However almost all the Albanian universities, participating in the project, identified legal barriers or lack of regulation which hinder the development of 3M activities in Albanian universities. One such example is the, so perceived, legal obstacle to hire non academic personnel to staff the Research and Development Centre, even if the centre generates enough income to allow it.

The circumstance of diverse perception of the existing barriers is not new. In other European countries there are examples of universities searching the law for specific permission to pursue a given way, forgetting that if the law does not specifically forbids a certain course of action is because such action is allowed. In other cases it occurs that the ministry of HE and Science and the ministry of finances have different understanding of the autonomy of HE Institutions.

The project, trough deliverable 1, also illustrates how governance and internal mechanisms of management need to be modified in order to foster inside the university involvement with 3M activities.

Turku University, Finland supplies the example of the impact on the sector of changes on the higher education act occurred in 2010. However more than changes in the legal framework are required, namely active measures of support are needed both from government and the productive sector. Here the Finish government has played an active role in support of academia-industry collaboration.

3.2 The experience of the Albanian Universities. Current situation

Deliverable 1.2 Mapping 3M activities and needs in Albania partner universities is achieved through the self-description of each partner university in Abania focusing on the identification of its selling points and uniqueness related with 3M activities, as well as the needs for further development.

This is an important outcome of the project as it enables the institutions to better focus on specific fields and built a unique profile. At the same time identifies areas for collaboration and grounds for profitable investment.

AUT presents itself as *a unique centre in providing under-graduate and graduate education as well as scientific research, training and extension services in the fields of agriculture and food*. The university finds itself being more and more sought after as source of continuous training in their fields of competence, namely new techniques on plant and animal production. The potential impact on the economy of the region is quite high and could easily translate in improved economy in related economic sectors like livestock, forestry, food production and safety.

PUT provides *under-graduate, graduate and doctoral education as well as scientific research, training and extension services in all engineering fields*. It supplies the qualified human capital needed for the industrial development of Albania; extracting and processing industries, energy, transport and telecommunications are given as example.

Outside the Capital near the sea, University of Durrës is oriented towards tourism, naval construction and port management. Hence its 3M activities have impact on those sectors which have in turn influenced the offer and respective curricula.

Also near the sea, university of Vlora offers higher education in Economics, Health, Technical Sciences and Education. Here tourism is an important factor as well as ITC. It is mentioned that graduates are employed at the local TV stations whose influence on the offer has been felt.

University of Gjirokastra situated in the Southern part of Albania identifies its strengths in education, social sciences and nursing. The region turns to the university offer on continuing education.

University of Korça offers full-time and part-time studies on Economy, Agriculture, Education, Natural and Social Sciences including Nursing. Very interestingly the University mentions specifically a career office to support graduates into the job market.

Also with full and part time offers University of Shkodra, located in northern Albania, has offers in Tourism, Albanian language and Environmental Sciences.

While it appears that there exist some degree of differentiation on the orientation and offer of the Albanian partners, the identified needs, in what concerns interaction with the region, are almost the same in all partner universities. They range from lack of adequate infrastructures and funding to the absence of real incentives. In the majority of cases it comes across quite

clearly that regional stakeholders have an old-fashioned idea of a University, seeing them basically as educational organizations.

The findings were presented at the kick-off seminar, together with examples of good practices in EU partner universities.

The report prepared by the Ministry of Education and Science on the current legal problems or limitations for the development of 3M activities in Albania was also presented at the seminar. Attending the seminar were the Minister of Education and Science plus 8 senior staff members from the Ministry, this shows of the importance attributed to the project and allows the expectation of a higher impact of the findings and an adequate follow-up. Important as well were the presences of the head of the Agro-biznes Council and the Municipality of Peshkopi.

The discussions during the seminar led to a better understanding of the importance of 3M activities for the development of Albania and enabled the preparation of next step: the training on how to better develop those activities.

3.3 Training activities

After the overview from each university concerning their identified needs in terms TT, CE and SE the project envisaged training at each university. The training activities consisted of workshops lasting for two days involving, university personnel plus, and most important, regional stakeholders, namely local authorities, employers associations, NGO's etc.

The workshops had the participation of five trainers, the project coordinator, the USSL expert and one EU partner for each 3M dimension per activity and involved a minimum of 20 trainees and included visits to local agents.

The activities also included a seminar open to the public to motivate the community and give visibility to the project.

