



# Overview of the Higher Education System

## Albania



February 2017

This document has been produced by the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) on the basis of contributions from the Albania National Erasmus+ Office and the authorities of the country concerned:

Mrs Linda Pustina, Director of Higher Education and Scientific Research, Ministry of Education and Sports  
Mrs Klodiana Tane, Expert in the Department of European Integration and Projects,  
Ministry of Education and Sports  
Mrs Edit Dibra, National Coordinator of Erasmus+ Office in Albania

The approach and data collection have been implemented in close cooperation with Eurydice, the Network Education Systems and Policies in Europe.

This document reflects the views of the Erasmus+ Office and the Authorities of the country concerned. The European Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

© European Union, 2017

For any use or reproduction of photos which are not under European Union copyright, permission must be sought directly from the copyright holder(s).

ISBN: 978-92-9492-471-1

doi: 10.2797/24898

**For further information:**

**Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA)**

Erasmus+ : Higher Education – International Capacity Building

Postal address: Rue Joseph II, 59 B-1000 Brussels - Belgium

Contact: [EACEA-EPLUS-CBHE@ec.europa.eu](mailto:EACEA-EPLUS-CBHE@ec.europa.eu)

Web-site: [https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus-plus\\_en](https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus-plus_en)

**Albania National Erasmus+ Office**

Postal address: Sheshi Skenderbe, Pallati i Kultures, kt 3

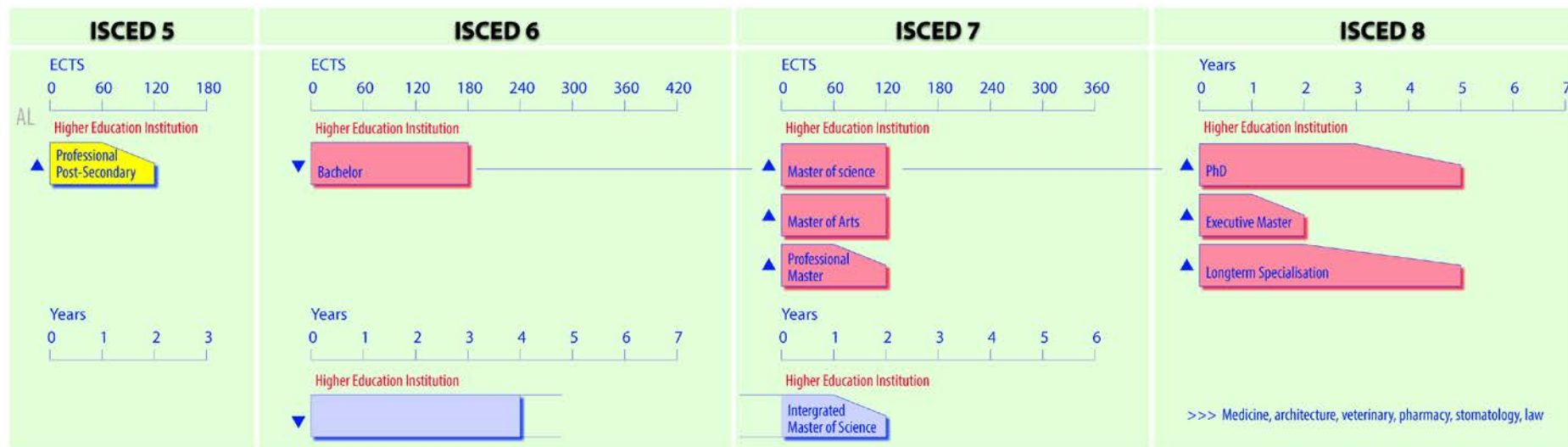
Contact: [albania@erasmusplus.al](mailto:albania@erasmusplus.al)

Web-site: <http://erasmusplus.al/>

**Eurydice**

Web-site: [http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/index\\_en.php](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/index_en.php)

## The higher education system in Albania



- Most common length of a Bologna cycle
- Other length of a Bologna cycle
- Professional programme
- Programme outside the typical Bologna model
- Professional programme non Bologna

**ECTS:**  
Credits according to the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System

		regulated at national level	decided at institutional level
All	programmes have admission requirements	▼	▲
SOME		▽	△



## Contents

1	Overview .....	1
	1.1 Fundamental Principles and National Policies	1
	1.2 Lifelong Learning Strategy	1
	1.3 Organization of Private Education	1
	1.4 National Qualifications Framework	2
	1.5 Statistics on Organization and Governance	2
	1.6 Distribution of responsibilities.	2
2	Higher Education Funding .....	4
	2.1 Public Education	4
	2.1.1 Financial Autonomy and Control	5
	2.1.2 Public Higher Education Fees	5
	2.2 Private Education	5
	2.2.1 Private Higher Education Fees	5
	2.3 Financial Support for Learners' Families	5
	2.4 Financial Support for Learners	5
3	Higher Education system structure.....	6
	3.1 Types of higher education institutions	7
	3.2 First Cycle Programmes	8
	3.2.1 Branches of study	8
	3.2.2 Admission Requirements	8
	3.2.3 Curriculum	9
	3.2.4 Teaching Methods	9
	3.2.5 Promotion of Students	9
	3.2.6 Employability	9
	3.2.7 Student Assessment	9
	3.2.8 Certification	9
	3.3 Short-Cycle Higher Education	10
	3.4 Second Cycle Programmes	10
	3.4.1 Branches of Study	10
	3.4.2 Admission Requirements	10
	3.4.3 Curriculum	11
	3.4.4 Teaching Methods	11
	3.4.5 Promotion of Students	11
	3.4.6 Employability	11
	3.4.7 Student Assessment	11
	3.4.8 Certification	11
	3.5 Programmes outside Bachelor and Master Structure	11
	3.6 Third Cycle (PhD) Programmes	11
	3.6.1 Organization of Doctoral Studies	11

	3.6.2	Admission Requirements	12
	3.6.3	Status of Doctoral Students/Candidates	12
	3.6.4	Supervision Arrangements	12
	3.6.5	Employability	12
	3.6.6	Assessment	12
	3.6.7	Certification	12
4		Teachers and Education Staff in Higher Education.....	13
	4.1	Initial Education for Academic Staff in Higher Education	13
	4.2	Service Conditions for Academic Staff Working in Higher Education	13
	4.2.1	Planning Policy	13
	4.2.2	Entry into Profession	13
	4.2.3	Professional Status	14
	4.2.4	Salaries	14
	4.2.5	Working Time and Holidays	14
	4.2.6	Promotion, Advancement	14
	4.2.7	Retirement and Pensions	14
	4.3	Continuing Professional Advancement for Academic Staff in Higher Education	15
	4.3.1	Organizational Aspects	15
	4.3.2	Incentives for Participation in Continuing Professional Advancement Activities	15
5		Management and Other Education Staff in Higher Education.....	15
	5.1	Requirements for Appointment	15
	5.2	Service Conditions	16
6		Quality Assurance in Higher Education .....	16
	6.1	Responsible bodies	16
	6.2	Approaches and Methods for Quality Assurance	17
7		Educational Support and Guidance.....	18
	7.1	Support Measures for Learners in Higher Education	18
	7.1.1	Definition of Target Group(s)	18
		The student loan scheme is open to all students who earn the right to study in higher education.....	18
	7.1.2	Specific Support Measures	18
	7.2	Guidance and Counselling in Higher Education	18
	7.2.1	Academic Guidance	18
	7.2.2	Psychological Counselling	18
	7.2.3	Career Guidance	18
8		Mobility and Internationalisation in Higher Education.....	19
	8.1	Student Mobility	19
	8.2	Academic staff mobility	20
	8.3	Other Dimensions of Internationalization in Higher Education	20
	8.3.1	European, Global and Intercultural Dimension in Curriculum Development	20
	8.3.2	Partnerships and Networks	20

	8.4	Bilateral Agreements and Worldwide Cooperation	20
	8.4.1	Bilateral agreements	20
	8.4.2	Cooperation and participation in worldwide programmes and organizations	21
9		On-going Reforms and Policy Developments.....	21
	9.1	Overall national education strategy and key objectives	21
	9.2	Overview of processes and drivers for the education reform	22
	9.3	National Reforms in Higher Education	22
	9.3.1	2015	22
	9.3.2	2014	22
10		Legislation.....	22





## 1 Overview

---

The Republic of Albania is located in South-eastern Europe, bordering the Adriatic Sea and Ionian Sea, between Greece to the south and Montenegro and Kosovo to the north. Total population of the country is 2,821,977 inhabitants according to the 2011 population and housing census. Albanian population is composed of the following ethnicities: Albanians 98.1%, Greeks 0.9%, other 1% (including Vlach, Roma (Gypsy), Macedonian, Montenegrin, and Egyptian)<sup>1</sup>

Annual growth rates in Albania averaged to 4.31 % of GDPs, from 1996 until 2015, reaching an all-time high of 13.50 % in the fourth quarter of 1999 and a record low of -10.84 % in the fourth quarter of 1997.<sup>2</sup> Albania's GDP per capita was around 13.37 billion USD in 2014 according to World Bank estimations.<sup>3</sup> Economic growth in Albania expanded to 0.23 % of the GDP in the second quarter of 2015 compared to the previous quarter.

