



Sustainable development of Blue economies through higher education and innovation in Western Balkan Countries – BLUEWBC

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Executive Summary – Albania.....	3
2. STRUCTURE AND CONTENT OF I&E COURSES:	5
<i>2.1 Mandatory and Elective I&E course in all study programs</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>2.2 Topics covered in I&E education, learning activities.....</i>	<i>6</i>
3. I&E ENVIRONMENT AT CAMPUS	6
4. ECOSYSTEM INVOLVEMENT IN I&E EDUCATION	7
<i>4.1 Industry involvement in development of I&E courses & Students engaging with industry. 7</i>	
<i>4.2 Close cooperation with I&E ecosystem for students during and after I&E courses</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>4.3 Industry and ecosystem involvement in competitions, grants etc.</i>	<i>7</i>



1. Executive Summary – Albania

The potential and resources that offer Blue Economy in Albania are promising. The aim of this analysis is to identify the gap among the industry potentials and university offer; in addition how to bring closer the universities and their E&I programmes to better fit with blue economy in Albania. The sections below presents the industry offer and the gap where academic and training curricula remains at country level.

1. The coastline of Albania is 362 km and has six islands (all are very small and uninhabited). The Coastal areas (Qark as Administrative Unit) which have the highest density population are Tirana (756.675), Durrës (263.711) and Vlorë (181.346).

Coastal Tourism is the largest contributor to Albania's "Blue Economy". The Tourism and Travel Industry is reported to have a direct contribution to GDP of 8.5% (in 2017) and 7.7% of employment, or otherwise 93,500 jobs. Coastal tourism in Albania is in many forms, including diving tourism, marine archeology, ecotourism, recreational fishing, etc.

Fishing: The value exported to the fishing sector for 2018 was ALL 5.2 billion. Meanwhile compared to 2017, fishing exports have increased + 16.2%. In 2018, the number of employees in this sector was 1,094 people. Our country has about 450 fishing boats. Currently, most Albanian fishing boats are repaired in Italy. It is thought that this developing sector will be supported so that private entities can be given the opportunity to have repair services in our ports. Investment in new modern fishing fleet is necessary to shift fishing from species which are overfished to explore species which are not fished and that represent high stocks

Passenger ferry services The passengers' transportation traffic by ships has increased year by year. Most important node is Durres, also due to investments in the new passengers' terminal. Moreover, it is expected that tourism growth in the future will trigger the demand for passenger ferry services. The Strategic Document of Transportation for 2013-2020 considers three future challenges related to maritime transport, which are: integration of different kinds of transportation, modernization of ports and increasing security of life in sea and protection of maritime environment. Also the increasing number of operators creates conditions for improvement in services making them more attractive for passengers.

Sea transport is carried out in four main ports, Durres, Vlora, Shengjin, Saranda and the ports of Port-Romano and Petrolifera are also an important pillar of our Blue Economy.

Aquaculture has been selected as one of the most relevant and promising marine and maritime activities because it is expected to grow in the future, triggered by domestic and regional market demand. Further investments are foreseen by the private sector - some with



public support, e.g. IPARD Program. Aquaculture in Albania is developed on seaside mainly in Saranda and Vlora and in lagoons.

2. On the basis of the previous analysis carried out in work package 1.1. and additional desk research, it is identified a need to bring closer educational programmes (E&I education at undergraduate until post-graduate level) with industrial and business needs. The aim is to develop their skills in Blue economy through educating them in I&E and provide a supporting environment in the maritime labour market .

At country level, there is a GAP with focus on Blue Economy Skills:

1. The Programmes are still reflecting mainly traditional education and specialization and the integration of awareness of blue economy is not present.
2. The awareness on promising perspectives of Blue Economy with focus on specializations of young generation remains low.
3. Even though there is an increased number of universities and programmes with focus on business and market orientation, “Blue Growth” Courses/ Programmes are poorly included in curricula.
4. There are few opportunities to match the SMEs operating in Blueeconomy with skilled and trained young people – training programmes are not offered by academia.
5. There are very few partnerships established among business and universities for intership, training purpose and job preparation with `blue economy focus.
6. Universities do not advertise the opportunities of higher employability since the programme is not adopted toward this specialization or has a potential towards blue economy.
7. There is a gap of cooperation of Albanian Universities with international universities or institutions with experience and know - how in the field.
8. There are few resources dedicated to research at country level. Academics and universities are cooperating in international partnerships and applying as partners or coordinators.



2. STRUCTURE AND CONTENT OF I&E COURSES:

2.1 Mandatory and Elective I&E course in all study programs

Faculty of Economy, University of Tirana (FEUT) offers the subjects of “Entrepreneurship (Entrepreneurship and Management of SME)” and “Innovation” for the students of BSC Finance and BSC Business.

The subject of “Entrepreneurship and Management of SME” is a mandatory subject for the students of BSC Business and elective for students of BSC Finance.

At Master Level , “Entrepreneurship” is a mandatory subject for the students of Master Professional in Business Administration (two years Programme).