Judging from the materials submitted as Deliverable 2.1, the impact of the above activities was considerable.

In particular it is worth mentioning the SWOT analysis which resulted from the discussions during the workshop. A list of actions to be taken in order to improve the 3M activities at each university was produced.

The next step on the training activities consisted of visits to three EU partners, UPV, PT and UT, with the objective of coming into contact with diverse ways of addressing and developing 3M activities. The different pathways and activities are contextual and result from very diverse needs and opportunities presented; some will not be quite appropriate to repeat in Albania but others may provide

good benchmarks for Albanian universities. All visits lasted for two days and the participants included three representatives from each university plus a representative from the Ministry of Education Science and Sport.

The EU partners organized a choice of the activities to be presented and discussed in greater detail, in each visit, so that the chosen ones were those which could, more easily, be adapted to the Albanian reality. Also taken into consideration was the need to give a good coverage of technology transfer, continuing education and social engagement.

In all cases the focus was on the governance model, structure and partnerships of the centres.

As a result Albanian universities were provided with tools to be used when creating Regional Development Centers in their universities. The visits made possible to the participants to realize the needed changes at internal level and at the level of communication with external partners as well as the support which can only be given by the Ministry of Education Science and Sport, be it in terms of the legislation or relating to direct funding of the initial activities of the RDCs.

The impact of the visits was evaluated as extremely positive by each partner university in Albania.

Deliverable 3.1 states - *participants consider that they have had a general view on how to develop 3M activities in their universities and how to start to create the Regional Development Centre, its structure, main actions and procedures. The training visits have also been useful to know models of collaboration, methodologies and experiences to increase the role of the universities in the social and economic growth of the country, and as generators of knowledge and science diffusion.*

Many of the participating institutions have offices or services (on continuing education, project management, student career), but there are not active or need more ideas to make these structures more efficient. In this case, business incubators, sports facilities or lifelong learning centres have been some examples from European universities that have been considered by participants as very useful good practices to be implemented, both in their structure and management, in Albanian universities.

*In relation with the viability of developing cases of good practices in 3M activities, the Albanian partners have concluded that there are some structures that could be established in their universities as the **alumni centre** or mechanisms to improve the interaction with social and business regional environment.*

However, in some cases, the viability of developing 3M activities is difficult because the conditions and contexts between the host universities and the participating institutions are not the same, mainly considering budget allocation and human resources. Thereby, it was stressed that the Ministry of Education and Sport has an important role of leadership to improve the legal framework and to upgrade the financial mechanisms for developing these activities. In the same way, the universities have the mission to boost 3M activities in their policies and plans.

Some of the elements that could be translated to the Albanian reality and context from these training visits are structures of project services, lifelong learning centres, alumni centers, quality management service offices and career development office. These elements differ in their degree of applicability. On the one hand, continuing education and alumni centres can be implemented and improved in the Centres because there are reachable and real goals. On the other hand, children university centers, sport facilities as well as cultural activities are targets to be reached in the medium-long term. The vast majority of the partners are taking into account that in all cases it is necessary to establish a better relationship between the universities and the community (government, other institutions, NGOs, etc.).

Very interestingly is the documented evidence that after these training visits each Albanian university has concrete ideas about certain foci areas for their RDC. Those ideas were better development and concretized during the evaluation of the regional needs through interaction with the external stakeholders.

University of Shkroda concluded that the RDC should address the management of projects, Alumni services and Life Long Learning.

University of Gjrokastra includes in the RDC activities Alumni services, Life Long Learning and Information and Communication Technologies.

University of Durres, while stating that conditions in the EU partner universities differ a lot from the ones in Albania, will include Alumni, Life Long Learning and Quality Management in their RDC.

Polytechnic University of Tirana will devote the RDC to Technology Transfer, Life Long Learning and Social Engagement (Energy saving, Red Cross, Transport are some of the ideas).

University of Korça will have as starting point the improvement of the already existing activities like the Project Management Office and Student Career Centre. Other activities will be initiated.

University of Vlora's RDC decided to focus on Life Long Learning in the form of short (one year) training courses, on promoting innovation and technology

transfer complemented with support to research by organizing conferences and other meetings.

3.4 The regional demand

At the beginning of the project it was quite evident that regional actors, municipalities, industry and commerce were not sure about the importance of university for economic development. Such situation is a major barrier to the achievement desired. Without the full engagement of the external stakeholders little can be achieved by the RDCs, no matter how well designed and equipped they are.