The education expenditures for 2015 amounted to 2.7% of GDP (2.56% of GDP in 2014).<sup>4</sup>

### 1.1 Fundamental Principles and National Policies

---

According to the Constitution, the Government and Parliamentary Bodies determine the educational policy for tertiary education. They are responsible for drafting and approving laws, bylaws and other regulations and for carrying out the other activities in the field of tertiary education provided for by law.

Article 57 of Albanian Constitution states that everyone has the right to access education and basic education is mandatory for all. The same article guarantees in principle the autonomy of higher education institutions<sup>5</sup> (HEIs).

The main legal framework that regulates higher education is Law No. 80/2015, date 22.7.2015 "On Higher Education and Scientific Research in Higher Education Institutions in the Republic of Albania".

### 1.2 Lifelong Learning Strategy

---

Lifelong learning has been a cross-cutting issue, addressed by different laws and strategies developed by Ministry of Education and Sport (MES), Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth, Ministry of Economic Development, Trade, Tourism and Entrepreneurship. However, a real National Strategy for Life Long Learning is not yet in place in Albania.

However, National Strategy on Employment and Skills 2014-2020 has a special focus on expanding Adult Learning opportunities to rural areas. National Agency for Vocational Education, Training and Qualifications was appointed as the National Support Service for the European Platform of Adult Learning in Europe (EPALE). The European Commission awarded a grant to promote this platform (EPALE) in Albania.

### 1.3 Organization of Private Education

---

Institutions of higher education may be public, non-public and public independent. Educational institutions have equal status, regardless of ownership type or founder's identity. Licensing of all higher education institutions is monitored by Ministry of Education and Sport and the Government. Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education and Accreditation Board, which is an independent and collective decision-making body, are in charge of accreditation of all higher education institutions and study programmes offered by HEIs.

---

<sup>1</sup>INSTAT, (2011), Population and housing census 2011, (*Censusii Popullsisëdhe Banesave,2011*), [http://www.instat.gov.al/media/177354/main\\_results\\_\\_population\\_and\\_housing\\_census\\_2011.pdf](http://www.instat.gov.al/media/177354/main_results__population_and_housing_census_2011.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> CIA government factbook, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/al.html>

<sup>3</sup> World Bank Albania Country Data (2015), <http://data.worldbank.org/country/albania>

<sup>4</sup> Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Albania by email

<sup>5</sup>Constitution of the Republic of Albania, (*Kushtetuta e Republikës së Shqipërisë*), [http://www.eft.europa.eu/webatt.nsf/0/729FBD780EAD0CA7C1257E9D00330501/\\$file/ALBANIA\\_2015.pdf](http://www.eft.europa.eu/webatt.nsf/0/729FBD780EAD0CA7C1257E9D00330501/$file/ALBANIA_2015.pdf)

#### 1.4 National Qualifications Framework

---

Albanian Qualifications Framework was adopted by Law No.10247 on 21.3.2010, "On Albanian Qualifications Framework". AQF comprises of 8 levels similar to European Qualifications Framework. According to the above-mentioned law, the responsible institutions for AQF are Ministry of Education and Sport, Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth and National Agency for Vocational Education, Training and Qualifications. A National List of Vocational Qualifications is developed for AQF II-IV levels, i.e. qualifications descriptions are developed in terms of learning outcomes. Based on qualifications descriptions, approximately 100 frame curricula are being developed and offered by secondary vocational education institutions. Strategy for Employment and Skills 2014-2020 was adopted by Decree of Council of Ministers No.818 of 26.11.2014. According to this strategy, a National Catalogue of Vocational Qualifications shall be developed.

Due to difficulties encountered in AQF implementation process, both responsible ministries have established a task force by a joint Ministers' Order in September 2015. The task force has a two-year mandate to accomplish three main objectives:

- a) Development of AQF handbook comprising all levels of qualifications;
- b) Review of current legislative framework;
- c) Conduct of AQF referencing process in the European Qualifications Framework;

#### 1.5 Statistics on Organization and Governance

---

Number of Universities (academic year 2014/2015)	
41	
Public	Private
15	26

Number of students (academic year 2014/2015)
162,544 students

Source: National Education Statistics

#### 1.6 Distribution of responsibilities

---

The main authorities responsible for higher education policies in Albania as defined by the Law on Higher Education<sup>6</sup> are:

**Ministry of Education and Sport (MES)** is the institution that implements the government policy in the field of higher education and scientific research, mainly through:

- a) policy development in the field of higher education and scientific research and adoption of a strategic plan in this area;

---

<sup>6</sup> Law No.80/2015 "On Higher Education and Scientific Research in the Republic of Albania", Articles 7-17.

- b) drafting and proposing of legal grounds in the field of higher education and scientific research;
- c) proposing a funding model and the budget for higher education and scientific research to the Government
- d) submitting proposals to the Government regarding the decision on opening, closing, or merging higher education institutions;
- e) issue of permit to higher education institutions to start operating;
- f) approval of opening of new study programmes, reorganization, suspension of academic activities and their closing;
- g) auditing the use of public funds in the higher education institutions at least once in three years;
- h) submitting a proposal for the maximum limit of tuition fees for study programmes in the first cycle in public higher education institutions;
- i) managing the State register of scientific degrees and academic credentials;
- j) ensuring that election processes in public higher education institutions respect the rules and submission of elected rectors for appointment by the President of the Republic;

**Council of Higher Education and Science** is an advisory body for the Minister of Education and Sport responsible for implementation of policies as well as quality development and promotion in higher education.

**Conference of Rectors** is responsible for coordination, drafting of common policies, achievement of shared interests and carrying out the tasks provided for by law.

**Educational Services Centre (ESC)** is a public institution with the mission to provide services in the field of higher education to citizens and HEIs, as well as to ensure public access to higher education data. ESC provides services to third parties after MES approval, following the payment of fees provided for by a Decision of Council of Ministers. ESC is the institution that coordinates the application process of higher education institutions for first cycle study programmes, as well as for integrated and professional programmes. This Centre creates and administers the national register for students of all levels and a database of HEIs according to their study programmes and the degrees or certifications they issue. It provides each student enrolled in a higher education institution with a unique matriculation number that accompanies the student until graduation in the respective programme of study, as determined by the directive of the line Ministry responsible for education. Every higher education institution has an obligation to report to ESC within the deadlines set by the line Ministry for the education of all applicants registered in the second and third cycle of higher education studies as well the graduates list for every cycle.

**National Agency for Higher Education Financing (NAHEF)** is a public institution under the authority of MES responsible for allocating public funds to support the activities of public higher education institutions; to provide scholarship support for excellent students who achieved high grades in the secondary and tertiary education; to support the students enrolled in study programmes designated as priority areas and students from disadvantaged social groups. NAHEF sets also the allocation criteria for public funds. MES approves the criteria and distribution formula for such funds and defines annually the priorities for each main area of study.

**Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (AQAHE)** is a public legal body responsible for quality assurance in higher education. It monitors and evaluates the quality of institutions and offered programmes, through quality assurance mechanisms, accreditation and other processes. AQAHE bases its activity on its guidelines and Higher Education Quality Code, which is updated pursuant to European standards and quality guidelines in European Higher Education Area. In the context of external quality assessment, AQAHE cooperates and coordinates its activities with partner agencies, part of European Network for Quality Assurance (ENQA). AQAHE collaborates also with higher education institutions for

establishment and functioning of internal quality assurance systems. It carries out the evaluation process for accreditation of higher education institutions and study programmes they offer, as well as the continuous monitoring of their quality. AQAHE enjoys independence in drafting and adoption of its procedures, evaluation criteria and formats, selection of experts and ad hoc assessment commissions, as well as the content and results of academic quality evaluation reports. AQAHE operates through elected and independent committees, according to the main areas of higher education in natural sciences, engineering and technology, medical, agricultural, human and social sciences. These committees have a temporary nature and consist of experts with academic qualifications, experience in higher education and research and expertise in quality processes.

**Accreditation Board** is a collective decision-making body established in Agency for Quality Assurance that takes the final decision on accreditation of higher education institutions and their study programmes.

