European Commission

Overview of the Higher Education System

Kosovo[1]

[1] This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence

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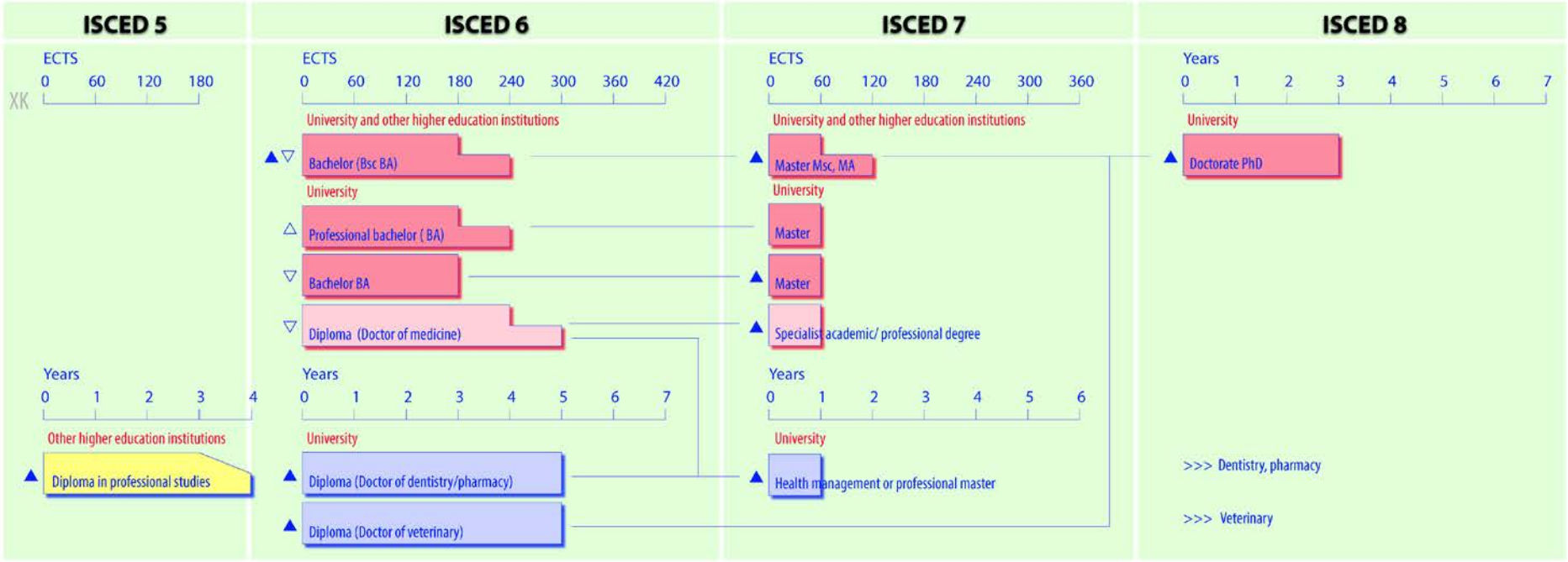
The higher education system in Kosovo



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		▽	△

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1. Overview

Based on Kosovo Agency for Statistics the total land area of Kosovo1 is 10 908 km². It is situated in South-Eastern Europe bordering Albania to the southwest, Montenegro to northwest, Serbia to northeast and Macedonia to the south. Kosovo's structure is characterized by a very young population, where the average age is 30.2 years. According to the data provided by the 2011 census, the total Kosovo population amounts to 1,739,825. The largest ethnic group is Albanians, amounting to 1,616,869 or 92.9% of the total population. The second and third largest ethnic groups are, respectively, Bosnians, with 27,533 inhabitants (1.6%), and Serbs with 25,532 inhabitants (1.5%). They are followed by Turks (18,738 or 1.1%), Ashkali (15,436 or 0.9%) and Egyptians (11,524 or 0.7%). Finally, Roma and Gorani, with 8,824 and 10,265 inhabitants, amount to 0.5% and 0.6% of the total population. A remaining 0.1% defined them as pertaining to other groups.

The right to education is recognised in the Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo, and the Law on Local Self Government (Law Nr. 03/L-040) and is regulated by an extensive legal framework, strategy and action plans adopted by the Kosovo Government. The Law on the Use of Languages in Kosovo (Law No. 02/L-37) provides that Albanian and Serbian shall have the status of an official language and be in equal use with the official languages in municipalities where 5% of the total population of the municipality has that language as mother tongue (art. 2). In addition, a language other than Albanian and Serbian shall have the “status of a language in official use” in municipalities where 1) the community using that language as a mother tongue represents above 3% of the municipality’s total population, or 2) that language has been traditionally spoken in the municipality (art. 2 of the Law on the Use of Languages). It also should be mentioned that there are reserved places for minority community members at Kosovo universities. The Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo as well as the Law on Education in Municipalities (Law.03/L-049 and 03/L-048), promulgated in June 2008, gives to the Municipality of Mitrovica North, enhanced competencies in higher education. According to this law, the University of Mitrovica is an autonomous public institution under the authority of the municipality. At present, this University (with its ten schools: Faculty of Economics, Faculty of Medical Sciences, Faculty of Law, Faculty of Natural Science and Mathematics, Faculty of Technical Sciences, Faculty of Philosophy, Faculty of Arts, Teachers' Training Faculty and Faculty of Sports and Physical Education, and the Faculty of Agriculture) continues to operate under the Serbian legal framework similarly to the three professional higher education institutions where the language of instruction is Serbian: the Higher Technical Professional School, Zvecan – Visoka Tehnicka Skola Strukovnih Studija (270 students) - the Higher Economic Professional School, Leposavic – Visoka Ekonomska Skola Strukovnih Studija (2 500 students) and the Higher Technical Professional School, Urosevac-Zvecan – Visoka Tehnicka Skola Strukovnih Studija (223 students).

The municipal authorities in Mitrovica North are encouraged to work with the Government towards integration of the university and the professional schools in the Kosovo education system, and its participation in regional and international cooperation.

The total number of households in Kosovo is 297,090 while the real GDP growth was 1.2% (2014), and the GDP per capita was € 3,084 (2014).

As potential candidate for EU membership, Kosovo shows a lower-middle-income with a solid economic growth performance since 1999. It is one of the only four countries in Europe that recorded positive growth rates every year during the crisis period 2008–12, averaging 4.5 %.

1.1 Fundamental Principles and National Policies

The right to education is guaranteed in the *Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo* which in its Article 47 [Right to Education] provides that:

1. Every person enjoys the right to free basic education. Mandatory education is regulated by law and funded by public funds,

2. Public institutions shall ensure equal opportunities to education for everyone in accordance with their specific abilities and needs.

The higher education in Kosovo is regulated by the Higher Education Law (Law No.04/L-037), adopted in August 2011 and bylaws derived from it.

The higher education in Kosovo is based in the following principles, as articulated in the Higher Education Law, article 2:

1. Academic freedom, as determined by the *Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo* and its subsequent interpretation by the judiciary;
2. Equality before the law of all bearers of higher education;
3. Equal opportunities for all students and staff in higher education institutions without discrimination;
4. Diversity and quality in programmes of study and in support of learning;
5. Creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship as key objectives of higher education bearers and programmes of study;
6. An European and international focus in all areas of higher education, providing for student and staff mobility and comparability of standards of diploma and qualifications;
7. A commitment to research and scholarship to support teaching and learning and to extend the boundaries of knowledge and understanding within Kosovo and abroad;
8. Active engagement of students, in the individual aspect as well as collectively, in the life of their institution and in their own learning.

The Strategy for the Development of Higher Education 2010-2015 is in its final stage of implementation which has resulted with the promotion of an all-inclusive education policy and the enhancement of a higher education quality assurance system.

The Kosovo Strategic Plan for Higher Education in Kosovo (KESP) for the period 2011-2016 is entering its third and final implementation phase, while the new KESP for the period 2017-2021 is in the process of development.

Another document affecting development of the higher education is the National Research Program approved by the Kosovo Parliament in 2010 which defines measures for research, promotion, and national research priorities for the period 2010-2015.

Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) in cooperation with the Ministry of Trade and Industry, and the Ministry of Economic Development, has drafted the National Innovation Strategy 2013-2020, which greatly supports the triple helix approach bringing together academia, research and industry.

1.2 Lifelong Learning Strategy

All higher education institutions in Kosovo can provide continuous education as a form of lifelong learning at the same levels for which they offer accredited programmes.

Continuous education may serve to complement, deepen and consolidate knowledge and competencies and can be provided in various formats including short courses, summer courses, re-qualification cycles.

Continuous education may lead to a full qualification for students who complete all course units or are exempted from this obligation by the process of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL).

HEIs are active in providing courses for Lifelong Learning (LLL) in disciplines that they offer like in Management, Finance, Information Systems, Computer Applications, Executive Programme Management Engineers, Procurement Management, etc.

In addition, there are carefully led Microsoft IT Academy, Academy CISCO networking courses, courses for certification according to IPMA's (International Association for Project Management) certification programme EOQ (European Organization for Quality), which are proved to be very attractive for industry and implemented according to Personal Certification Standards like ISO 17024.