Hence one of the most important impacts of the project is the change of that situation through direct involvement of the stakeholders on the definition of the objectives of the RDCs which obviously should be linked to regional demand.

Therefore, drawing on the knowledge acquired during the training visits and with the support of two European experts, each Albanian university prepared for and interviewed the regional stakeholders.

The objective is twofold: to better understand the regional needs from the external stakeholders perspective and at the same time motivate them to become active partners with the university on activities addressed to regional development.

The complete attainment of such objectives can only be seen in due time, in particular the involvement of the regional interests, however for the moment this phase of the project resulted on the design and business plan of the RDCs at each Albanian university.

This was done in consultation with external stakeholders, businesses, government and students.

3.5 Establishing Regional Development Centers

This section of the report is based, not only on the produced documentation but mainly, on the evidence provided by visits to four of the established RDCs, namely Agricultural University of Tirana, the Polytechnic University of Tirana, University of Durres and University of Vlora and on the presentations from all the Albanian partners at the final seminar of the project that took place in Durres from 17 to 18 September.

In all cases the visits resulted on additional information on the achievements so far and on the major obstacles, that are delaying the full operation of the centers.

Accompanying the visits were the RDC's responsible (which in all cases is a member of teaching staffing), representatives from the faculties and, in two cases, also from the rectorate.

A major impact of the project was the analysis carried out by each Albanian partner of its situation vis-a-vis the third mission activities. The results have evidenced two major items which may be considered key results. One, internal to each university, relates to the identification and listing of all projects and activities linked to third mission. Those were dispersed and carried through on an individual basis. One of the universities pointed, the identification of their own capacities, as the major impact of the 3M-ALB project. Moreover the project has highlighted the need for the adoption of a common framework relative to this mission, across the University.

The increased communication with external stakeholders can be also counted as an important positive impact of the project. Demands from the external stakeholders have formed the basis for the design of activities to be carried out by the RDC's and there are plans to continue and increase the dialogue.

The phases of implementation of the centers differ from university to university as well as the development in terms of achievements. However it was very encouraging to learn of the following illustrative developments resulting directly from the project (this is not an exhaustive list, which can be found elsewhere D4.2, but examples of good practices, resulting from the project):

The "Career & Alumni Center" in Agricultural University of Tirana (AUT) was established on March 28th, 2014. The center, based in the first floor in the new building of Economic and Agro-Business Faculty, is serving as a coordination office with focal offices established in each faculty of the AUT. The center is under jurisdiction of Vice Rector for Education, Ms. Bizena Bijo and Mr. Remzi Keco is the Chief of the Office for "Development and Evaluation of Curricula & Career".

On March 28th, the center, jointly with the different university structures in charge of carrier development, organized a "Career day". The event took the form of a fair that counted with the participation of about 600 students and 31 outside entities, enterprises, employment agency and representatives of government. A significative outcome of this event was the signature of thirty cooperation agreements between companies taking part in the event and the Agricultural University of Tirana. The signatory companies will provide places for students internships. Further the "**HAKOerns company**", **leader in market for food processing**, agreed to sponsor the acquisition of the software needed to initiate and maintain a WEB Portal where students looking for an internship/job can find an adequate company who provides it and the business can find a student/graduate in the field they are looking for.

Another important example was found at the University of Vlora. There short program courses designed according to the needs of the local job market were organized after collecting information from local employers.

Planned to function after working hours or during the weekend these courses will permit successful students to be awarded a certificate. In some cases the credits may be partly transferred to certain BsC degree program at the university. The validation process of these courses and of credit recognition is awaiting the Senate decision.

The above two examples illustrate well the diversity of approaches taken by the universities to respond positively to the regional demand.

3.6 Coordination

The project smooth development and completion according with the very demanding objectives were due to a constant and intelligent coordination through mechanisms involving all partners. All the Albanian partners visited were unanimous in their appreciation of the competence and diligence of the coordination team.

4 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The U3M-AL project was needed to promote the mutual engagement of Albanian universities with the social and economic sectors of their region. Given the nature of the project its full impact will only be totally felt far away in time, however it is already possible to see evidence of movement in the right direction.