**National Agency of Scientific Research and Innovation (NASRI)** is a public institution under the authority of Ministry of Education and Sport, the main responsibility of which is allocation of project-based funding for scientific research. These projects are submitted by higher education institutions and scientific research institutes in the fields of natural sciences, engineering, technology, medicine, agriculture, human and social sciences. NASRI identifies priority areas for research, technology and innovation, and it assesses the programmes and projects in the aforementioned areas at a national level. It is also responsible for disseminating information and coordinating the application processes for international research projects in higher education. NASRI organises the evaluation process of research activities carried out in research units of higher education institutions every four years, and ranks them based on this assessment. NASRI allocates competition-based funding for doctoral study projects. The Agency also administers other funds for research and innovation in the framework of national programmes, international and bilateral scientific research schemes using the call for application mechanisms.

## 2 Higher Education Funding

---

### 2.1 Public Education

---

Funding sources of public higher education institutions are: State budget, student tuition fees, income from services rendered or generated by third parties, donations, scientific activities, international projects, bilateral or multilateral agreements, funding from special funds.

The resources obtained from services, research, consultancy or any activity carried out by academic staff are divided between the academic staff and HEI, pursuant to existing legislation and regulations approved by Governing Board. Public higher education institutions regulate those distribution modalities by their internal acts.

State budget funds are allocated in the form of grants, pursuant to the following categories: grant for policy development of public higher education institutions; teaching grant; scientific research and grant for creative activities.

Funding support for the institution and academic infrastructure is allocated based on ranking of public higher education institutions made by National Agency of Scientific Research and Innovation.

The teaching grant includes funds targeted at public higher education institutions and support of students (for the latter see section 3.5).

Funds targeted at institutions are allocated among public higher education institutions according to a formula that guarantees equal opportunities, fairness and transparency. Funding for competing projects for higher education institutions development is awarded based on applications evaluated according to criteria set in sector strategy and annual budget law.

Institutions are free to make investments. Higher education institutions charge tuition fees, which are fixed by relevant Decrees of Council of Ministers. Universities are not restricted in the manner they use the

tuition fees. Tuition fees constitute a significant part of higher education institutions funding. Universities are also encouraged to seek private funding and have the right to receive loans for their institutional and infrastructure development. Universities are required to report on the amount and use of such private funding.

The government makes available public funds to support study programs or specific fields of scientific research, in accordance with development priorities and strategic interests of the country. National Agency of Research and Innovation (NASRI) is a public institution under the authority of the line ministry for education and sport, whose main responsibility is allocation of funds for scientific research programs on the basis of projects submitted by institutions of higher education and scientific research institutions in the fields of natural sciences, engineering, technological, medical, agricultural, human and social sciences. On the basis of competition among applicants, NASRI approves funding for projects of doctoral studies. It administers also other funds related to research and innovation in the framework of national programs, international and bilateral scientific research, which it distributes based on applications of institutions

---

### **2.1.1 Financial Autonomy and Control**

The State funded higher education institutions are autonomous. Autonomy means freedom of higher education institutions to run their own affairs regarding staff, students, curricula, teaching and evaluation, governance, finance and administration.

In accordance with Law on Higher Education all higher education institutions enjoy academic freedom and institutional, organizational and staff selection autonomy. In addition, law guarantees financial autonomy by granting to HEI the right to generate legitimate incomes from teaching activities, scientific research activities, arts and sports activities and by any other economic income in line with the legislative framework in force. Furthermore, the same law grants to higher education institutions the right to receive funds from the State and other organizations, to define internal rules for distribution of funds, use of income and to administer real estates and the income wealth that they possess legally.<sup>7</sup>

---

### **2.1.2 Public Higher Education Fees**

According to the new Law on Higher Education, fees are determined by HEIs, including public ones, within the ceiling provided in bylaws.

---

## **2.2 Private Education**

---

### **2.2.1 Private Higher Education Fees**

Currently, there are 26 private higher education institutions operating in Albania. The main sources of income for the functioning of such institutions are tuition fees. Based on the new Law on Higher Education, the private higher education institutions may benefit from State budget funds only in two cases: from scholarships offered to students who decide to study in a private higher education institution and from scientific research fund if the private institution is awarded a project dedicated to research.

---

## **2.3 Financial Support for Learners' Families**

There are no structural measures targeting learners' families. All existing structural measures apply to students directly.

---

## **2.4 Financial Support for Learners**

### *Student loans*

The new Law on Higher Education provides for a student loan scheme in Article 114. It states that Ministry of Education and Sport mediates the students' lending process, with the aim of providing financial support to afford the costs of studies. In principle, the student loan scheme will be open to all students who gained the right to study in a higher education institution. A Decree of Council of Ministers shall provide for the

---

<sup>7</sup> Ibidem, Article 3.

student loan scheme. Despite the fact that the law entered into force on 6 October 2015, the necessary bylaws need to be drafted to make this scheme functional.

#### *Student grants*

The student support fund includes three funding categories:

- a) scholarships for excellent students;
- b) scholarships for students enrolled in study programmes that constitute a national priority;
- c) scholarships for students belonging to disadvantaged social groups;

Scholarships for excellent students are awarded at the national level to students with maximal **Grade point average** GPA<sup>8</sup> at entrance, regardless of study programmes and institutions where they attend their studies. The student continues to benefit from this grant if her/his results continue to be excellent throughout the years of study.

Scholarships for students are granted to students who have chosen to attend a study programme in a public higher education institution, which constitutes a national priority area, as defined by Council of Ministers.

Scholarships for disadvantaged social groups are distributed to students who are admitted to a public higher education institution and meet the criteria to be considered as students in need, as defined by Council of Ministers. NAHEF awards these grants.

#### *Other social benefits*

Besides the above-mentioned mechanisms, additional support in the form of quotas<sup>9</sup> is awarded to several groups of students that come from families with economic and social difficulties. Such categories include persons with disabilities, blind people, Roma and Balkan-Egyptian minorities, paraplegic and quadriplegic persons, and orphans. Decree of Council of Ministers provides for this support annually. Students that benefit from such quotas receive a 50% reduction in their tuition fees.

This approach was implemented for the first time during the academic year 2014-2015 for two specific categories, namely paraplegic and quadriplegic people, blind people and orphans in order to enable them to access higher education.

There was an increase of 33% in the second-cycle quotas for the academic year 2015-2016, for special categories (15 for blind persons, 20 for Roma and Balkan-Egyptian minorities, 15 for paraplegic and quadriplegic persons, 15 for orphans). These categories will benefit also from a 50% reduction of fees in the first and second cycle.

### **3 Higher Education system structure**

---

Higher education in the Republic of Albania is guaranteed within the framework of the number of students eligible for each study programme, for those candidates who have successfully completed high school education, who fulfil the admission criteria set out by the higher education institutions and the legal framework in force. Higher Education institutions may establish additional admission criteria, which are published by the higher education institution itself and are transmitted to the Centre for Educational Services and Ministry of Education and Sport.

Albania started reforming the higher education system by joining the Bologna Process in 2003. Nevertheless, it was the sole responsibility of MES to develop higher education system until 2009, while accreditation process was the responsibility of Accreditation Council, which provided recommendations to the Minister in order to make decisions.

---

<sup>8</sup> Grade Point Average (GPA).

<sup>9</sup> Fixed number or share of the approved student enrolment to a particular study programme

In 2009-2010, an extensive number of private HEIs were established and subsequently accredited (2010-2013) without respecting strict criteria and standards. Following this chaotic situation, a reform in higher education and scientific research is currently under way. In 2014, 18 private HEIs were closed and 13 suspended. Three branches of public HEIs and 1 public HEI were closed as well. This reform culminated with the adoption of the new Law on Higher Education in October 2015.

Each academic year is organised in two semesters. Each semester usually lasts 15 weeks. The first semester starts in October and the second semester in March. In addition, there are winter exams, national and religious holidays, spring and fall exams.

The new Law on Higher Education defines two types of study programmes, namely full time and extended programmes. The extended-study programme may be offered in study programmes of one to two years duration with a professional character; second cycle 'Professional Master' degree programmes and third cycle 'Executive Master' degree programmes. The study programmes, which grant the right to exercise a regulated profession, are organised only as full time study programmes

Albanian system includes the following study cycles:

- a) **Professional study programmes (*Programet e studimit me karakter profesional*)** after high school education of 60 or 120 ECTS. Their normal duration is one or two academic years and a 'Professional Certificate' (*Certifikatë Profesionale*) or 'Professional Degree' (*Diplomë Profesionale*) is issued for the area of obtained education, EQF 5.
- b) **Bachelor degree (*Bachelor*)** (3 years, 180 ECTS), EQF 6;
- c) **Master of Science degree (*Master i Shkencave*)** or **Master of Arts degree (*Master i Arteve*)** (2 years, 120 ECTS), EQF 7d) **Professional Master degree (*Master Profesional*)** (1,5 years, 60-90 ECTS), EQF 7;
  - a. **Master of Science or Master of Arts degree in integrated study programmes of the second cycle (*Master i Shkencave ose Master i Arteve në programme të integruara të studimeve të ciklit të dytë*)**. (5 or 6 years, 300 - 360 ECTS), mainly in medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, veterinary studies, architecture and law, EQF 7;
  - b. **'Executive Master' study programmes (*Master Ekzekutiv*)**, which offer a high-level scientific and professional education. It has a normal duration of one or two academic years and it is organised in 60 or 120 credits, EQF 8. They are finalized with a graduation thesis and in conclusion, the 'Executive Master' (*Master ekzekutiv*) degree is conferred for the relevant attended educational field;
  - c. **Ph.D. degree, (*Studimet e doktoratës*)**, which also includes 60 ECTS for organized theoretical studies, it has a duration of at least 3 academic years, EQF 8; The doctoral studies are finalized with the scientific degree of 'Doctor' (*Doktor*).
- d) **Long term specialization studies (*Programet e studimeve specializuese afatgjata*)** are part of the third cycle and offer advanced studies in such fields as medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, engineering, law, veterinary studies, etc. They consist of at least 120 ECTS and last for at least 2 years, EQF 8; they are finalized with the comprehensive training examination or with a graduation thesis and in the end a 'Specialization Diploma' (*Diplome specializimi*) is conferred for the relevant attended educational field.