“Innovation” is offered as elective subject for BSC Finance and BSC Business students, third grade.

“Brand Management” is offered as Mandatory subject for BSC Business students and

“Entrepreneurial Marketing” is offered as mandatory subject at Master in Marketing programme.

“Leadership” subject is offered at Master level too.

Within FEUT, the Department of Marketing and Tourism offers Courses on Tourism with some concepts of Blue Economy.

A joint program at Bachelor Level or Master Level would provide contribution on the matter. The aim will be on evaluating multi-disciplinary qualitative and innovative entrepreneurship education that will be accessible to all higher education students’ education within FEUT or other faculties/universities.

The approach of teaching these subjects remains traditional, with focus on academic teaching and research from a theoretical perspective. The approach on involving students in initiative taking is largely lacking. The students are supported only on business idea phase and developing a business plan or a marketing plan.

The focus is on theoretical aspects, case studies, group work and joint course work. Students work in group and prepare business plan or develop business ideas which they present in class. Sometimes joint activities are held as student conferences or competitions for best idea or best business plan or marketing plan. However, the support does not continue at later stages as supporting with financing, putting into contact with industry, or developing further the business.

Working with real work projects is somehow a limitation and often it remains in seminars as discussions of case studies rather than in depth analysis.



Interdisciplinary curricula or subjects is useful and supports the students with broader skills and make them fit better at labour market. There are some good initiatives as offering the subjects by the Department of Management as Entrepreneurship and Tourism, Sustainable Tourism etc. The concepts of Blue Economy are slightly discussed however there is a need for improving this matter.

2.2 Topics covered in I&E education, learning activities.

The topics on Innovation and Entrepreneurship subject are in line with standards and cover knowledge on: Opportunity mapping, Idea generation, Product design, Business planning, Business modeling, Social and sustainable entrepreneurship; business foundations. However a more close approach to blue economy should be addressed. Blue economy case studies, real life examples or academic concepts on BlueEconomy are not present.

With respect to learning activities, FEUT has a good experience in inviting Guest Speakers, however this is a practice mainly initiated by the Lectors, based on personal network and needs to be formalized.

Business stimulation through competitions and Business idea pitching are regularly implemented during lecturing courses of innovation, entrepreneurship and marketing/tourism. However students are supported up to idea generation phase and pitching their business plan at faculty level.

Communication and collaboration with business needs a boost. Business Simulation through games, study visits at local I&E Industry / ecosystem or support for I&E Entrepreneurship is sporadic and not formalized. While with regard to _ Student companies establishment and support; mentorship from industry experts or Co creation with partners is not taking place at FEUT. There is not established a student company to manage or invest a student fund or to run a company. A Center for entrepreneurship is not established at FEUT.

3. I&E ENVIRONMENT AT CAMPUS

FEUT building is currently under reconstruction and new spaces are planned for students extracurricular activities. Students have their own network within FEUT and on regular basis, the summer school and the winter school is organized. However, more focus on E&I should be addressed on these activities or dedicated ones should be organized.

“Business ideas competitions” are organized for awarding “ Best Business Plan”; Best Business Idea”; or “The most Innovative Business Idea ” etc. However this is part of the curricula for Entrepreneurship, Innovation and Marketing Subjects and are organized as mandatory course



requirements.

I&E mentorship/ advice service at campus or university is not taking place. It is not established yet a University Seeds Funds.

It is lacking a Center for Entrepreneurship or Business Incubator to support the students. Trying their entrepreneurial skills in practice is barely applicable at faculty and not supported through financial or expertise means.

A consultation among academics and business representatives is not part of a calendar of activities. Many courses do not clearly present the market and business needs to properly address topics on entrepreneurial tourism, innovation or including curricula on blue economy.

4. ECOSYSTEM INVOLVEMENT IN I&E EDUCATION

4.1 Industry involvement in development of I&E courses & Students engaging with industry

Cooperation among Industry and Universities remains low at country level. This level of collaboration is presented in the lack of trust that industry shows toward universities (source: Start-Up Gap Analysis, Albania – EU 4 Innovation Project). The Industry barely is referred to the academia for expertise and knowledge transfer. Students are hired by Industry but expertise and specialization is required outside universities, preferably outside Albania. The curricula remains traditional and more approach to Industry needs is required. Only few joint courses are established within FEUT in collaboration with private sector as Master in accounting and finance, collaborating closely with Bank System, Consulting Companies and Auditing Consulting Firms.

4.2 Close cooperation with I&E ecosystem for students during and after I&E courses

Through joint programs mentioned above, there is likely that a number of student will be hired by companies, but it is a limited number.

There is not an Alumni Database on students destination. There is not a data set on the number of students that run their own company or have tried to open their business. However entrepreneurship initiatives remain low among young generation.

4.3 Industry and ecosystem involvement in competitions, grants etc.

International funds and projects are becoming more present among universities. Mostly our Faculty is participating as Partner and in few cases as Leading or Coordinator Party.

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