



ERASMUS+ PROJECT  
**Re@WBC**

Enhancement of HE research potential  
contributing to further growth of the WB region



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**Enhancement of HE Research Potential Contributing to Further Growth of the WB Region**  
**Re@WBC**

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Abstract	The following document is a report on the current situation regarding the relationship between the Western Balkan (WB) partners of the ERASMUS+ project <i>Re@WBC</i> and the scientific diaspora. In addition to the description of the current situation regarding this network, universities come with future actions to undertake in order to improve the situation.
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### *Internal report on establishing links with scientific Diaspora by creating and updating databases (Activity 2.9)*

#### **1. Introduction**

We should agree on the fact that considering the diaspora as a national asset is certainly not a new phenomenon and that the diaspora strategies that extend across a range of social, cultural, political, educational and financial dimensions are now being implemented by the developed and developing countries. Establishing links with the scientific Diaspora requires defining a diaspora strategy which shall aim at developing and managing relationships between homelands and diasporic populations. This strategy shall vary from highly formalized and structured programs to projects that are easily perceived and applied.

The following is an internal report on scientific Diaspora, based on the information gathered from the reports provided by the Western Balkan (WB) partners of the ERASMUS+ project *Re@WBC*:

- ✓ University of Niš
- ✓ University of Novi Sad
- ✓ University of Belgrade
- ✓ University of Kragujevac
- ✓ University of Sarajevo
- ✓ University of East Sarajevo
- ✓ University of Montenegro
- ✓ University of Vlora
- ✓ University of Tirana

It can be noted in the reports gathered from the seven universities that although there can be many facets to a country's Diaspora strategy, it can be said that, countries tend to pursue similar initiatives, with much in common in terms of philosophy and approach.

#### **2. University Of Niš**

Alumni Center of the University of Niš, established on December 14th 2010 by decision of the Senate of the University of Niš as a separate organizational unit of the University, aimed primarily at:

- establishing and maintaining relationships between the University of Niš and its students after graduation.
- interconnecting its former students of all levels of education into an integral University Alumni Center.

Alumni Center functions are focused on:

- developing cooperation between the University of Niš and enterprises, organizations and institutions where its former students and postgraduates are employed.
- encouraging and promoting scientific, technical and practical activities of the Alumni members.

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They are realized through collaboration in the implementation of professional, scientific and artistic projects, as well as through the improvement of student and general academic mobility.

First meeting held during the celebration of the 46th anniversary of the University of Niš. This meeting was attended, among others, by Prof. Dr. Bane Vasić from the University of Arizona (Tucson, USA), Prof. Dr. Staša Tadić from the University of Pittsburgh (Pennsylvania, USA), Dr. Danijela Ristic Durrant from the University of Bremen (Germany), while Prof. Dr. Jovan Antović from the Medical Faculty in Stockholm (Sweden) participated in the discussion during a video conference with alumni worldwide. The meeting was also attended by the teaching staff of the University of Niš, which are directly involved in the process of international cooperation, as well as by the entire University management.

### Recommendations

- work intensively on connecting and networking of the largest possible number of graduate students, along with coordinating their activities in promotion of the University of Niš in the communities where they are currently located, but also on linking with the economy and financial institutions.
- foster strengthening academic and scientific potentials of the parent university
- find ways to link the University more closely with industry and financial institutions that could facilitate and assist scientific research, development of new technologies and their application in practice.

### **3. University of Novi Sad**

The first Alumni meeting at the University of Novi Sad was held in July 2003. The Alumni Association of the University of Novi Sad gathers, on a voluntary basis, all former students, teachers, assistants and friends of the University to foster and maintain relationships with the University in order to inform, monitor and participate in the events at the University and to ensure lasting cooperation. On the University web site there is a database of Alumni Association members. Advancement of the Alumni Association activities of the University of Novi Sad is supported through the Tempus project “*Developing and setting up measures for initiating and sustaining Higher Education Society Cooperation – INTERFACE*”, financed by EU Tempus program.

The preparation of the new version of the University Alumni Association web site is in progress.