### 3.1 Types of higher education institutions

---

The new Law on Higher Education<sup>10</sup> establishes different types of HEIs: **Universities** (Universitetet) **University Colleges** (Kolegjet Universitare), **Academia** (Akademitë) and **Higher Vocational Colleges** (Kolegjet Profesionalë të Lartë).

**University** is a higher education institution that operates in the area of education, scientific research, creative and professional activities. It represents an integrated structure composed of main units, basic

<sup>10</sup> Ibidem, Articles 17-20

units and other units as the institution statutes provide for, including at least three main units. University provides higher education, development of knowledge, science, innovation and professions. It conducts basic and applied scientific research activities in compliance with its study programmes, with the higher education law and with its statutes. A university offers study programmes in all higher education study cycles and programmes with a professional character.

**Academia** is a higher education institution that operates in the area of profiled higher education, scientific research, creative and professional activities. It consists of at least one faculty. In compliance with its area of study, an Academia can offer study programmes for all cycles and study programmes with a professional character.

**University College** is consists of main units, basic units and other units as provided in its statutes. It includes at least two faculties and provides higher education, knowledge, scientific and innovation development as well as professional programmes. A College conducts basic scientific research activities in line with the areas of its study programmes and its statutes. Such institutions offer study programmes in the first and/or second study cycle and programmes with a professional character.

**Higher Vocational College** is a higher education institution with professional orientation that prepares professionals with practical skills. It consists of at least two departments. It offers teaching activities that last for 1-2 academic years and correspond respectively with 60 or 120 ECTS. It may be established in affiliation with higher education institutions, which have the status of universities and university colleges. In these cases, it shall be considered as a main unit of the institution. In all other cases, the higher vocational education college is considered a special unit of a higher education institution.

## **3.2 First Cycle Programmes**

---

First cycle studies are offered in all types of higher education institutions in Albania except for the Higher Vocational Colleges. The first cycle study programmes, referred to level 6 of Albanian Framework of Qualifications, are organized in not less than 180 (ECTS) and their normal duration is three academic years. In the first cycle study programmes, students graduate through a comprehensive final exam or graduation thesis. At the end of the first cycle study programme, 'Bachelor' degree is conferred for the attended subject area.

### **3.2.1 Branches of study**

---

Business Administration and Law, Arts and Humanities and Social Sciences are the most popular domains in the first cycle in higher education.

Overall, the most popular field of study is Business Administration and Law, which attracts more than one quarter of all students. One third of students in Bachelor and Master levels of private HEIs opt for this field of study. This is followed by Health and Welfare and Arts and Humanities with 10% of newly enrolled students. This pattern is also true in public HEIs, with the exception that almost one fifth of students at Bachelor level enrol in subjects of Arts and Humanities and one tenth in Engineering, Mathematics and Statistics.

### **3.2.2 Admission Requirements**

---

Admission of students to a first cycle study programme is possible for each candidate that has successfully attended secondary education and meets the criterion of average grade provided annually by a Decree of Council of Ministers.

The higher education institutions may set additional admission criteria for selection of candidates, which are published by higher education institution itself and transmitted to the Centre for Educational Services and Ministry of Education and Sport.



### **3.2.3 Curriculum**

---

Curricula content is provided by departments of the institution and its specialists. The responsible person for the subject/module provides the number of hours to be devoted to lectures, seminars, exercises, laboratory work based on ECTS number.

Each curriculum is based on national standards, which include defined objectives determined by the set of knowledge, and competences a student must acquire by the end of a study programme. The general objectives in terms of knowledge and competences are the same for similar study programmes offered by different higher education institutions. Institutions themselves set the specific objectives.

Students may also choose optional topics and interdisciplinary activities organized by certain departments (e.g. knowledge on law, economics, foreign languages, IT, telematics).

As established by the new Law on Higher Education the study programmes will be encoded at the national level and the same programmes should have a 70% similar content in all HEIs at the national level (80% for the Teaching study programme).

### **3.2.4 Teaching Methods**

---

Higher education teachers have to organize their lectures in compliance with the curriculum but the teaching methods they should use are not prescribed.

### **3.2.5 Promotion of Students**

---

Students can move on to the next year of studies once they have completed their obligations in terms of obtaining the sufficient number of ECTS as provided in the regulation of each HEIs.

The student can pass a particular exam at any time within the dates/periods scheduled in advance by each HEI. Regulations of each HEI provide for further promotion specifications of students.

### **3.2.6 Employability**

---

Cooperation between universities and enterprises has started only recently. Many universities use this cooperation for student placements in enterprises, especially for students in engineering, medicine and agriculture. Some universities organize training courses to update the knowledge of enterprise employees such as teacher training, nursing training, economics training, etc. Some training is organized within Tempus projects and within the framework of other bilateral assistance projects. As provided by the new Law on Higher Education, employability of students will be considered as a parameter for the ranking of universities, as well as an indicator for the assessment of performance in relation to funding of Albanian HEIs.

### **3.2.7 Student Assessment**

---

Student's exam performance is expressed by grades 4 (failed) to 10 (excellent). Higher education institutions may also establish other, non-numerical grading systems by relating the ratio of such grades (percentage) to the one expressed by grades from 4 to 10. Diploma supplement contains this as well. Statutes and regulations of higher education institutions provide for more specifications on student assessment.

### **3.2.8 Certification**

---

The responsible authority for certification is the higher education institution itself. Upon completion of each level of higher education, the student receives a diploma for his/her relevant field of study and the number of received ECTS, with the exception of PhD diplomas. The student also receives a diploma supplement, which contains information regarding the level, type and content of studies successfully completed, in compliance with the format of the European diploma supplement. The diploma template and the related supplement for each study programme should be registered in the State register of diplomas and certificates for higher education and scientific research, which is administered by Ministry of Education and

Sport. HEIs can issue only the diploma and supplements whose templates have been registered previously in the above-mentioned State register.

### **3.3 Short-Cycle Higher Education**

---

Higher education institutions may offer study programmes with a professional character after high school education. Those programmes should have 60 or 120 credits and they should refer to level 5 of Albanian Framework of Qualifications, EQF 5. Their normal duration is one to two academic years and they should lead to a 'Professional Certificate' (*Certifikatë Profesionale*) or 'Professional Degree' (*Diplomë Profesionale*) issued for the relevant area. Credits accumulated in higher vocational studies may be transferred to the first cycle of studies, pursuant to the criteria set by the higher education institutions.

### **3.4 Second Cycle Programmes**

---

#### **3.4.1 Branches of Study**

---

In Albania, the second cycle study programmes include 'Master of Science', 'Master of Arts' and 'Professional Master', in reference to level 7 of Albanian Framework of Qualifications, EQF 7. All criteria and modalities to obtain the degree 'Master of Arts' are equal to those for obtaining the degree 'Master of Science' with the difference that 'Master of Arts' degree is conferred by higher education institutions, which offer education in the area of arts. 'Master of Science' study programmes provide the graduates with in-depth theoretical knowledge as well as with scientific research training in a given field, whereas 'Master of Arts' study programmes provide the graduates with in-depth theoretical and practical knowledge in the field of arts. These programmes cannot have less than 120 credits following the first cycle study programmes (with a normal duration of two academic years). 'Master of Science' study programmes are completed with a graduation thesis and in the end 'Master of Science' degree is conferred for the relevant educational area.

There are two categories of such programmes:

- a) Programmes which are conducted with not less than 120 credits following the first cycle and with a normal duration of two academic years;
- b) Integrated study programmes with 300 and 360 credits and a normal duration of five and six academic years. These integrated study programmes in medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, veterinary, architecture and law (integrated study programmes in law are established by the new Law on Higher Education, but not yet implemented since the new law entered into force on 5 October 2015). Council of Ministers may provide for other fields where integrated study programmes could be offered.