There is currently not yet an Agency and specific strategy for LLL in Kosovo. The main body for supporting the development and implementation of LLL is the Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education, founded by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology in 2014. The main activities of the Agency are planning, development, organization, implementation, over viewing and improvement of professional education and the adult education system.

1.3 Organization of Private Education

The Law on Higher Education in Kosovo provides that a private institution of higher education can be established by a person, company, foundation, trust or association with a legal personality and a registered office in Kosovo. Such private HEIs can be organised as Colleges, Professional Higher Vocational Schools and Academies.

Based on Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA) there are 29 private higher education institutions accredited (2016).

According to the Law on Higher Education the higher education institutions based on a public-private partnership are considered as public institutions if they are established by law or by decision of the Government and ratified by the Assembly. In all other cases, they are considered as private higher education institutions.

Foreign higher education institutions operating in Kosovo are regulated by the regulations for private higher education institutions. If they want to award a Kosovo degree, they must undergo the same accreditation and licensing procedures as other private higher education institutions. If they deliver education leading to a foreign degree, they have to demonstrate to KAA that the programme and/or institution is accredited in accordance with the regulations of his/her country by a recognized accreditation body.

All licensed higher education institutions in Kosovo, irrespective of their status, shall have:

1. Academic freedom for staff and students, which must be guaranteed in the higher education institutions statutes;

2. The freedom of association and cooperation with other institutions, both at the institutional level and at the level of their main constituting groups such as students, teachers and other categories;

3. Documents for grades and diplomas will be in compliance with the adopted content and format by the Ministry, specified through sub-legal acts;

4. Immunity from the law enforcement bodies, unless specified otherwise by separate law.

Private higher education institutions are responsible for their own funding and must provide evidence of their financial stability before they undergo licensing procedure.

A private institution of higher education, accredited and licensed, may receive funds from the Ministry for specific activities. They may also participate in calls for proposals in higher education and research issued by the Ministry or other public bodies in Kosovo or by international organisations. MEST and KAA are the authorities responsible for monitoring the activities of the private HEIs and regularly report on them.

1.4 National Qualifications Framework

The National Qualifications Framework (NQF)[1] is an important output of the reform of the Education and Training system. It is intended to improve the access to work and further learning by ensuring that qualifications are relevant to employment and learning, and meet the needs of learners, the economy, the education and training institutions.

The National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and the National Qualifications Authority (NQA) are established by the Law on National Qualifications (Law 03/L-060). The National Qualifications Authority has a Governing Board of 13 members drawn from the relevant ministries, universities, social partners, non-governmental organisations and private sector providers. This Board has overall responsibility for the NQF.

The basic structure of the framework is a set of eight levels at which qualifications, modules and any other components of qualifications can be placed. Each of the levels of the NQF is defined by a statement of typical learning outcomes. These outcomes are of three kinds: knowledge, skills and wider competences. Kosovo NQF level descriptors are based on the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) level descriptors, elaborated to show how they will apply in the Kosovo context. In accordance with the Bologna Process and the Dublin descriptors for higher education, short-cycle studies are also offered (NQF level 5). These qualifications may be either vocational or academic and will normally last one or two years of full-time study or its equivalent in part-time study. The compatibility of NQF and EQF levels are shown in the table below:

[1] http://akk-s.net/uploads/national_qualifications_framework.pdf

National Qualifications Framework				
NQF Level	Contains qualifications associated with			EQF ref. level
	Education programmes	**Currently available qualifications (Type)**	**Potential work roles/occupational requirements**	
8	Higher education - Bologna 3rd cycle (Doctorate)	Doctorate (A)	Entry to, or continuing professional development within, senior levels of management or higher level professional occupations	8
7	Higher education - Bologna 2nd cycle (Master)	Master degree (A)		7
6	Higher education - Bologna 1st cycle (Bachelor)	Bachelor degree (A)		6
5	Bologna short cycle and /or post-secondary VET	Title of qualifications still unknown (A), (C) Certificates of non-formal providers (D or E)	Specialist/Trainer/Manager	5
4	Preparation for progression into higher education and/or labour market entry	Matura diploma in general or vocational subjects (B), (C), Vocational education diploma (C)	Qualified Worker/Supervisor	4
3	Preparation for labour market entry (young people and adults)	Vocational education certificate (C) Certificates of non-formal VET providers (D or E)	Semi-skilled Worker	3
2	Progression from lower to upper secondary education (young people), preparation for labour market (adults)	No existing qualifications of formal education system identified Certificates of non-formal providers (D or E)	Low-skilled Worker	2
1	Basic education	No existing qualifications of formal education system identified Certificates of non-formal providers (E)	Minimum level of basic skills, inc. literacy/numeracy, required for entry to lowest level of employment	1

Figure 1. Comparisons between NQF and EQF.

Source: National Qualification Framework of the Republic of Kosovo

The government of Kosovo started to improve and consolidate the legal framework that promotes a more consistent development of skills and competences through education, and has started to enhance the dialogue with social partners, especially businesses/industry, in order to explore their needs for qualifications and skilled workforce. Ministry of Education, Science and Technology has compiled and endorsed a series of strategic documents that promote and support preparation of a skilled workforce to directly respond to the labour market needs. The Kosovo Education Strategic Plan 2011-2016 (KESP) clearly supports such measures in different education sectors, particularly higher education and vocational education and training.

Whereas unemployment rate in Kosovo is 30.9%, it is comparably lower for persons with tertiary qualifications: 18.3% of unemployment for holders of Bachelor degree, 7.4% for holders of Master degree and 2.5% for PhD holders.

In order to improve employability of higher education graduates, many higher education institutions have introduced industrial boards to facilitate input from the industry and contribute to the development of curricula and teaching methods, and also internships for students in local companies. Also, there are coordinated efforts of the Government and the donor community to improve links between education and the job market.

1.5 Statistics on Organization and Governance

In 2014-2015, nearly 110,000 students were registered in HEIs. Public HEIs have the advantage of high competition for vacancies, and consequently they can cherry-pick the best applicants. In 2014, 72,000 students were registered at public HEIs and 45,000 at private HEIs.

More than two fifths (43%) of the overall number of the students were studying Business, Administration and Law. Annual enrolment at HEIs is shown in the Table 1.

Table 1: Enrolment according to degrees and type of HEIs

Academic year	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015
Total number of students enrolled	38,335	38,543	39,904
Bachelor	30,671	30,554	30,864
Master	5,760	5,979	7,109
Doctoral	146	283	196
Type of qualification not reported	1,758	1,727	1,735
Proportion of students in public and private HEIs			
Number of students in public HEIs	22,517	24,371	23,436
Number of students in private HEIs	15,818	14,172	16,468
% Public*	59%	63%	59%

*Source: Data provided by HEIs: * Calculations excluding enrolment in HEIs in Northern Kosovo*

In 2014, almost 40,000 students enrolled in the first year of studies (Table 1). The number of students increased from one academic year to another between 2012 and 2014.

Four-fifths of students enrol in Bachelor studies in 2014-2015 and almost one fifth (18%) of students enrolled in Master Studies. Enrolment in Master studies increased by almost one quarter (23%) from 2012-13 to 2014-2015.

Relatively few students enrol in Doctoral studies - 196 students in 2014-15. The HEIs operating in northern Kosovo had an average intake of 2,000 students in each of the three most recent academic years.

Public HEIs have enrolled about three-fifths of students over the last three academic years (Table 1). While public HEIs enrol the majority of students in BA studies, the intake in MA studies is almost the same in public and private HEIs. About 10% of enrolled students belong to HEIs operating in Northern Kosovo.

The most attractive field of study, for both Bachelor and Master students, at both private and public HEIs, is Business, Administration and Law, at which more than two-fifths of students enrol, and almost two

thirds of students at Master's level at private HEIs. The second most popular field of study is Social sciences, journalism and information, attracting a further 12% of students. Altogether the three social science and humanities study fields (ISCED 02, 03 and 04) take in almost two thirds (64%) of all students (rising to 75% at Master's degree level in private HEIs).

The Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects (ISCED 05 and 06) take in less than one tenth (8.6%) of students (rising to 9.9% at Bachelor degree level in private HEIs due to a concentration in ICT subjects).

Table 2: Proportion of students enrolled in 2014-15 in different fields of study by type of HEIs and level of degree

Field of study	Private		Public		Total
	Bachelor	Master	Bachelor	Master	
01 Education	0.2%	0.0%	9.5%	4.4%	5.0%
02 Arts and humanities	9.3%	7.3%	11.5%	13.9%	10.6%
03 Social sciences, journalism and information	17.5%	12.4%	7.9%	12.6%	12.0%
04 Business, administration and law	43.7%	63.5%	35.4%	48.2%	41.8%
05 Natural sciences, mathematics and statistics	0.0%	0.0%	4.9%	3.8%	2.7%
06 Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)	9.9%	5.0%	3.8%	3.9%	5.9%
07 Engineering, manufacturing and construction	5.4%	3.0%	16.2%	7.9%	10.5%
08 Agriculture, forestry, fisheries and veterinary	0.0%	0.0%	3.2%	1.5%	1.7%
09 Health and welfare	9.1%	5.6%	3.8%	0.9%	5.9%
10 Services	4.9%	3.2%	3.8%	2.9%	4.0%
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Source: HE provision database.