So far the major achievements/impact of the project are:

- 1) The identification of the legal limitations for developing 3M activities, done via a study carried out under the responsibility of by Ministry of Education and Science. This study concluded that there are **NO legal barriers**, as such, to the development of 3M activities by the universities.
- 2) Despite what is stated above (point 1), the Albanian universities, participating in the project, identified constrains or lack of regulation which hinder the development of 3M activities in Albanian universities. One such example is the, so perceived, legal obstacle to hire non academic personnel to staff the Research and Development Centre, even if the centre generates enough income to allow it.

- 3) The setting up, by the Ministry, of a Strategic Development Fund specifically addressed to support the establishment of Regional Development Centres at the Albanian universities.
- 4) The project, through deliverable 1, also illustrates how governance and internal mechanisms of management need to be modified in order to foster, inside the university, involvement with 3M activities.
- 5) The identification, in each university, of the existing activities related to third mission. In general those activities were dispersed and carried through on an individual basis. The project has highlighted the need for the adoption of a common framework relative to this mission, across the University.
- 6) At the beginning of the project it was quite evident that regional actors, municipalities, industry and commerce were not sure about the importance of university for economic development. Such situation is a major barrier to the achievement desired. Without the full engagement of the external stakeholders little can be achieved by the RDCs, no matter how well designed and equipped they are. Hence one of the most important impacts of the project is the change of that situation through direct involvement of the stakeholders on the definition of the objectives of the RDCs which obviously should be linked to regional demand.
- 7) It is to be expected that external stakeholders remain engaged to be active partners with the university on activities addressed to regional development.

Finally:

A common issue highlighted at all the universities visited is the hurdle constituted by what was called lack of regulation. Apparently while there is nothing in the higher Education law that forbids monetary compensation to the staff for their involvement in 3M activities, university management will be questioned about the legal basis that permit such payments should the university decide on granting such incentives. On the other hand, and perversely, the staff may earn 'unlimited' extra money as consultants to private business.

The issue of sustainability of the centers also depends on adequate change or amendment of the legislation, in what concerns the provision and accreditation of short courses to further qualify high secondary school leavers or to re-qualify mature students, already employed or changing jobs.

As illustrating example one may consider the short program courses proposed by University of Vlora. They were designed according to the needs of the local job market and after collecting information from local employers.

Planned to function after working hours or during the weekend, successful students will be awarded a certificate. In some cases the credits may be partly transferred to certain BsC degree program at the university.

The obvious way of making these efforts sustainable would for the University to collect fees from the attendees and use them to sustain the center and provide incentives to the staff working there and hire personnel for the secretariat.

It was understood that such possibilities depended on approval of the Ministry of Education and also on the Ministry of Finance. Another possibility mentioned was to have the center accredited as an independent structure operating outside the university; this approach, in time, would undermine the engagement of the university.

Hence an emphatic recommendation is that this question should be addressed, identifying exactly where the problem lies and deal appropriately with it.

Another recommendation is that universities monitor the development and achievements of the Research and Development Center, in order to keep their activities on track, and further develop their relationship with the regional stakeholders.

ANNEX 1. PROGRAM OF THE VISITS FOR THE IMPACT REPORT

Sunday, 14/09/14

17:25h Taxi from Tirana airport to Xheko Imperial hotel in Tirana

Monday, 15/09/14

08:45h Taxi from Xheko Imperial hotel in Tirana to Agricultural University of Tirana (Contact person: Bizena Bijo, bizena.bijo@yahoo.com)

09:00h Visit to Agricultural University of Tirana

11:00h Taxi from Agricultural University of Tirana to Politechnic University of Tirana (This time is flexible, depending the duration of the visit. Contact person: Bizena Bijo, bizena.bijo@yahoo.com)

11:30h Visit to Polytechnic University of Tirana (Contact person: Mimoza Cukalla, m_cukalla@hotmail.com)

15:00h Taxi from Xheko Imperial hotel to University of Durres (Contact person: Kseanela Sotirofski, nelasotiri@yahoo.com)

16:00h Visit to University of Durres

18:00h Taxi from University of Durres to Hotel Liro in Vlora (Contact person: Eva Cipi, eva.cipi@yahoo.com)

Tuesday, 16/09/14

10:00h Visit to University of Vlora

16:00h Taxi from Hotel Liro in Vlora to Xheko Imperial hotel (Contact person: Eva Cipi, eva.cipi@yahoo.com)

Wednesday, 17/09/14

09:45h Taxi from Xheko Imperial hotel in Tirana to Tirana airport.