#### **3.4.2 Admission Requirements**

---

Admission to the second cycle of study programmes is possible for those candidates that have completed successfully a first cycle of study programme and meet the admissibility criteria of the higher education institution where they apply. The admissibility criteria are set by the basic unit, which offers the programme. Integrated study programmes are excluded from the present rule. The main unit and ESC set the criteria for the latter. Higher education institutions may recognize the credits acquired in 'Professional Master' second cycle study programmes, with the aim of transferring them to 'Master of Science' study programmes. Higher education institutions send to ESC the list of enrolled students at the beginning of the academic year.

It is important to note that one of the admission criteria to a Master of Science degree is the knowledge by the candidate of one out of five foreign languages of the European Union (English, French, German, Italian and Spanish), certified by internationally recognized examinations.

### 3.4.3 Curriculum

---

The curricula are developed at the institutional level. Study programmes consist of compulsory and optional subjects. The standard instruction language is Albanian, but the higher education institutions may organize examinations, some parts or an entire study programme in a minority language or another foreign language, which has to be declared by the HEI in the application submitted for licensing.

### 3.4.4 Teaching Methods

---

Higher education teachers have to organize their lectures in compliance with the curriculum but the teaching methods they use are not prescribed.

### 3.4.5 Promotion of Students

---

Idem as 3.2.5

### 3.4.6 Employability

---

Idem as 3.2.6

### 3.4.7 Student Assessment

---

Idem as 3.2.7

### 3.4.8 Certification

---

Idem as 3.2.8

## 3.5 Programmes outside Bachelor and Master Structure

---

Unlike other programmes, which follow the Bologna Bachelor and Master cycles (3+2), integrated study programmes of the second cycle have 300 and 360 credits with a normal duration of five and six academic years. Those integrated study programmes are offered in medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, veterinary and architecture (and law, according to the new law). Council of Ministers may provide for other fields where integrated study programmes could be offered.

## 3.6 Third Cycle (PhD) Programmes

---

'Executive Master' study programmes (Master Ekzekutiv); 'Specialization Diploma' (Diplomë specializimi); Doctoral studies (Studimet e doktoratës). The third cycle study programmes includes the 'Executive Master' study programmes, the long-term specializing study programmes as well as the doctorate studies in reference to level 8 of Albanian Framework of Qualifications, EQF 8. 'Executive Master' study programmes offer a high level of scientific and professional education. They have a normal duration of one or two academic years and are organized in 60 or 120 credits. They are completed with a graduation thesis and the 'Executive Master' degree is conferred for the relevant educational field.

Long-term specializing study programmes are vocational oriented programmes that offer a specialised professional knowledge. They last at least two academic years with not less than 120 credits. They are completed with a comprehensive training examination or with a graduation thesis. At the end, a 'Specialization Diploma' (*Diplomë specializimi*) is conferred for the relevant educational field.

### 3.6.1 Organization of Doctoral Studies

---

Doctoral studies are designed as individual programmes intended to promote independent research in the field provided by the basic unit or the main unit. They rely on scientific research and creative activities. Doctorate studies last not less than three academic years and not more than five academic years. Doctoral studies lead to the degree of 'Doctor' (*Doktor*). Higher education institutions provide themselves for the criteria of annual assessment for the progress of candidates and the work carried out in research. Higher education institutions, which meet the criteria for offering doctorate studies, apply for funding to National Agency of Scientific Research and Innovation or other funding institutions.

Doctoral studies are conducted on a full-time basis within the basic unit or on a part-time basis in those cases when the doctorate candidate is employed as academic staff in another higher education institution or as research staff in an institution of basic or applied research. When doctorate studies are carried out in collaboration with other higher education institutions, some parts of the research project may be implemented in collaborating institutions.

The basic unit provides the number of doctorate students and the research project of each doctorate student must relate to the unit research activities.

In order to conduct doctoral studies, the student may benefit from external funds or be self-funded.

### **3.6.2 Admission Requirements**

---

Admission to third cycle degree programmes is possible for those candidates who hold a 'Master of Science' or 'Master of Arts' degree and meet the admissibility criteria, provided by the higher education institution. An additional criterion to access a third cycle study programme is the knowledge by the candidate of one out of five foreign languages of the European Union (English, French, German, Italian and Spanish), certified by internationally recognized examinations, in compliance with the respective directive of Ministry of Education and Sport. If the individual has obtained a degree in one of the aforementioned languages, the obtained degree is an evidence for meeting the criterion. The basic units provide the admissibility criteria in the third cycle study programmes pursuant to quality standards provided by the State and made public.

Higher education institutions transmit the list of graduates in the third cycle programmes to the line ministry in order to be entered in the State register of scientific degrees and academic credentials.

### **3.6.3 Status of Doctoral Students/Candidates**

---

Both employed and unemployed students have equal rights in terms of eligibility for any particular programme and a State-financed status, as long as they meet all other required preconditions. Unemployed students are entitled to all benefits and rights as those granted at the previous levels of study (health insurance, student subsidies for meals, public transport and scholarships).

Employed students exercise such rights through their employee status.

### **3.6.4 Supervision Arrangements**

---

Scientific supervisors of doctorate students shall hold a 'Professor' or 'Associated Professor' title and may supervise a certain number of doctorate students at once. This number includes all the supervisions that the academic staff concerned supervises in all higher education institutions where she/he is involved and as Quality Code of Higher Education provides for.

### **3.6.5 Employability**

---

Idem as 3.2.6

### **3.6.6 Assessment**

---

Being the final part of studies, PhD thesis is assessed on the basis of its scientific or artistic significance and contribution to the relevant field. It represents an independent scientific research paper. Each higher education institution sets the general rules for the application procedure and PhD thesis defence, which apply to all its departments.

### **3.6.7 Certification**

---

Once students have completed all their examination obligations and have defended their PhD thesis, they receive the diploma stating their official title 'Doctor', (*Doktor*).

## **4 Teachers and Education Staff in Higher Education**

---

### **4.1 Initial Education for Academic Staff in Higher Education**

---

Law on Higher Education and Scientific Research and more specifically HEIs' statutes and regulations regulate the initial education, the conditions of service and professional development of academic staff.

There are no special programmes for the initial education of future academic staff in higher education. Likewise, there are no requirements concerning particular subjects during the studies, such as psychology, pedagogy, teaching methodology or other education related subjects.

Admission criteria in higher education institutions for those planning to pursue the academic career are equivalent to those expected for any other student applying for a higher education programme. Typically, a PhD degree is required for those applying for academic staff positions, although staff members with lower degree levels may apply as well, but only for teaching in the first cycle programmes.

Research and publication of scientific papers are highly valued for students aiming the academic career.

### **4.2 Service Conditions for Academic Staff Working in Higher Education**

---

Academic staff in higher education institutions includes professors, associated professors, lecturers and assistant lecturers. Lecturers and assistant lecturers (provided they have a PhD), associate professors and full professors may teach at all levels of higher education.

#### **4.2.1 Planning Policy**

---

There is no planning policy in terms of teacher supply and demand in higher education.

#### **4.2.2 Entry into Profession**

---

Staff in HEIs is composed of academic staff, supporting academic staff and administrative staff.

Staff may be employed with a fixed-term or indefinite term contract, as well as for a part-time or full-time assignment.

Statutes and internal acts of HEIs provide for the rights and obligations of higher education staff pursuant to applicable laws and regulations.

Those academic staff members who are the main lecturers of subjects or modules and supervisors of scientific research activities fall into category 'Professor'. The academic staff members of this category hold academic credentials of 'Professor' or 'Associate Professor'. This category is hired with an indefinite term contract.

Those academic staff members who exercise teaching and scientific research activities fall into category 'Lecturer'. This category includes the academic staff members that hold the scientific degree of 'Doctor', and have at least three years of experience in teaching prior or after receiving the aforementioned degree, in addition to meeting the criteria provided in the statutes of higher education institutions. This category is hired with an indefinite term contract.

Those academic staff members that exercise teaching-research activities fall into category 'Assistant lecturer'. The assistant lecturers shall hold at least a 'Master of Science' degree and should meet the criteria provided in the statutes of higher education institution. Assistant lecturers are hired with a fixed term contract.

The academic staff that engages in teaching shall at least hold a degree from the consecutive higher cycle. (i.e. a master of science degree is required for teaching at bachelor level, a PHD degree is required for teaching at Master level and so on.) In higher vocational education colleges, academic staff shall hold at least a 'Professional Master' degree.

The institution provides for the full teaching workload for the academic staff in public higher education institutions in compliance with the relevant directive of Ministry of Education and Sport. The institution itself provides for the minimal workload in non-public institutions.

The basic unit provides for the employment criteria of full-time academic staff based on the needs of the latter, and approved by the Rector. An 'ad hoc' commission composed with the majority of relevant basic unit representatives leads the competition to access a position in public higher education institutions. HEI statutes provide for regulations and procedures for selection of 'ad hoc' commission members and selection of academic staff. The institution statutes in non-public institutions provides for the criteria, rules and procedures of academic staff employment.