Currently in Kosovo, education programmes are being offered in 29 private higher education institutions accredited by the Kosovo Accreditation Agency.

In total, private HEIs are covering about 35% of the number of students registered in the Higher Education System in Kosovo and the distribution of the students in public and private Institution according to the study areas can be found in Table 3.

Table 3. Percentage of students in public and private institutions per study area.

Area of Study	Public	Private	Total
Education	9.2%	0.0%	6.8%
Humanity and Arts	10.8%	6.4%	9.7%
Social Sciences, Business and Law	48.1%	63.7%	52.1%
Natural Sciences, Mathematic and Computing	5.5%	10.2%	6.7%
Engineering, Production and Construction	14.0%	7.5%	12.3%
Agriculture and Veterinaries	2.6%	0.0%	2.0%
Health and Welfare	6.9%	7.7%	7.1%
Services	2.8%	4.5%	3.3%
Total	100	100	100

Based on the Law on Higher Education, only public universities can offer study programmes that lead to qualifications for pre-university teachers. The Minister has the exclusive right of approval or denial of such programmes.

Academic freedom and institutional autonomy are guaranteed by the Law on Higher Education (Article 13). There is a legal provision that the Government cannot impose any funding conditions restricting academic freedom (Article 22), whereas HEIs are required to have provisions in their Statutes that guarantee academic freedom for staff and students (Article 27). All providers of higher education enjoy full institutional autonomy in line with the Magna Charta principles, including election of governing and management bodies, and arranging their structures and activities through their own rules in conformity with the Law.

Licensing and accreditation are compulsory for all HEIs operating in Kosovo. Whereas license is issued by the MEST and represents the work permit, accreditation represents a formal acknowledgement that an institution of higher education and its programmes fulfils internationally recognized standards, and is issued or recognized by the Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA). Before applying for license to MEST, each private HEI has to undergo an institution and programme accreditation with the KAA.

1.6 Distribution of responsibilities

At central level, the main body responsible for HE policy implementation and for licensing all HE institutions is the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST).

The Law on Education in Municipalities, promulgated in June 2008, gives to the Municipality of Mitrovica North enhanced competencies in Higher Education.

The other main regulatory bodies are the Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA) and the National Qualifications Authority (NQA). The KAA is the independent public agency responsible for accreditation of all public universities and private higher education institutions offering academic degrees, whereas the NQA is a cross-ministry body, in charge of developing the National Qualifications Framework at all levels to comply with the needs of society and economy.

The main document guiding medium-term development of education in Kosovo is the Kosovo Education Strategic Plan 2011-16 (KESP) which has a separate chapter for Higher Education and is in line with the Kosovo Higher Education Strategy 2005-2015 and the requirements of the Bologna Process. The two documents set targets and measures for integration of Kosovo in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), whereas key priorities are: increasing participation and ensuring equal access to higher education, improving the quality of higher education and establishing better links between higher education and labour market. Progress in achieving KESP targets is reviewed on an annual basis by MEST, the higher education institutions and the development partners through a process called the Joint Annual Review and appropriate measures to address concerns planned and formulated in an Aide Memoire which is shared with development partners.

Another important document affecting developments in higher education is the National Research Programme approved by the Kosovo Parliament in 2010 which defines measures for research promotion and national research priorities for the period 2010-2015. Development of human capacity for research and strengthening links between research and society are two strategic objectives of the National Research Programme that establish direct links to Higher Education System. In addition, the joint MEST, Ministry of Trade and Industry, and the Ministry of Economic Development National Innovation Strategy 2013-2020, greatly support the triple helix approach bringing together academia, research and industry.

2 Higher Education Funding

The financing of public higher education institutions is regulated in accordance with the Law on Higher Education in Kosovo.

Public higher education institutions may receive funding from the following sources: allocations made by MEST and the Council for Research; tuition and other fees paid by students; income from commercial and other services; donations, gifts and endowments, and contracts with local, international, public or private bodies involved in teaching, research and consultancy activities.The University of Mitrovica as well as the three above mentioned professional higher education institutions located in the northern part of Kosovo can benefit from the Kosovo budget and international sources of funding as stated in the Law on Education in municipalities. This includes funding from the Government of Serbia which must be transparent and made public, in accordance with the laws of Kosovo.

The private higher education sector is mostly self-financed (mainly by student fees). The newly drafted Law on Higher Education foresees the possibility of funding the private sector from Kosovo budget. The actual financing framework for public higher education institutions in Kosovo is using the same approach, which determines mostly input-based funding. For the moment, only public higher education institutions receive public funds. Private higher education institutions are permitted to determine tuition fees and spend money based on their statutes and development strategy. Although, the main responsibility for financing public higher education lies at the central government, public higher education institutions are encouraged by the Higher Education Law to also generate additional revenues via external funds, namely projects, donations and provision of services through cooperation with industry and society.

Despite the fact that the Kosovo Education Strategy Programme 2011-2016 (KESP) and the Law on Higher Education mention the need for developing a financial methodology to finance the higher education institutions in order to promote effectiveness and accountability, still there is no such strategy in place.

2.1 Public Education

2.1.1 Financial Autonomy and Control

Public universities based on the Higher Education Law have established governance structures to operate autonomously. The Steering Councils and Rectors are responsible for financial planning and financial execution at university level. Universities have internal financial planning and execution procedures, which are set up in their statutes in compliance with the Higher Education Law. The Steering Councils are obliged to report annually to the MEST on the financial implementation within a given fiscal year.

MEST is currently developing a new financing framework for public higher education through the TEMPUS Project “Increasing the Financial Autonomy and Accountability at public higher education (FAITH)"(Project no:544142-TEMPUS-1-2013-1-AT-TEMPUS-SMGR) which is working out on a funding model based on financial outputs and outcomes.

Since 2011, financing in higher education has increased permanently (€ 34.63 mil. in year 2011; € 37.62 mil. in 2012; € 41.02 mil. in 2013; € 50.76 mil. in 2015). Financing is increased as nominal amount, but also as a percentage of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and government budget. In fact, in 2014, this financing amounted to 0.91% of GDP, thus approximated to the EU average of 1.13% (*Source:* Joint Annual Review 2014).

Within four years the nominal amount of public expenditures per student capita has risen only of 2% and this as a result of halving the students’ payments and salaries of the university teachers (€ 689 in 2011; about € 703 in 2015). On the other hand, the student expenditures per capita as a percentage of GDP have continuously declined in the past four years (from 28.50% in the year 2011 to 21.48% in 2015).

As a total, public expenditures on higher education are at the limits of European standards, while expenditures per student capita are declining because of the increasing number of students and the continued growth of the GDP. About 75% of the public higher education institution budget is spent on salaries, while almost all HEIs face substantial lack of academic staff.

2.1.2 Public Higher Education Fees

Kosovo public universities apply rather low student fees, which have recently been further reduced to make higher education more accessible to as many young people as possible. Starting with the academic year 2014/15, the fee per semester at public universities are € 25 for Bachelor level, € 150 for Master level and € 500 for PhD level.

2.2 Private Education

2.2.1 Financial Autonomy and Control

Private higher education institutions are financially independent from the MEST. However they are accountable to the Kosovo financial authorities.

2.2.2 Private Higher Education Fees

Private HEIs apply student fees, which have recently been further reduced to make higher education accessible to as many young people as possible. In average the fee per semester varies from €400 to € 600 for Bachelor and Master levels.

2.3 Financial Support for Learners' Families

In the Kosovo education system there is no institutional measure to support the Learner's families. There are however different schemes for supporting students with various needs. Therefore, fee waivers are provided for newly enrolled and students from low income families (social assistance schemes) and for student with special needs. Also, free access to dormitories and canteens is provided for those students (approximately 1.2% of total students).Particular attention is paid to students from ethnic minority groups which have been evidenced at the University of Prizren and University of Peja (study programmes are offered in Bosnian and Turkish language).

Private Higher Education Institutions also have programmes for fee waiving. Other types of support for students from disadvantaged groups are: reduced accommodation fees and need-based scholarships provided by the municipalities.

2.4 Financial Support for Learners

Public universities have regular programmes of merit-based scholarships for excellent students in bachelor and master studies, for about 2% of the total number of students. Private higher education institutions also provide different types of scholarships and fee waving schemes (no data available).

Students at the public universities are also supported by the Kosovo government as well in the form of stipends. In 2015 MEST granted € 300.000stipends for the students at all levels.

Public universities also reserve places for ethnic minority students in specific study programmes where competition for admission is high, whereas MEST and civil society organizations provide scholarships for the most disadvantaged groups of students – Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians. Inclusiveness is a key word in the Kosovo Education Strategic Plan, whereas target HEIs anticipate measures to ensure equal opportunities for students from disadvantaged groups.