Apart from the Alumni Association of the University of Novi Sad, some of the 14 faculties that form the University have its own alumni service. Having analyzed web pages of all the faculties, the current situation of existing Alumni activities is the following: 6 faculties (out of 14) provide links to their respective Alumni Associations on their faculty web pages, while the remaining 8 faculties provide no information regarding that kind of activities on their web pages.

Three faculties provide only a static list of graduated students (Faculty of Law, Faculty of Medicine and Faculty of technical sciences Mihajlo Pupin in Zrenjanin).

- Faculty of Philosophy provides a detailed description of the foundational principles of their Alumni association, but no information is available about the members and their activities. There is information that an invitation to join the Alumni association will be open soon to all the students of all study levels who completed their studies at the Faculty of Philosophy.
- Faculty of Technical Sciences launched a campaign in 2014 to gather companies, enterprises, banks, industries, IT companies, service companies, SMEs, private companies and others as well as the Alumni in a *Friends club of the Faculty of Technical sciences*. The aim of the *Friends club* is to support the

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faculty activities related to students, as well as to establish a permanent presence of these companies in various forms at Faculty. This will create a pool of companies around the Faculty, which would in addition help in providing sponsorships, provide the ability to create professional practice (for undergraduate and graduate students), employment of graduates, feedback on the quality of their academic programs, and to promote Faculty in other forms of cooperation. At the same time their former students (Alumni) will be informed about the activities of the Faculty, about the possibilities of further education and training, and will be able to help in equipping laboratories, to provide advice and useful experiences. There is a list of members of the *Faculty Friends Club* but there is no information about their activities.

- The Academy of Arts founded the Alumni association in May 2012 with the support of the Tempus project “*Introducing Interdisciplinarity in Music Studies in Western Balkans in line with European Perspective – InMusWB.*” The aim of the Alumni association is to connect all those who participate or have participated in the work and activities of the Academy of Arts, with a desire to create, strengthen and develop further connections. There is a list of Alumni members on the web site of the Academy. The Alumni Association has its own Web page, Facebook and Gmail address.

University of Novi Sad is about to promote a new Strategy for the Internationalization of the University of Novi Sad. The Strategy recognizes the importance and the benefits of collaboration with the university alumni and the scientific diaspora. The University of Novi Sad is devoted to establishing sustainable ways of engaging not only the alumni of the University of Novi Sad, but also the alumni of all the universities in the ex-Yugoslavia region in various activities ranging from merely raising awareness of the educational and scientific activities of the University to deeper integration into the educational and research environment of the University (such as guest professorship positions and collaboration in joint research projects).

#### 4. The University of Belgrade

The University of Belgrade (UB) has a very long tradition in academic and cultural exchange, inter-university and international cooperation with universities within the country and abroad as well as with the Serbian scientific diaspora. As the oldest and largest learning community in this part of Europe, the UB has unique responsibilities and opportunities toward the society. Still, the cooperation with scientific diaspora does not follow any specific formal format.

A significant number of professors, scientists and researchers left Serbia and continued their work in the United States, Canada or Western Europe, where they found much better working options. In the last decade, the links with Serbian scientific diaspora were mainly supported by joint cooperation through different project programs. The other directions of cooperation with scientific diaspora include: participation in conferences/ scientific events, lecturing and visiting professorship, joint supervision of doctoral thesis.

The UB has concluded the bilateral agreements of cooperation with more than 180 universities on every continent. It has adopted the Strategy for the Internationalization in 2014 and an Action plan for the Internationalization in 2015.

The implementation of aforementioned bylaws has enabled more formal framework and improved the communication flow with diaspora. The UB has reinforced social network and valuable professional platform by founding the Alumni association in September 2008. The Alumni Association was established

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to promote the best interests of the University of Belgrade, enabling graduates to share the international and multicultural experience.

### 5. University of Kragujevac

There are total of three alumni bases that should be mentioned in scope of this question at University of Kragujevac - one university alumni database - two faculties alumni databases.

1. Activities on forming of unique database of alumni students at **University of Kragujevac**, were initiated back in 2012, when initial invitation for application of students graduated in 2007, were announced. Application form were published on university web site: [www.kg.ac.rs/doc/alumni\\_formular.doc](http://www.kg.ac.rs/doc/alumni_formular.doc)

All activities on database initialization and alumni students data collecting and entering were performed by University Center for Career Development and Student Counseling. Establishment of Alumni Association of the University of Kragujevac became one of key activities within recently adopted Strategy for Internationalization of the University of Kragujevac in period 2015 - 2020.