#### **4.2.3 Professional Status**

---

Most commonly, higher education teachers are employed on a full time basis, but it is possible to engage academic staff on a part time basis as well. Academic staff members who hold the academic credentials of 'Professor', 'Associate Professor' and 'Doctor' are hired with an indefinite term contract. The assistant lecturers are hired with a fixed term contract.

A full-time employed academic staff in a higher education institution cannot be employed as a full-time employed academic staff in another higher education institution, inside and outside the country. She/he may engage part-time in another higher education institution, only after receiving the approval from heads of basic unit, main unit and HEI's Rector and with the agreement of institutions. The participation of academic staff in projects, consultancy, publications and services that are conducted in the higher education institution where she/he is employed with full time, is not considered as dual employment within the institution.

#### **4.2.4 Salaries**

---

Currently, a Decree of Council of Ministers provides for the structure and remuneration level of academic staff of public HEIs. Based on the new Law on Higher Education and Scientific Research (2015), a higher education institution is guaranteed the right to decide the remuneration level of its academic staff in compliance with the institution format. Bylaws shall provide for implementation modalities of this right. The Administration Board of the higher education institution approves the salary levels of administrative staff pursuant to applicable legislation.

#### **4.2.5 Working Time and Holidays**

---

Working time and holidays are provided pursuant to national Labour Code. Furthermore, statutes and internal regulations of higher education institutions provide for working modalities, rights and obligations of the staff of higher education institutions.

#### **4.2.6 Promotion, Advancement**

---

Bylaws provide for academic staff advancement in career. Staff members have to fulfil a number of criteria to acquire the title of associated professor and professor. A basic criterion is to have a PhD and a certain number of publications in journals and a certain number in journals with impact factors. They have to attend conferences, be part of poster session and publish abstracts. With the current reform undertaken in higher education, criteria will change and participation in national and international conferences will also be required with an emphasis put on the EU projects, innovation and registered patents.

#### **4.2.7 Retirement and Pensions**

---

Academic staff that holds the title 'Professor' serves in office until the age of 68, with the exception of cases when she/he leaves office earlier with her/his request. Based on the needs of higher education institution and with her/his consent, she/he may serve in office even after the said age based on one-year contracts, renewable, pursuant to modalities stipulated in institution statutes.

Academic staff that holds the title 'Associate Professor' serves in office until the age of 65. Based on higher education institution needs and with her/his consent, she/he may serve in office even after the said age based on one-year contracts, renewable, pursuant to modalities stipulated in institution statutes.

Academic and administrative staff may retire at the age of 65 with a minimum of 35 years of work. Social insurance law regulates the pensions.

### **4.3 Continuing Professional Advancement for Academic Staff in Higher Education**

---

Professional advancement of academic staff is mostly based on scientific work.

#### **4.3.1 Organizational Aspects**

---

There are no requirements provided by the Law for professional advancement at this level, making it therefore optional, unless differently required by a particular higher education institution. However, professional advancement by publishing scientific papers and other relevant publications is extremely important for career development. Professional advancement can be organized in the forms of specialization, work towards a higher level of formal education, symposia, courses, study theses, congresses, seminars, conferences and similar activities. Institutions are required to provide conditions for professional development of their staff, including the time for completion of such engagement within regular working hours.

#### **4.3.2 Incentives for Participation in Continuing Professional Advancement Activities**

---

Hours spent on professional development can be counted as working time and the institution is required to cover all expenses incurred in the process after its approval. A certain number of working days, as decided by the institution, can be used for professional development. If institution budget allows, the staff may receive additional funds for research and participation in conferences and other important academic events. Ministry of Education and Sport, approves regularly funds for research and science development for which academic staff may apply.

After receiving the approval of basic unit where she/he conducts the academic activity, academic staff of 'Lecturer' and 'Professor' categories is entitled to disengage from institution commitments once every seven years for a total duration of one year in order to work for her/his academic development. Statutes of higher education institution provide for arrangement modalities of legal relationship between the parties during this period.

## **5 Management and Other Education Staff in Higher Education**

---

### **5.1 Requirements for Appointment**

---

#### **Rector**

The Rector is the highest academic authority of a higher education institution and she/he is the legal representative for academic and protocol issues in compliance with the present law provisions. The Rector has a four-year long mandate. He serves in office for one mandate, with the right of re-election for one additional mandate. After the mandate ends, she/he continues to be part of the basic unit staff where she/he carries out her/his academic activity.

The President of the Republic decrees the higher education institution Rector of in compliance with the current law provisions.

When a public university is created, the President of the Republic appoints its Rector for a one-year mandate during which she/he is on charge for organizing and conducting the general elections of that institution within that mandate. When one rector leaves for legitimate reasons or fails to fulfil the mandate, the Minister responsible for education appoints one of the Vice Rectors as Acting Rector for a maximum term of six months with the purpose of organizing elections in the institution.

## **Dean**

The main unit head is the faculty dean, the director of scientific research institute, when the institute meets the standards of a main unit, and the director of higher vocational education college, in cases when the latter is created in affiliation with an university or college.

The head is the highest academic authority of the main unit and its representative. She/he coordinates the basic unit activities, the main unit collective bodies and settles their disputes.

In public higher education institutions, she/he is elected by the assembly of the academic staff of the main unit and its students. The students' votes in the election process for the unit head are awarded a 10% share in the total number of votes. The respective HEI statute stipulates the specific selection criteria for the running candidates.

The unit head mandate lasts four years. She/he serves in office for one mandate, with the right of re-election for one additional mandate. After the mandate ends, she/he continues to be a member of the basic unit where she/he conducts her/his academic activity. In public higher education institutions, the Rector appoints as the main unit head the candidate who wins the elections.

## **Department Head**

The basic unit head is the head of department or of a scientific research centre. She/he represents the governing academic body of that unit. In public higher education institutions, she/he is elected by the academic staff assembly of the basic unit. In non-public higher education institutions, she/he is elected or appointed pursuant to the terms provided by the institution statutes.

In public higher education institutions, the main unit head appoints as the basic unit head the candidate who wins the elections. When a new basic unit is created in a public higher education institution or in the case when a new higher education institution is created, its head is appointed by the dean for a mandate that lasts until elections for the basic unit head are conducted.

The candidates for the basic unit head are required to be academic staff of 'Professor' category or holders of the scientific 'Doctor' ('Ph.D.'). a degree received in a OECD member State or EU country universities. In the case when there are no such candidates, the lector is allowed to run for the head position when she/he holds the 'Doctor' scientific degree. The respective HEI statute provides for the specific selection criteria of running candidates. The basic unit head may serve in office for a four-year mandate, with the right of re-election for one additional mandate. After the end of the mandate, she/he continues to be a member of the academic staff of the basic unit where she/he conducts her/his academic activities.

## **5.2 Service Conditions**

---

Each higher education institution provides separately the further details on managing bodies' selection, dismissal, responsibility and other service conditions in its statutes and regulations.

## **6 Quality Assurance in Higher Education**

---

### **6.1 Responsible bodies**

---

#### **Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (AQAHE)**

According to the current Law on Higher Education, the Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (AQAHE) is the public legal institution responsible for quality assurance in higher education. By means of quality assurance mechanisms, accreditation and other processes, AQAHE monitors and evaluates the institution quality and the offered programmes. AQAHE bases its activities on its guidelines, the Higher Education Quality Code which is updated pursuant to the European standards and the quality guidelines in the European Higher Education Area. AQAHE collaborates with higher education institutions for the establishment and functioning of the internal quality assurance system. AQAHE carries out the evaluation



process for the accreditation of higher education institutions and the study programmes they offer, as well as the continuous monitoring of their quality.

AQAHE enjoys independence in drafting and adoption of its procedures, evaluation criteria and formats, selection of experts and ad hoc assessment commissions, as well as the content and results of academic quality evaluation reports. It operates with elected and independent committees, according to the main areas in higher education (natural sciences, engineering and technology, medical, agricultural, human and social sciences). These committees have a temporary nature and consist of experts with academic qualifications, experience in higher education and research and expertise in quality processes.

In the context of external quality assessment, AQAHE cooperates and coordinates its activities with partner agencies, part of the European Network for Quality Assurance (ENQA). It publishes an annual report about its activities and final evaluation reports on higher education institutions and study programmes.

### **Accreditation Board**

The Accreditation Board is created in AQAHE and is a collective decision-making body, independent in its activity. The Accreditation Board is composed of domestic and foreign experts, personalities in the field of higher education and quality assurance and has a mandate of 4 years. It makes the final decision on accreditation of higher education institutions and programmes they offer. The Board approves the request of higher education institution by conducting external evaluation by one of ENQA member agencies.