3 Higher Education system structure

The organization of higher education is regulated by the *Law on Higher Education in the Republic of Kosovo* (No. 04/L-037), adopted in August 2011. The higher education system in Kosovo operates through public universities and private higher education institutions (colleges, institutes, higher professional schools and academies). Only accredited institutions of higher education can offer study programmes that lead to a degree or diploma.

A new public provider of higher education may only be created by decision of the Ministry that must be ratified by the Assembly. A new private provider of higher education aspiring to offer higher education qualifications must undergo a preliminary (*ex ante*) accreditation process at the institutional and programme level before it is licensed by MEST. The statutes of all institutions named "University" must be ratified by the Assembly, while the statutes of other types of HEI have to be approved solely by the Minister of Education.

Higher education is open to all students of Kosovo. After completion of upper secondary school all students have to undergo the Matura exam, which is regulated by the Law on Final Examinations and State Matura Examination. Students who successfully pass the Matura exam have the right to enter higher education.

Although, Kosovo has not officially joined the Bologna Process, since the introduction of Bologna Reforms by the University of Prishtina in 2001/2002, all national legislations have served to better implement and make operational the Bologna reform objectives and principles in Kosovo. As a result of the implementation of these reforms in higher education, all institutions of higher education currently

implement the ECTS credit system, the three-cycle degree system, student and staff mobility, the diploma supplement and a quality assurance system. The annual full-time student workload is estimated at 1500 hours, making one ECTS credit point equal to 25 hours of planned instruction.

In terms of degree structures, higher education is organized as follow:

- **First level** – three (3) to four (4) years of studies in which the student reaches respectively 180 or 240 ECTS, and obtains a Bachelor Degree.
- **Second level** – one (1) to two (2) years of studies after completion of the first level in which the student reaches respectively 60 or 120 ECTS and obtains a Master Degree.
- **Third level** – programme of doctorate studies with an academic and independent research scientific character. Doctoral studies include minimum 3 years of study or 180 ECTS.
- Any other post-secondary education at level 5, 6, 7 and 8 of the European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning, for which credits may be given (ECTS).

The University of Mitrovica organizes all study programmes according to the following levels: Bachelor, Master, and Doctoral; apart from the Faculty of Medical Sciences, which has Bachelor, Integrated Academic and Doctoral studies. The curriculum reform, guided by the Bologna process, has reached into every department and faculty since 2009.

3.1 Types of Higher Education Institutions

According to the Law on Higher Education, higher education institutions are classified in the following categories:

- **University** is an institution of higher education which offers educational, scientific, research/artistic and professional programmes in at least five different subject areas and who has issued at least one graduate with an accredited doctorate in each of these programmes.
- **University College** is an institution of higher education, which offers Bachelor, Master and Doctoral studies in at least three study areas. University Colleges offer professional and academic oriented programmes.
- **College** is an institution of higher education which offers professional or academic programmes at Bachelor and Master level.
- **Higher professional schools** offer professional courses in one or more professional fields at Bachelor level, including programmes at level V according to NQF.
- **Academies** provide higher education and creative activity in specific areas of arts, sports or other professional areas at Bachelor and Master level, including programmes at level V according to NQF.

3.2 First Cycle Programmes

Bachelor programmes are offered in all types of HEIs and take 3-4 years (180 - 240 ECTS credits). A bachelor thesis is required at most of the Bachelor programmes. Depending on the discipline, accredited bachelor programmes can lead to a Bachelor of Sciences (BSc.), Bachelor of Arts (BA), Bachelor of Law (LL.B.), Bachelor of Engineering (B.Eng.) Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) or Bachelor of Fine Arts (B.F.A.).

3.2.1 Branches of Study

Main branches of higher education studies according to ESAC are the following:

- Business studies and management sciences
- Law
- Social Sciences
- Art and Design
- Engineering and Technology, etc.

3.2.2 Admission Requirements

After completion of upper secondary school all students have to undergo the Matura exam, which is regulated by the Law on Final Examinations and State Matura Examination. Students who successfully pass the Matura exam have the right to enter higher education.

All public universities organize entrance exams that are usually organized in two periods of time, in June and in September (the latter applies only to academic units of Universities which have not reached the quota of foreseen students). Quotas of students are proposed by Universities and are approved by MEST. Ranking of students is based on the Matura exam and based on the exams results.

Only few private higher education institutions organize entrance exams. Usually the students are admitted to Bachelor studies only after successful completion of the Matura exam. The quotas are determined by the HEIs themselves in the majority of cases, unless the number of students is restricted by the Kosovo Accreditation Agency in certain fields like Architecture or Medicine.

3.2.3 Curriculum

Curricula in the majority of higher education institutions for Bachelor studies are organized in 3 years and only in few cases in 4 years. BA programs that the University of Mitrovica offers last for 4 years. Curricula of HEIs are evaluated and accredited continuously by the Accreditation Agency and therefore are largely harmonised with curricula of European Universities. All curricula clearly indicate the number of mandatory subjects, the number of elective subjects, the number of teaching hours and exercises, the number of ECTS, calculation of ECTS and the names of professors. Moreover, all HEIs must clearly describe the learning outcomes for every module.

3.2.4 Teaching Methods

Generally there is the requirement that teaching methods should be clearly described for every module when HEIs undergo external evaluation by the Accreditation Agency. HEIs must describe the teaching and learning methods, the evaluation methods and criteria to pass, the ratio between the theoretical and practical part of teaching, and the basic literature to be used in each module. At public Universities, based on the internal rules, lectures are organised in large groups (in those study programmes that allow, for i.e. Law Faculty) of students or small groups with a minimum of eight students (i.e. Medical Faculty).At the private colleges, students are divided in smaller groups that consist of maximum 30 students. Subjects are delivered through lectures, exercises, class work, presentations and seminars.

3.2.5 Progression of Students

Students are able to pass from the first year to the second year, only if they have completed 9 out of 10 subjects. If students fail to pass exams, they do not usually need to register the subjects again and attend lectures, but they are given the right to attend the exam in the upcoming examination term. Students can

attend lectures of the second year. However they cannot undergo exams of the second year unless they have completed 9 out of the 10 first year subjects. Students registered in three years Bachelor programmes, have to complete their studies within six years maximum, otherwise they will lose the status of students.

Bachelor degrees are completed with a Bachelor thesis which students have to defend in front of a commission. Rules and regulations concerning the Bachelor thesis are described in the statutes of each HEI and are subject of an evaluation by the Accreditation Agency. Only after successful completion of a Bachelor degree, students are able to register to Master studies. However, students with 180 ECTS Bachelor degrees cannot be registered in some Academic Units of Universities for Master studies which require students to have a 240 ECTS Bachelor degree (Faculty of Education).

3.2.6 Employability

There is no formal regulation at national level concerning the employment of students after their graduation. This depends from each HEI and how they have organised this issue with companies (e.g. how many cooperation agreements they have with companies). Usually all HEIs send their students for internships at private companies or public institutions, depending on their field of studies, and depending on the number of ECTS that are required with the curricula.

In the private education sector, however, the relationship with the employers is more advanced especially with programmes offering certain competences i.e. in business management, IT, language.

3.2.7 Student Assessment

Assessment methods are usually prescribed in every subject syllabus and are delivered to the students during the first week of the semester. The most common forms of assessment of students are exams. However, midterm exams can be organised consisting of 50%, and other elements are taken into consideration such as participation of students with usually 10%, Paper presentation with usually 20%; seminars with usually 20%. Student grades are evaluated from grades 5 (failed) to 10 (excellent).

3.2.8 Certification

Higher Education Institutions issue the degrees for their students. Students receive their degree after completion of the studies, including all information concerning the study programme attended, the academic degree, the ECTS reached, the level according to the National Qualifications Authority. Students can also receive diploma supplements.

3.3 Short-Cycle Higher Education

Within the public higher education system there are no short cycle programmes. However, there is one short cycle study programme accredited at one Private College (UBT). It consists of 120 ECTS and it is oriented to professional studies. After the completion of this study programme, students receive a Certificate instead of a Diploma and therefore these students are not able to register at standard Master programmes.

3.4 Second Cycle Programmes

In Kosovo, Master programmes last 1-2 years (60-120 ECTS credits) depending on the length of the Bachelor studies. Master programmes can be provided at Universities, University Colleges and Colleges. A Master thesis work is required in all master programmes. Accredited Master programmes, depending on the discipline, can lead to a Master of Science (M.Sc.), a Master of Arts (M.A.), a Professional Master, a Master of Laws (L.L.M), a Master of Engineering (M. Eng.) or a Master of Fine Arts (M.F.A.).

3.4.1 Branches of Study

Studies in Master level can be either academic studies or professional studies. The main branches of higher education studies according to ESAC are the following:

- Business studies and management sciences
- Law
- Social Sciences
- Art and Design
- Engineering and Technology, etc.

3.4.2 Admission Requirements

In order to register to a Master programme, students need to have a Bachelor degree. Students who have completed a three-year study programme with 180 ECTS register to a two-year Master study programme (120 ECTS). Whereas students who have completed a four year study programme with 240 ECTS register to a one-year Master programme (60 ECTS).

Public universities organise entrance exams for students. Master students, in addition, must pass an English language proficiency test. Quotas of students are proposed by Universities and are approved by MEST. Ranking of students is based on the exams results.