HEIs are required to measure the quality of their study programmes following the State Quality Code for accreditation. The new Law on Higher Education and Scientific Research (2015) emphasises that a compulsory annual evaluation of professors by their students should take place in specialized evaluation centres within the HEIs. Some HEIs have already begun this process. The EU Tempus projects assist HEIs in reaching quality standards. Programmes such as CEEPUS, ERASMUS MUNDUS and TEMPUS have contributed to increase students' and academic staff mobility and to improve the teachers' qualification level.

## **6.2 Approaches and Methods for Quality Assurance**

---

Higher Education Institutions, which need to undergo the external evaluation process for their first accreditation, apply for the start of this process to AQAHE and to Accreditation Board, at least 1 year before the start of the study programme. A HEI can start its activity only after being granted the licence. The licensing of a Higher Education Institution takes place after meeting the State criteria and the requirements set by the Council of Ministers based on proposals of Ministry of Education and Sport.

Accreditation is the public recognition that an Albanian HEI or programme meets the set standards of quality. In achieving recognition by the accrediting agency, HEI/programme commits to a process of self-assessment and external peer review not just to meet standards but to continuously seek ways for enhancing the quality of provided education and training.

The purpose of accreditation system of Albanian HE institutions is:

1. To use evaluation standards to ensure quality education;
2. To encourage institutions to improve the education quality;
3. To ensure the accountability of educational institutions;
4. To ensure public confidence in educational institutions.

Higher Education Institutions are responsible for their internal quality assurance and provide for their own internal documents and procedures required for the internal quality assurance. They establish the responsible unit for quality assurance, with a student representative and an external expert as members. They evaluate periodically their education, research, artistic activities, performance and efficiency, as well as their institution administrative and financial activities. The quality assurance unit has operational autonomy and access to all Higher Education Institution data.

## 7 Educational Support and Guidance

---

University and faculty career development centres provide the student career guidance at university level. Almost all universities have career centres, which organize career workshops, provide counselling and offer internships.

These offices cooperate closely with foreign HEIs in the recognition process of international student mobility and degrees, legalization of documents, transfers of studies and mutual agreements. They support the participation of their students in international mobility programmes, joint activities with foreign students, summer schools, etc.

International Relations Offices (IROs) cover the implementation of bilateral and multilateral agreements, as well as the implementation of international projects, in which their institution participates. IROs cooperate closely with Albanian Erasmus+ Office through activities organised in the framework of Erasmus+ Programme, such as Erasmus+ Information days, experts' workshops, on-site information sessions on the EU programmes, etc. They are responsible for university promotion abroad and preparation of brochures and information leaflets on their institution in foreign languages.

### 7.1 Support Measures for Learners in Higher Education

---

#### 7.1.1 Definition of Target Group(s)

---

Three categories of students benefit from scholarships of teaching grants:

- a) Excellent students;
- b) Students enrolled in study programmes that constitute a national priority;
- c) Students who belong to disadvantaged social groups.

Scholarships for excellent students are awarded to students with maximal GPA in admission, at national level, regardless of the study programme or the institution where they have chosen to attend their studies. The student continues to benefit from this grant if throughout the years of study her/his results continue to be excellent. Scholarships for students are granted to those students who have chosen to attend a study programme in a public higher education institution whose area of study constitutes a national priority, as provided by Council of Ministers.

Scholarships for students of disadvantaged social groups are allocated to students who are admitted to public higher education institutions and meet the criteria to be considered students in need, as provided by Council of Ministers.

The student loan scheme is open to all students who earn the right to study in higher education.

#### 7.1.2 Specific Support Measures

---

No information available.

### 7.2 Guidance and Counselling in Higher Education

---

Please refer to section 8.

#### 7.2.1 Academic Guidance

---

No information available.

#### 7.2.2 Psychological Counselling

---

No information available.

#### 7.2.3 Career Guidance

---

In recent years, Albanian universities opened career development centres, which currently provide career information and organize educational activities for career management, such as workshops, lectures and training courses. Their services are available to their students, alumni and potential students. In addition to providing career guidance and counselling services, these centres provide also information on educational mobility opportunities and internships.

## **8 Mobility and Internationalisation in Higher Education**

---

International cooperation in higher education institutions is managed by International Relations Offices (IROs). These offices are set up almost in all Albanian HEIs. These offices cooperate closely with foreign HEIs in the recognition of international student mobility and degrees, legalisation of documents, study transfers and mutual agreements. They assist students to apply for international mobility, in mutual activities with foreign students, in summer schools, etc.

International Relations Offices cover the implementation of bilateral and multilateral agreements and implementation of international projects in which their institution participates. IROs cooperate closely with Albanian Erasmus+ Office through activities such as organisation of Erasmus+ Information days, experts' workshops, on-site information sessions on the EU programmes, etc. They are responsible for the university promotion abroad and preparation of institution brochures and information leaflets in foreign languages.

International cooperation in Albanian universities is mostly based on a number of bilateral and multilateral agreements that HEIs establish in the framework of their own autonomy.

International mobility in Albania is targeting mainly outgoing students and incoming and outgoing professors. Some programmes which are offered in foreign languages, mostly in Italian and English, attract a few foreign students as well.

### **8.1 Student Mobility**

---

Higher education institutions in Albania have been participating in many Erasmus Mundus projects, especially in that part of the programme which supported the academic cooperation and exchanges of students and academics through the establishment of exchange networks between higher education institutions from the Western Balkans and the EU. The Erasmus Mundus partnerships have had a systemic impact on international cooperation of Albanian universities. The most active HEIs involved in Erasmus Mundus action 2 partnerships are the University of Tirana, Agricultural University of Tirana, Polytechnic University of Tirana, University "Aleksander Moisiu" of Durres, University "Aleksander Xhuvani" of Elbasan, University "Fan Noli" of Korça, University "Luigj Gurakuqi" of Shkodra, University "Eqerem Çabej" of Gjirokastra, University "Ismail Qemali" of Gjirokastra and European University of Tirana. Seven university exchange networks have been funded (some of them are still running): BASILUES, Join EU-SEE, SIGMA, ERAWEB, EUROWEB, TECH-WB and SUNBEAM.

From 2014, there are two new partnerships (exchange networks) with the participation of institutions from Albania: TECH-WB and SUNBEAM, while two previously existing networks, SIGMA A and EUROWEB, acquired funding for an additional period. During the last years, around 268 Albanian students have benefited from mobility exchanges in the framework of the above-mentioned programmes, at Bachelor and PHD level and around 80 academic and administrative staff have benefited from mobility for training purposes.

In addition, during the past ten years, more than 140 students from Albania were awarded scholarships to attend Erasmus Mundus Joint Master and PhD courses at prestigious EU universities.

Tempus projects served as a viable instrument to boost students' mobility, mainly focused on staff mobility.

Albanian HEIs participate in CEEPUS programme as well. This is an academic exchange programme for students and professors from Central and Eastern Europe. The programme is based on an international

agreement signed by the following Member States: Austria, Albania, Bulgaria, Montenegro, Czech Republic, Croatia, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Serbia. Student exchanges are organized within university networks. Each network has a certain number of target subjects. The cooperation is based on the correspondence between university institutes and faculties, which are active in the same academic field.

Furthermore, the outbound mobility of national students is promoted and funded through the “Excellence Fund”. This fund was set up by the Government of Albania and is run by Ministry of Education and Sport. The Fund was established in order to support excellent students and young scientists that get admission for a Master or PhD degree into one of the 15 best universities of the world, based on previous year “Times Higher Education” rankings.

The new EU programme for education, youth and sport Erasmus+ offers to Albanian HEIs the possibility to become partner in International Credit Mobility projects which have a special focus on students and staff mobility.

## **8.2 Academic staff mobility**

---

Tempus has been the largest financial instrument to support capacity building through mobility of teaching staff in Albanian HEIs. Albania has been the first among the Western Balkan countries to participate in Tempus programme, starting from 1992 until the last call in 2013, when the programme ceased to exist, i.e. it has been replaced by Erasmus+ programme. Throughout the entire period (1992-2013), around 36 million Euros have been awarded to Albanian universities through Tempus projects and Albanian universities have been selected as partners in 111 proposals out of 456 applications. All Tempus projects have played a vital role in bringing the academic community into the European network of higher education institutions, mainly by supporting retraining and upgrading of academic staff (70%-80% of the academic staff have been retrained abroad through Tempus).

## **8.3 Other Dimensions of Internationalization in Higher Education**

---

### **8.3.1 European, Global and Intercultural Dimension in Curriculum Development**

---

On 18 September 2003, Albania joined the Bologna process officially. Since then, higher education legislation has been updated with a view to support the Bologna process reforms and respond to national needs. The reform process has addressed issues such as study cycles, ECTS introduction, diploma supplements, consolidation of financial autonomy of HE institutions, improvement of the process of recognition of academic qualifications, external and internal quality assessment, financing of higher education, academic standards, implementation of a national qualification framework, student mobility within the country and abroad, improvement of student enrolment in HE institutions, setting-up performance standards. Albania has also ratified the Lisbon Convention on Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Area and established ENIC<sup>11</sup> office within the Ministry of Education and Sport. Furthermore, recently, MES is cooperating with various countries for the automatic recognition of diplomas.