In only few private institutions of higher education entrance exams are organized. Usually the students are admitted to Master studies only after successful completion of a Bachelor degree. The quotas are determined by the HEIs themselves in the majority of cases, unless the number of students is restricted by the Accreditation Agency in certain fields like Architecture or Medicine.

3.4.3 Curriculum

In the majority of higher education institutions, curricula for Master studies are organized in two (2) years study programmes, and only in few cases in one (1) year. MA studies at the University of Mitrovica last for two semesters (1 year) with the only exception of the Faculty of Medicine which has integrated academic studies of BA and MA (4+2). Curricula are evaluated and accredited continuously by the Accreditation Agency and therefore are largely harmonised with curricula of European Universities. All curricula should clearly indicate the number of mandatory subjects, the number of elective subjects, the number of lessons hours and exercises, the number of ECTS, the method for calculating the ECTS and the names of professors. Moreover, all HEIs must clearly describe the learning outcomes for every module.

3.4.4 Teaching Methods

In contrast to the first cycle studies teaching methods in the MA programmes differ largely. Teaching methods at Master level put the emphasis on theory, independent work, individual and group work, mentorship and coaching in a form of seminars and research projects. Text books and advanced literature is being used, including audio /video tools. The teaching and learning methods, evaluation methods and passing criteria reflect the ratio between the theoretical and practical part of teaching and the literature to be used in each module. At public Universities and private education institutions lectures are organised in smaller groups in comparison with Bachelor programmes.

3.4.5 Progression of Students

Similarly to the first cycle of studies, at MA level students are able to pass from the first year to the second year only if they have completed 9 out of 10 subjects. If students fail to pass exams, they do not usually need to register for the subject again and attend lectures, but they are given the right to enter in the exam in the upcoming examination terms.

3.4.6 Employability

Though there is no formal regulation at national level concerning the employment of students after their graduation, most of the students that are attending MA studies are already employed or have already started their internships. Some of the public higher education institutions have initiated negotiations with public and private organisations leading to memorandums of understanding for practical placements of students, while for some private higher education institutions this cooperation is already an established practice.

3.4.7 Student Assessment

Assessment methods are usually explained in the syllabus corresponding to each subject, which are provided to the students in the first week of the semester. The forms of assessment of students are exams, midterm exams, seminars and evaluation of research projects. Students are expected to carry out a research project based on which they can receive a passing grade. Student grades are expressed from grade 5 (failed) to 10 (excellent).

3.4.8 Certification

Higher Education Institutions issue the degrees for their students. Students receive their degree after completion of the studies, with all information concerning the study programme attended, the academic degree, the ECTS reached, the level according to the National Qualifications Authority. Students can also receive diploma supplements.

3.5 Programmes outside the Bachelor and Master Structure

Programmes outside the Bachelor and Master structure are only study programmes in specific domains and correspond to the so called integrated study programmes (Faculty of Medicine and Faculty of Veterinary and Agriculture). These study programmes consist of 5 years with 300 ECTS/ 360 ECTS. After completion of these studies, students are able to continue with PhD programmes.

3.6 Third Cycle (PhD) Programmes

3.6.1 Organisation of Doctoral Studies

Postgraduate or doctoral levels are programmes with an academic and independent research scientific character. The length of this cycle is at least 3 years or 180 ECTS. All students that have collected at least 300 ECTS in previous studies can register to doctoral studies. Exceptions to this study scheme are studies in medicine, dentistry, pharmacy and veterinary medicine which are organised in an integrated form (300-360 ECTS). After completion of these studies students qualify to register to doctoral studies.

According to the Law on Higher Education, PhD studies can be offered at Universities and University colleges. The University of Prishtina is accredited for offering PhD studies in 26 programmes .Also, the University of Mitrovica offers 14 accredited PhD study programs. Private Higher Education Institutions are not yet accredited to offer this level due to the failure to meet the formal criteria prescribed by the Law on Higher Education.

3.6.2 Admission Requirements

Conditions for the registration of students in PhD studies are specified in the statute of the Universities. There is a public announcement which is organised by the Universities. Students eligible for admission are graduates with a Master degree in the respective area and graduates from integrated medical programmes (5 – 6 years).

3.6.3 Status of Doctoral Students/Candidates

All students who have finished a Master degree have the right to be enrolled in Doctoral studies.

3.6.4 Supervision Arrangements

According to the statute of Universities, the student proposes the mentor and the research topic and a commission for thesis assessment is appointed within one month after the student has submitted his/her proposal. The mentor shall be selected among regular and associated professors of the respective area, and he/ she should have regular working relations with the Universities. Students may propose a co-mentor from another University as well.

3.6.5 Employability

There is no formal regulation at national level concerning the employment of students after their completion of studies at PhD level.

3.6.6 Assessment

Students are asked to do individual / and group research independently, during which the students will express their creativity and critical thinking. Students will prepare a research paper, which will be the basis for their evaluation. During the preparation of the research paper, students will be required to make a short presentation in class regarding the research topic, which will be discussed with other students. The research paper should be original and creative using various sources (and prominent authors). These two criteria will be the basis for assessing the quality of the paper. The topic of the research papers are selected in cooperation with the professor of the course. The format of the papers must meet the contemporary requirements of scientific papers, according to the system of reference "Chicago Manual Style".

3.6.7 Certification

Higher Education Institutions issue the degree for their students. Students receive their degree after completion of studies, with all information concerning the study programme attended, the academic degree, the ECTS reached, the level according to the National Qualifications Authority.

4 Teachers and Education Staff

4.1 Initial Education for Academic Staff in Higher Education

Initial training for higher education academic staff is regulated by the Law on Higher Education and, more specifically, by the higher education institutions statutes and rules.

There are no specific programmes for initial education of academic staff in Higher Education. The admission criteria for those planning to pursue academic career is regulated by the higher education institutions statutes. The PhD degree, the publication of scientific papers and the experience in teaching are required for those applying for initial academic staff positions.

However, the Centre for Excellence in Teaching at the University of Prishtina offer courses about teaching methods in Higher Education aiming at promoting a culture of academic excellence and providing professional development opportunities to all faculty and teaching assistants at UP and other HEIs.

4.2 Conditions of Service for Academic Staff Working in Higher Education

The academic staff in Higher Education Institutions is involved in teaching, research and other artistic creations. The Statute of a public Higher Education Institution contains provisions relating to the appointment, tenure, promotion, discipline, suspension, dismissal and discharge from work or retirement. Other service conditions of staff at all higher education institutions can be determined by the Governing Council of the provider. Each provider shall establish appropriate consultative frameworks with officially recognized unions composed by staff representatives and the Ministry of Education.

The recruitment of staff is organised at university level. Faculties submit their requests and the vacancies are then advertised. An evaluation committee reviews applications, interviews candidates and reports to the Faculty Council. The Senate takes the final decision.

Academic staff includes the following categories:

- Full professors
- Associate professors
- Assistant professors
- Lecturers
- Teaching assistants

In the academic year 2011/2012 the University of Prishtina comprised 1 877 academics and 398 administrative staff, whereas the University of Mitrovica 711 academics and 391 administrative staff.

Private higher education institutions use their own procedures for recruiting staff as stated in their statutes.

4.2.1 Planning Policy

No planning policy has yet been established in terms of teacher supply and demand in higher education.

4.2.2 Entry to the Profession

The recruitment of new staff in higher education is carried out through an open recruitment procedure, conducted by the Higher Education Institutions, as proposed by the relevant academic unit. The Higher Education Institutions determine their recruitment policy and specific requirements in accordance with the Law on Higher Education. The criteria for appointment and re-appointment and related matters are specified in the Statute of each higher education provider. They should be open to scrutiny by KAA and comply with the legislation in force for labour relations in Kosovo.

The statute of a higher education provider regulates the participation of international experts in reviewer committees for the selection process of academic staff.

According to the 2015 data from the Kosovo Accreditation Agency, the public higher education institutions comprises 1,157regular full time academic staff, while 1,302 staff members are contracted as external academic staff. In the private higher education institutions regular academic staff amounts to 1,027 individuals.

4.2.3 Professional Status

The academic staff status is regulated by the applicable legislation on civil servants who are appointed in accordance with the general employment legislation.

However, their term of appointment, duration of contracts, upgrading and dismissal is regulated by the respective statutes of the higher education institutions.

Academic staff is required to act and perform their obligations in compliance with the professional code of ethics as provided in the statutes of their respective higher education institution.

4.2.4 Salaries

The general MEST financial policy is fixed. All public higher education institutions are implementing a fixed salary scale policy.

4.2.5 Working Time and Holidays

Full time employees work 40 hours per week with all other specificities being determined by their contract and class schedules, issued by the higher education institution. The institution determines the structure and schedule of teachers' annual and weekly obligations. Staff members are entitled to a minimum of 20 vacation days per year, which are used up during collective holidays and breaks which are determined by the academic year calendar. A staff member may use paid absence days in situations determined by the institution (professional development, conferences, illness, maternity leave etc.).

4.2.6 Promotion, Advancement

Universities and Colleges may appoint the following categories of academic staff: regular Professor, associate Professor, assistant Professor and University Assistant.

Regular, Associate and Assistant Professors should have completed a Doctorate degree and published a certain number of papers in peer review international journals. Regular and Associate Professors should also be able to demonstrate successful academic leadership of master and doctoral theses, ability in curriculum design, pedagogic innovation, research and publication. They should have an extensive amount of published scientific papers or other publications of considerable scientific relevance in their field of expertise, along with other contributions to science and higher education quality.

A visiting professor from a foreign higher institution may be employed without a recruitment procedure.

Other providers may appoint the following categories of staff: professor; assistant Professor; lecturer and assistant lecturer. The criteria for all titles except Assistant and Lecturer shall include at least a Master's degree or equivalent in the scientific domain of the nominee.

Most commonly, the higher education academic staff is employed on a full time basis. However, the duration of their employment may vary in accordance with their respective titles:

- Teaching assistants and lecturer: fixed-term employment for 3 years;
- Assistant Professor: fixed-term employment for 4 years;
- Associate Professor: fixed-term employment for 4 years;
- Full Professor: permanent position.

4.2.7 Retirement and Pensions

Conditions and criteria for recognition of the right to age contribution–payer pension is regulated by the Law on Pension Schemes financed by the government. The age of retirement of academic staff is sixty–five (65). However, a retired professor may be assigned the title 'Professor Emeritus' which would give him/her the right to teach and deal with scientific work until the age of 70 year. But, the number of academic staff that can be promoted to professor emeritus is very small.

4.3 Continuing Professional Development for Academic Staff Working in Higher Education

4.3.1 Organisational Aspects

The professional development of academic staff is mainly based on scientific work. Professional development in the form of published scientific papers and other relevant publications remains very important for career promotion. Professional development is organized in the form of specialization, work towards a higher level of formal education, symposia, courses, study theses, congresses, seminars, conferences, international mobility or similar activities.

However, the main challenge for professional development remains that the higher education institutions are not adequately equipped for professional development of their staff, including the time for the completion of such engagement within regular working hours.

So far, foreign grants (fellowships, post-doc grants and other grants) are the main support for professional development in Higher Education.

The Centre for Teaching Excellence (CTE), at the University of Prishtina contributes to academic staff professional development with regards to the improvement of pedagogical aspects in teaching and learning. It offers different courses which aim to ensure excellence in teaching through the promotion of a culture for academic excellence. In this Centre, domestic and international coaches provide professional development courses related to teaching, assessment, mentoring and leadership in higher education and other related modules.

4.3.2 Incentives for Participation in Continuing Professional Development Activities

Institutions are responsible for covering expenses related to professional development for their staff. MEST regularly approves funds for research work and science development, for which academic staff may apply. A special fund is available to young researchers who recently joined the academic community (PhD students, assistants and associate professors).

After five years of employment, the higher institution may approve one year of paid absence for teacher's professional development and scientific research purposes. The institution is obliged to approve unpaid absence for the purpose of professional development, especially for participation in scientific projects and preparation of PhD or specialization thesis.

5 Management and Other Education Staff for Higher Education

5.1 Requirements for Appointment

The University Governing Board and the Senate are the main governing bodies of public universities pursuant to the Law on Higher Education (Law 2011/L-037). The chief academic and administrative officer and the person in charge of the University is the Rector, who is responsible to the University Board for the effective, efficient and economic operation of the University. The Rector is elected by a Governing Board. The Rector is assisted by Vice Rectors and a Secretary General.

The University Board is accountable to MEST for the proper and efficient use of the funds allocated to the University by ministries or any other public source. Usually, the University Board consists of nine voting members, four of them nominated by the Ministry and five members elected by the Senate among the academic staff of the University. Ruled out from election for membership of the Board are the persons holding the following positions: a. Rector, Vice-Rector, Dean, Vice-Dean; b. Members of the Senate; c. the Secretary General, the Secretaries of the faculties.

The Rector is elected by the Governing Board. The Secretary General is the highest executive administrative officer of the University, responsible to the Rector for the efficient, economic and effective administration at all levels of the University. He is the head of the office of the central administration of the University.

The Senate of the University is the highest academic body of the University, consisting of the following voting members: 1. Rector; 2. Vice-Rectors; 3. Deans of all academic units; 4. one member elected by and from the academic staff in each academic unit; 5. seven members elected by the student parliament from among the regular students of the University; 6. two members elected by and from the non-academic staff.

The Senate is responsible for:

- The general strategic issues relating to research, scholarships, teaching and courses at university, including: a. the criteria for the admission of students; b. the appointment of teaching staff; c. policies and procedures for the assessment and examination of the academic performance of students; d. the general outline of study programmes; e. the provision for lifelong learning; f. the academic standards and the validation and review of courses; g. quality assurance and evaluation; h. the procedures for the award of qualifications and honorary academic titles; i. the procedures for the exclusion of students for academic or other reasons;

- The development of strategies for the academic activities of the university, the resources needed to support them and the provision of advice thereon to the rector and the board.

- The development of a policy for the protection of the intellectual property of the University and its commercial utilisation;

According to the statutes of each institution, additional bodies may be established to support and advise the existing councils and the Rector.

At the academic unit level, the Dean, Vice Deans, are the managers while the scientific council, the academic council and different committees are contributing to the functioning of the unit.

5.2 Conditions of Service

At the public higher education institutions a candidate to become rector has to have the following qualifications: a. proven academic teaching and scientific experience, equal to a full professor but with no requirement of holding the position of a full professor; b. proven managerial skills.

The Rector proposes a list of nominees for Vice-Rectors from among the professors of the University after having consulted with the Senate. The mandate of the Vice-Rectors shall be linked with that of the Rector, with a possible single renewal.

The Secretary General of the University has to meet the following requirements: 1. Academic degree (Master or equivalent with a minimum of four years of study) preferably in the fields of law, economics or social sciences; 2. Appropriate qualifications and experience; 3. Proven organisational and managerial

skills; 4. Sufficient knowledge about educational, artistic and research processes; 5. Minimum of five years of relevant working experience.

The person may not be selected for any of the managing positions if they are convicted of a criminal offense, plagiarism of higher education documents, discrimination, bribery or have broken the rules of the professional code of ethic. They are also dismissed if anything mentioned above occurs during their mandate, or if they fail to perform duties required by their position.

The modality and selection procedures of the managing bodies at the private higher education institutions are defined by each institution.

6 Quality Assurance in Higher Education

6.1 Responsible Bodies

According to the Law on Higher Education, the Kosovo Accreditation Agency (KAA) is an independent agency responsible for assessing and promoting the quality of higher education in Kosovo. Through professional and transparent processes of quality assessment and quality audit and by other means deemed appropriate, which meet international best practice standards, KAA ensures that the standards and quality of higher education in Kosovo meet the demands and expectations of the European Network of the Association for quality assurance in higher education.

Kosovo Accreditation Agency is a full member of ENQA and licensed from the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. KAA consists of an Accreditation Board, respectively by the State Council of Quality, which is the decision making and policy making body of KAA. The Board is composed of 9 experienced professionals in higher education, with proven experience in science and research.

The Kosovo Accreditation Agency has a mandate:

- To carry out the accreditation and re-accreditation of public and private higher education institutions and their academic and research programmes;
- To supervise the accredited institutions.

KAA's aims:

- To open the sector of higher education for providers from Kosovo and abroad;
- To provide quality assurance for all institutions of higher education;
- To promote, improve and develop the quality of the higher education sector;
- To create transparency and comparability in the interest of providers, students and the labour market;
- To encourage innovative practice and content in higher education;
- To ensure the comparability of degrees from Kosovo higher education institutions with those awarded by international programmes;
- To implement the objectives for the integration of Kosovo into the European Higher Education Area and to contribute to its development.

KAA supports the implementation of quality assurance measures at two levels: internal and external. For internal quality assurance, KAA works closely with HEIs and supports them to develop and maintain relevant structures and processes. All higher education institutions in Kosovo are required to have quality assurance offices and instruments of internal evaluation. QA guidelines have been developed for all HEIs.

HEIs are required to produce self-evaluation reports and submit them along with applications for programme or institutional accreditation, which is in full compliance with the ENQA Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area. The Tempus programme played an important role in establishing a Quality Assurance culture in Kosovo and many Tempus projects implement QA principles in line with EU standards at different HEIs in Kosovo.

6.2 Approaches and Methods for Quality Assurance

The external evaluation process of quality, respectively the accreditation process is foreseen by the Law on Higher Education and by the Administrative Instructions on Accreditation of HEIs which were approved by MEST in 2011. According to the legislative framework, the accreditation process is a periodic activity of KAA. It is based on the evaluation of documents submitted by the applicant institution (Self-Evaluation Report) and the findings during the site visit of a team of experts. The members of the expert panel are international experts who have been trained by partner agencies in Europe and abroad.

The main parameters that are evaluated are the following:

- Academic Freedom
- Scope and Diversity
- Research at the institution
- Teaching Staff
- Procedures for selecting the teaching staff
- Quality Assurance procedures
- Study plans
- Facilities and equipment
- Financing
- Development plan

All decisions for accreditation are taken by the State Council of Quality and serve as a precondition for granting the licence by MEST.