### **8.3.2 Partnerships and Networks**

---

No information available.

## **8.4 Bilateral Agreements and Worldwide Cooperation**

---

### **8.4.1 Bilateral agreements**

---

Almost all Albanian universities have established bilateral and multilateral cooperation agreements with universities mainly from Western Balkans and the EU countries, but in many cases even with HEIs from Russia, USA, Turkey, etc. This cooperation aims mainly at increasing the common participation in the EU

---

<sup>11</sup> ENIC (European Network of National Information Centres on academic recognition and mobility) is the national office responsible for recognition of foreign diplomas, degrees and other qualifications

projects such as Tempus, Erasmus Mundus, Erasmus+ and offering joint or double degrees, boosting mobility for staff and students.

#### **8.4.2 Cooperation and participation in worldwide programmes and organizations**

---

Most Albanian HEIs take part in several Networks for Higher Education such as UNSHP (Network of Albanian-speaking universities), UNICA (Network of Universities from the European Capitals), EUA (European Universities Association), AUF (Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie), CMU (Community of Mediterranean Universities), BSUN (Black Sea Universities Network), ASECU (Association of Economic Universities of South and Eastern Europe and Black Sea Region), etc. Some of them are members of CEEPUS “Central European Exchange Programme for University Studies”, which consists in university networks operating joint programmes leading to Joint Degrees and award of mobility grants for students and professors. They have also been partners in Erasmus Mundus Partnerships such as ERAWEB, Join EU-SEE, EUROWEB, Sigma, TechWeb.

### **9 On-going Reforms and Policy Developments**

---

#### **9.1 Overall national education strategy and key objectives**

---

The most urgent priority after entry into force of Law No.80/2015, "On Higher Education and Scientific Research in higher education institutions in the Republic of Albania", is the drafting of new bylaws. For that purpose, a working group was established and has taken the necessary steps for the process of preparation and drafting of bylaws in compliance with the new law. In addition, Albanian Ministry of Education and Sport is working closely with various international partners such as the British Council, the World Bank, etc. for the completion of this process.

The main objective of higher education reform consists in the creation of better premises for building a quality higher education system, which is responsive to labour market needs and requirements of the country strategic development. In addition, it seeks to educate high profile experts and train young scientists, in accordance with the country development priorities, contributing thereby to increasing the democracy standards.

In order to reach this objective, the strategy provides for:

- Adoption of a single and standardized higher education system in Albania, comparable and competitive with regional and European “markets”;
- Positioning the higher education system on stable financial bases, to cope with any potential alteration and economic decline. Funding diversification and institutional autonomy of HEIs are very important to optimise the use of all funding sources that society can supply;
- Development of sustainable internal (inside HEIs) and external QA mechanisms to ensure that higher education system meets the European standards;
- Development of sustainable independent higher education institutions which respond to economy needs;
- Development of tools to increase accountability to society and serve the public interest.

Achievement of the above-mentioned objectives shall be based on principles of:

- Quality assurance based on Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area;
- Equal opportunities, without discrimination and support of categories in need;
- Free competition among higher education institutions, academic staff and students;
- Merit based opportunities for all;
- Support to the country strategic development priorities through scientific research.
-

## 9.2 Overview of processes and drivers for the education reform

---

The reform process was based on a rigorous analysis of the current situation of the country, as well as the main international developments and requirements in the field. The current reform culminated with the approval of the new Law on Higher Education, which is in line with the main European and global trends in higher education. As such, this reform aimed at acquiring the wide support of the higher education community as well as the country policy makers and foreign partners. The main drivers of the reform comprised: the improvement of teaching and learning quality, the diversification of education offers in line with the country priorities and labour market needs, the fostering of the competition within Albanian HEIs and the improvement of HEIs' governance mechanisms through granting necessary autonomy, conditioned only by their performance and accountability.

## 9.3 National Reforms in Higher Education

---

### 9.3.1 2015

---

The reform in higher education and scientific research that started in 2014 culminated in October 2015 with the approval of Law No. 80/2015 "On Higher Education and Scientific Research in higher education institutions in the Republic of Albania".

In March 2015, Albanian Accreditation Agency for Higher Education in cooperation with Accreditation Council started a horizontal individual and comparative assessment process for all third cycle (PhD) study programmes offered by public and private HEIs in the country. Meanwhile, we are still in the process of defining the study areas for PhD programmes and establishing the expert commissions for assessing their content.

### 9.3.2 2014

---

The process of Verification and Control of Legality (VLC), which was concluded in August 2014 resulted in the closure of 18 private HEIs, 1 public HEI, some regional branches of Public HEIs and the suspension of 9 HEIs.

Ministry of Education and Sport signed a cooperation agreement in December 2014 with the British Agency for Quality Assurance (BAQA) to support the institutional assessment of public and private higher education institutions in Albania. The cooperation agreement is not yet finalised at the technical level, however, it is expected to raise the capacities for ensuring quality assurance in Albanian Higher Education, with a special focus on capacities of staff of Albanian Accreditation Agency for Higher Education.

## 10 Legislation

---

Law No.80/2015 "On higher education and scientific research in higher education institutions in the Republic of Albania", *Ligj Nr. 80/2015 "Për Arsimin e lartë dhe kërkimin shkencor në institucionet e arsimit të Lartë në Republikën e Shqipërisë"*. <http://www.arsimi.gov.al/al/newsroom/ligje/ligj-nr-80-2015-per-arsimin-e-larte-dhe-kerkimin-shkencor-ne-institucionet-e-arsimit-te-larte-ne-republiken-e-shqiperise&page=1>

All related bylaws are being prepared

Law No. 10,171, date 22.10.2009 "On Regulated professions in the Republic of Albania" dhe amendimet e viteve 2009k, 2010, 2011, *Ligj Nr.10.171 "Për Profesionet e Rregulluara në Republikën e Shqipërisë"*  
<http://www.arsimi.gov.al/al/newsroom/ligje/ligj-nr-10-171-date-22-10-2009-per-profesionet-e-rregulluara-ne-republiken-e-shqiperisee> .

National Strategy for Employment and Skills 2014-2020 (*Strategjia Kombëtare për Aftësim dhe Punësim*)

[http://www.sociale.gov.al/files/documents\\_files/Strategjia\\_per\\_Punesim\\_dhe\\_Aftesim\\_2014-2020.pdf](http://www.sociale.gov.al/files/documents_files/Strategjia_per_Punesim_dhe_Aftesim_2014-2020.pdf)

Standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European higher education area

[http://www.aaal.edu.al/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=608&Itemid=323&lang=en](http://www.aaal.edu.al/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=608&Itemid=323&lang=en)

Regulation of accreditation system, organization and operation of institutions of external quality assurance  
No.368, date 14.4.2011  
[http://www.aaal.edu.al/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=640&Itemid=362&lang=en](http://www.aaal.edu.al/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=640&Itemid=362&lang=en)





## HOW TO OBTAIN EU PUBLICATIONS

### Free publications:

- one copy:  
via EU Bookshop (<http://bookshop.europa.eu>);
- more than one copy or posters/maps:  
from the European Union's representations ([http://ec.europa.eu/represent\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/represent_en.htm));  
from the delegations in non-EU countries ([http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/index\\_en.htm](http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/index_en.htm));  
by contacting the Europe Direct service ([http://europa.eu/europedirect/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/europedirect/index_en.htm)) or  
calling 00 800 6 7 8 9 10 11 (freephone number from anywhere in the EU) (\*).

(\* ) The information given is free, as are most calls (though some operators, phone boxes or hotels may charge you).

### Priced publications:

- via EU Bookshop (<http://bookshop.europa.eu>).

### Priced subscriptions:

- via one of the sales agents of the Publications Office of the European Union ([http://publications.europa.eu/others/agents/index\\_en.htm](http://publications.europa.eu/others/agents/index_en.htm)).

**Education, Audiovisual & Culture Executive Agency**

Erasmus+ : Higher Education - International Capacity Building (CBHE)

**Write to us:**

Erasmus +  
Rue Joseph II, 59 (J-59 04/33)  
B-1000 Brussels  
Belgium

**Visit us:**

Rue Joseph II, 59  
B-1000 Brussels  
Belgium

**Fax:** +(32 2) 299 4530**Website:**[http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus-plus/library\\_en](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus-plus/library_en)**General questions about CBHE:**[EACEA-EPLUS-CBHE@ec.europa.eu](mailto:EACEA-EPLUS-CBHE@ec.europa.eu)