7 Educational Support and Guidance

All higher education institutions in Kosovo have their own Offices for Quality Assurance and their quality assurance system is defined by regulations. Those are open for review by KAA. HEIs have also career offices and information offices which provide information to students about their studies. Quality Assurance Offices are the offices responsible to organise surveys and other evaluations for students and academic staff, whose results serve to improve further the quality.

7.1 Support Measures for Learners in Higher Education

There are no formal measures for learners in higher education.

7.2 Definition of the Target Group(s)

No information available.

7.3 Specific Support Measures

No information available.

7.4 Guidance and Counselling in Higher Education

No information available.

7.5 Academic Guidance

Academic issues at most higher education institutions are regulated by the statutes or by the regulations for academic studies. HEIs provide academic guidance for students for preparing their BA or MA thesis or for other works and papers.

7.6 Psychological Counselling

There are no formal or recognised psychological counselling offered at HEIs in Kosovo.

7.6.1 Career Guidance

Not all academic units' in higher education institutions in Kosovo have their career offices. However, the majority of HEIs provide a wide range of support and assistance to graduated students. The offices provide various courses enabling alumni to prepare themselves professionally and become skilful in searching jobs. Offices are responsible to inform graduates about available jobs, studies and international mobility opportunities and maintain contact with the students for a longer period of time.

So far, the activities of the career offices have been office based and online based. Promotion material has been developed and distributed.

8 Mobility and internalization in Higher Education

8.1 Student Mobility

One of the eight principles on which Higher Education in Kosovo is based calls for European and international focus of Higher Education and promotion of student and staff mobility. HEIs targeted in the KESP 2011-16 make also a specific reference to internationalisation by offering international study programmes and promoting the mobility of staff and students.

Kosovo participates in European mobility schemes like the Central European Exchange Programme for University Students (CEEPUS), Tempus, Erasmus Mundus and Erasmus+ Learning Mobility, and also benefits from various forms of bilateral and multi-lateral support. However, the opportunities for the mobility of staff and students remain limited.

The major obstacles for outgoing mobility are the restricted number of scholarships available, the visa requirements and the insufficient knowledge of English among academic staff and students. For incoming mobility, the main obstacle is the language issue. For example, Kosovo students benefited from 331 out of 4,163 mobilities funded by the Erasmus Mundus Programme in the seven Western Balkans Countries; on the other hand Kosovo hosted only 5 of the 398 mobilities of EU nationals to the Western Balkans Countries.

A better ratio of outgoing and incoming mobilities is achieved in CEEPUS, where, in five years, 58 Kosovo staff and students have benefited from mobility to participating countries, whereas Kosovo had 46 incoming mobilities. In the last few years, special attention has been paid to support mobility of PhD students. MEST has provided each year 30 scholarships for PhD students from Kosovo enrolled in top-

ranked world universities, whereas the Austrian-funded project Higher-Kos supported 13 PhD students to complete their studies abroad.

To improve the mobility perspectives, MEST has encouraged the introduction of joint degree programmes and programmes taught in English, whereas the Higher Education Reform Experts under Tempus and the Erasmus+ programmes have facilitated discussion on the topic of international cooperation and joint degrees. The summer schools offered by HEIs, where courses are taught in English, area good example of incoming mobility of academic staff and students from all over the world. It is anticipated that the participation in the new EU Erasmus+ programme, will provide more mobility opportunities for staff and students.

8.2 Academic Staff Mobility

Kosovo higher education institutions have participated in the Tempus Programme since 2001. Those projects have resulted in the modernisation, initiation and implementation of structural reforms, capacity building activities and curriculum development. Much of the academic staff has benefited from those projects in building their capacities, through training, enhancement of research and teaching capacities through mobilities, study visits and exchange of experience with other EU and regional HEIs.

In addition, Kosovo participates in European mobility schemes like CEEPUS, Erasmus Mundus and Erasmus+ Credit Mobility, and benefits also from various forms of bilateral and multi-lateral support (see 8.1).

8.3 Other Dimensions of Internationalization in Higher Education

8.3.1 European, Global and Intercultural Dimension in Curriculum Development

To ensure the integrity of the process, external evaluation is carried out by impartial international experts hired by KAA, To strengthen international recognition of the standards and quality in the system, KAA has become member of the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) and the Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (CEENQA). For the sake of accreditation of programmes leading to EU regulated professions (architecture, medicine, pharmacy, nursing, etc.), Kosovo HEIs need to demonstrate that proper standards have been applied.

An extensive international support and expertise (in coordination with the Council of Europe and the European University Association) has served to further implement and make operational the Bologna Process objectives and principles and the modern European Standards regarding the autonomous operation of universities in terms of global budgeting, transparent operational processes and internal organisation, quality assurance and evaluation, modern management systems.

8.3.2 Partnerships and Networks

HEIs in Kosovo cooperate also closely with many national and international partners.

The main goal of this cooperation is the transfer of knowledge (know-how) and technology. As a result of the cooperation with international partners, HEIs until now have cooperated with more than one hundred international academics from the USA, Europe and South-East Asia, working with Kosovar students and academic staff. Cooperation with these partners makes it possible for the students to expand their academic knowledge, as well as developing research and development projects which are of great benefit to the industrial and economic development of Kosovo.

Furthermore, Kosovo students are given opportunities for study visits at some of the partners abroad, depending on the area of study and research.

Some of HEIs have established an Industry Advisory board which provide advises on the needs of industry and how well current graduates meet these needs.

Other formal links consist of the appointment of representatives from companies that are likely to recruit graduates from the HEIs.

Staff members maintain both formal and informal links with companies and other external agencies – research and professional links, sitting on boards of external agencies, providing consultancy and advice, etc.

8.4 Bilateral Agreements and Worldwide Cooperation

8.4.1 Bilateral Agreements

Kosovo has established a number of partnerships with the international community. These include:

- An agreement between the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Albania and MEST (2006 and 2011)
- An agreement between the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Albania and MEST, emphasizing collaborative scientific activities (2006)
- An umbrella memorandum between MEST and the Federal Minister of Education, Science and Culture and the Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Austria in which several Research, Technology Development and Innovation (RTD) relevant provisions were included, containing support for the Kosovo Centre for International Higher Education, Research and Technology Cooperation, the Council of Research and Technology, the Centre for Innovation and Technology Transfer and support for research projects (2006)
- Based upon the institutional partnership agreement with Austria, the MEST established (i) the Centre for Innovation and Technology Transfer (CITT) to support science-industry relations and (ii) the Centre for International Higher Education, Research and Technology Cooperation (K-CIRT). The latter is supposed to support the participation of Kosovar researchers and students in international and European programmes, such as CEEPUS, FP7, Horizon 2020.
- Many Bilateral Cooperation agreements with EU and International HEIs which include joint study programmes, double degree programmes, joint research and development structures, such as the international relations study programme between UBT College and the University of Warsaw, the Centre for Modelling and Simulation at UBT College, the UBT-SAP University Alliance, etc.

8.4.2 Cooperation and Participation in Worldwide Programmes and Organisations

Kosovo HEI's are involved in the development of international competence baselines for different professions like Project Management, Quality Management and based on this, the development of a scheme for personal certification.

Academic Staff and Institutions of Kosovo are part of International Organisations such as the International Project Management Association, the European Organisation for Quality, International Federation for Automatic and Control (IFAC), the International Federation of Accounting and Control, the European Federation of National Simulation Association (EUROSIM), the European Association of Planning Schools (AESOP), etc.. Those memberships support the participation of staff and students in different

activities like international congresses and conferences, summer schools, entrepreneurship and innovation, technical committees, etc.

The transformation of the higher education system in Kosovo occurs in a context of transition. Since 2001, the Tempus programme has been implemented through two overall long-term processes, the Stabilization and Association process and the process of building the bridge to the European Higher Education Area according to the national priorities.

Although Kosovo has not yet officially joined the Bologna Process, its implementation is the main trend in terms of higher education policy. Implementation of the Bologna principles and the recognition of the Tempus programme as a tool for reform and modernization of the higher education sector was the main priority of the Kosovo Strategy for Higher Education 2015.

The Tempus programme supported the modernisation of Higher Education by establishing an area of cooperation with the European Union (EU) and favouring voluntary convergence with the EU developments in the field of Higher Education deriving from the Europe 2020 strategy, the strategic framework for European Cooperation in education and training and the Bologna process.

The Tempus projects implemented in Kosovo have concretely supported the implementation of the HE strategic objectives by establishing three-cycle study systems in compliance with the Bologna Process, by introducing experiences and procedures for the implementation of the ECTS and the provision of the Diploma Supplement. They were strengthening the mobility of academics and students both within the Western Balkans region and to the EU countries, making distance learning methodologies functional and promoting interactive teaching and learning methods within the academic environment.

Most of the Tempus projects have addressed curriculum development needs in a variety of fields, whereas some of them have initiated interdisciplinary curricula. Various study programmes have been developed in the fields of Agricultural Sciences, Computer Sciences, Economics, European Studies, Law, Mechatronics, Medical Sciences, Civil Society and Local Development, Translation and Interpretation, Psychology, Sports, Biotechnology, and Education.

The reorganization of the structure of the study programmes has been supported by the adoption of the Bologna declaration in 2001/2 and by updating curricula, introducing new teaching and capacity building methods. International co-operation among universities in Kosovo and universities in the EU countries was significantly increased by involving professors, students, administrative staff and improving their qualification, teaching methods and language skills.

In the future, strengthening the quality assurance system, the cooperation of higher education institutions with the labour market, as well as the development of lifelong learning will remain a priority for the Erasmus+ programme.

9 On-going Reforms and Policy Developments

9.1 Overall national education strategy and key objectives

In order to maintain the gains already made in the education sector and to address key areas for improvement, the MEST developed the Kosovo Education Strategic Plan (KESP) 2011-2016[2].

The KESP 2011-2016 provides an important tool to make the education system more coherent, bridge the gaps in provision and ensures that links are maintained between the relevance of education content and learning with sustainable national development priorities. The KESP recognizes the need for the

[2] http://www.entwicklung.at/uploads/media/2c__Kosovo_Education_Strategic_Plan__EN__FINAL_DRAFT.pdf

education system to be more responsive to the labour market demands, aligned with key government priorities and pressing economic development goals. It offers a range of strategies for meeting the priorities of the Government of Kosovo, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Education for All (EFA) targets by 2015.

The strategic objectives that KESP addresses include in particular:

- Developing and supporting an inclusive system of education enabling equitable access to quality education;
- Closer alignment between education and employment including the development of tertiary vocational education and training in response to the labour market demand;
- Improving the quality of higher education by ensuring quality control, the application of European standards and a review of academic structures organization;
- Expanding provision of higher education and the establishment of new public universities;
- Establishing research institutions within higher education institutions to offer services for the private sector and for other purposes;
- Developing information and communication technology (ICT) in all levels and all groups of education;
- Declaring development of human resources a national priority and creating a life-long learning culture.

9.2 Overview of the education reform process and drivers

The KESP education reform processes have been organized around eight priority programmes, as follow:

1. Pre-school education (PSE) and Pre-primary education (PPE)
2. Pre-university Education (PUE)
3. Vocational Education and Training (VET)
4. Higher Education (HE)
5. Teacher Education (TE)
6. Adult Education & Training (AET)
7. Information & Communication Technology (ICT)
8. Capacity Building (CB).

The main actors/drivers of the education process in Kosovo are: the MEST, Ministry of Economy and Finance (MEF),the Accreditation Agency of Kosovo (AAK), the Authority for Curricula, Assessment and Standards (ACAS), the Kosovo Curriculum Framework (KAF), the National Qualifications Authority (NQA), Teachers Professional Development (TPD), the Kosovo Education Centre (KEC), the Agency for Vocational Education and Training and Adult Education (AVETAE), the international partners (European Union (EU), the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), the Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation (SDC), the Austrian Development Agency (ADO), the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), etc.

9.3 Reforms in Higher Education

During the recent period, several reforms were undertaken in Higher education.

9.3.1 2015

Increase access to Higher Education: A significant reform progress was achieved in ensuring that higher percentages of students enrol at higher education institutions. The number of students attending third cycle programmes has increased to around 122,000. Kosovo ranks at the top of European countries for the number of students with about 7.000 for 100.000 inhabitants. However, the increased rate in the number of students brought new challenges in quality management. With the acquirement of the membership at NQA in 2014, it was reconfirmed that Kosovo implements the European Standard Guidelines in external quality assurance. In the meantime MEST required increased internal quality assurance mechanisms. Public higher education institutions implement different practices of financial management and this is foreseen to be regulated within the framework of the new Law on Higher Education. Currently, in cooperation with international and national partners MEST is developing the implementation framework for a standardized and unified financial management practice at all public institutions. Though Kosovo still remains just an observer of the Working Group, it has made significant progress in implementing the Bologna process. Evidences show that there are still inappropriate study programmes lacking to meet the labour market needs and to create new job opportunities. Regarding the research component, government spending on scientific research is low (0.1% GDP) compared with the legal commitment to allocate 0.7% of the annual government budget in scientific research and development.

Enhancement of the legal framework: drafting, harmonization, amendment, review and adoption of the legal framework governing the high education system in Kosovo has taken place as foreseen in the KESP. As such, the statutes of the newly established public universities (Mitrovica South, Peja and Prizren) have been drafted and adopted. The harmonization of the University of Prishtina statute was implemented and the new draft Law on Higher Education and the Law on Regulated Professions have been submitted to the Parliament. In addition, all the necessary documentation for the formalization of the Students Union has been developed under the Tempus Project (No. 544357) – “Support to the Internationalization of the Kosovo Higher Education System through the establishment of the Kosovo Students’ Union”

Information and communication technology (ICT): The education system has a limited access to ICT and the contemporary technology is not integrated appropriately in the curriculum, teaching and education system management. The implementation of the education reform for incorporating information and communication technologies seems to be one of the most required priorities for the labour market. The Platform for ICT Data System Management has been approved which has resulted with a more efficient and systematic management of the data’s. The Platform for ICT Data System Management serves to manage student activities during the study program and staff activities on one hand and also administrative procedures management.

Planning and monitoring: The main challenge in the management of the education system remains the coordination of plans and priorities within a coordinated framework for planning and monitoring. Strategic plans are applied in Kosovo education in the context of shared responsibilities and participation of institutions and autonomous bodies.

Linking the study programmes with the labour market: the gap between the higher education system in Kosovo and the labour market was pointed out by the MEST and overcome with the support of the

European Commission and the Austrian Government through WUS Austria research project (ALLED) which analysed the education programmes in higher education and the employability of the students. This project has been completed and is available to the HEIs.

In the same vein, the need to enhance preschool education is related closely with the reform of the Faculty of Education curriculum. A reformed curriculum has been developed under the Tempus Project (No. 544023) "Modernizing Teacher Education at the University of Prishtina".

9.3.2 2014

Life-long learning: One of the primary challenges in the education sector is the participation in life-long learning, building a sustainable system for promotion of adult education and ensuring provision for funding. Indeed, there is no funding scheme and funding formula for adult education yet in Kosovo. The coordination of stakeholders, public and private, is below the required level. The capacity to monitor the developments and policy-making is limited as a result of the lack of financial resources.

9.3.3 2013

University Education (Higher Education): The quality of teachers is a key factor in students' achievement. Some positive developments were noted in teacher re-qualification programmes but further progress is needed to ensure that all teachers meet the minimum teaching standards. During the recent years, the compensation for teachers has increased and created conditions for attracting qualified teachers and improve accountability.

10 Legislation

Laws:

1. *Law no.04/L-037 on Higher Education in the Republic of Kosovo* (http://masht.rks-gov.net/uploads/2015/06/02-ligji-per-arsimin-e-larte-anglisht.pdf)
2. *Law no. 03/L-060 on National Qualifications* (http://masht.rks-gov.net/uploads/2015/06/11-ligji-kualifikimeve-2008-03-l-060-en.pdf)
3. *Law No. 03/L-068 on Education in the Municipalities of the Republic of Kosovo* (http://masht.rks-gov.net/uploads/2015/06/09-2008-03-l068-en.pdf
4. *Law No. 04/L-135 on Research and Scientific Activities* (http://masht.rks-gov.net/uploads/2015/06/ligji-per-veprimtari-kerkimore-shkencore-2013-eng.pdf)
5. *Law NO. 04/L – 143 on Adults Education and Training in the Republic of Kosovo* (http://masht.rks-gov.net/uploads/2015/06/ligji-per-arsimin-dhe-aftesimin-per-te-rritur-ne-republiken-e-kosoves-2013-eng.pdf)
6. *Law No. 04/L – 138 for Vocational Education and Training* (http://masht.rks-gov.net/uploads/2015/06/ligji-per-aftesimin-profesional-2013-eng.pdf);
7. *Law No.2004/37 on Inspection of Education in Kosovo*(http://masht.rks-gov.net/uploads/2015/06/05-ligji-mbi-inspeksionin.pdf)
8. *Law No 05/L – 066 on the Regulated Professions in Kosovo promulgated on 28 October 2016* (https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=13072)

Submitted for approval to the Government of Kosovo:

- *Law on Higher Education* (review)

- *Law on Inspection of Education in Kosovo* (review).

Bylaws:

1. *AI No.11./2015 on Comparability and Equivalence of Diplomas and Study programmes before the Bologna System and the Bologna System.* (http://masht.rks-gov.net/uploads/2015/09/binder1-2.pdf).

2 .*AI No.12/2015 on Scholarship Application* (http://masht.rks-gov.net/uploads/2015/10/ua-masht-12-2015-per-ndarjen-e-bursaverotated_1.pdf).

3. *Ai No.16/2015 on Establishment and Functionality of Student Union of the Republic of Kosovo.* (http://masht.rks-gov.net/uploads/2015/11/ua-nr-16-2015-per-themelimin-dhe-funksionalizimin-e-unionit-te-studenteve-4026_1.pdf)

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