2. **Faculty of Engineering**, University of Kragujevac established its alumni database back in 2010 and regularly work on its updating. Database have more than 5000 entries covering all graduated engineers, MSC's and PhD's during 56 years of faculty work. On-line database is located at faculty web site [http://www.mfkg.rs/index.php?option=com\\_wrapper&view=wrapper&Itemid=366](http://www.mfkg.rs/index.php?option=com_wrapper&view=wrapper&Itemid=366).

Database is supported with self developed software – ALUMNI, and have various search options and criteria (name/surname, type of study program, generation, student mentor, or other defined key word). Faculty of Engineering established its Alumni Club and support work and activities of this former student organization. Web site of Alumni Club is: <http://alumni.fink.rs/index.php>

3. **Faculty of Economics** established Alumni Society in 2012 as voluntary associations of former students of this faculty.

On line application form is located on faculty web site: [www.ekfak.kg.ac.rs/alumni?q=alumni\\_form](http://www.ekfak.kg.ac.rs/alumni?q=alumni_form) as well as contact information book of Alumni Society members: <http://www.ekfak.kg.ac.rs/sites/default/files/ALUMNI.pdf>

### 6. University of Sarajevo

This university provides initial screening to identify alumni of UNSA using common data set:

✚ residence

Mostly are currently residing in developed countries. The largest number is in BiH, US and Canada and you can find a small number in UK, Germany.

✚ area of professional engagement (Engineering, Information Technology, Business Development, Sales, Education)

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- ✚ area of studies (Economics, Electrical and Electronics Engineering, Computer Science, Mechanical Engineering, Law, Marketing )
- ✚ result: 6389 alumni
- ✚ mass mailing option ensured

### 6.1. The University of Sarajevo suggests the following opportunities for action:

- identification of alumni with different labeling of UNSA at their profiles
- communication with graduates through social networks on locating graduates with different strategies for generational approach (Data selection: in period 1970-1980 there are 594 graduates, 1980-1990 there are 1470 graduates, 1990-1995 there are 934 graduates, 1996-2000 there are 1069 graduates, 2000-2016 there are 3557 graduates)

## 7. University of East Sarajevo

At the University of East Sarajevo alumni network is not centralized at the University level, but faculties have established several association individually. Alumni networks currently existing at the faculties of the University of East Sarajevo are:

- Faculty of Economics-Pale, (established in 2013) list of association members, application procedure, and more information available at:

<http://www.ekofis.org/sr-yu/asocijacije/alumni.html>

- Faculty of Electrical Engineering, (established in 2015) full association website available at:

<http://alumni.etf.unssa.rs.ba/>

- Faculty of Business and Economics, (established in 2016) since the association is recently established, for now just a basic information and application forms are available at the website of the faculty:

<http://www.fpe.unssa.rs.ba/alumni.html>

- Production and Management Faculty, (established in 2014), list of association members, contact information and application form available at:

<http://fpmtrebinje.com/wp/o-fakultetu/alumni-klub/>

- Academy of Music, list of association members, contact information and application form available at:

<http://www.muzickaakademija.net/pages/alumni>

- Faculty of Agriculture, list of association members, contact information and application form available at:

<http://www.pof.unssa.rs.ba/index.php/alumni>

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### 8. University of Montenegro

University of Montenegro does not have any formal links with the scientific Diaspora established.

### 9. University of Vlora

UV has good cooperation with the Albanian scientific diaspora. However, this cooperation does not follow a formal format or work at a well-organized institutional level. The cooperation is most notably a result of the links academics have established among themselves.

The cooperation has so far worked in these directions:

- participation in conferences or scientific events

Members of the Albanian scientific diaspora have often been invited to give lectures or talks in events, conferences or public lectures organized by the University of Vlora. These invitations have usually been made by individuals who have good contacts with the members of the diaspora and who have acted as negotiators on behalf of the institution. These scholars have mainly been from the USA, the UK, the Czech Republic, Italy and Germany.

- lecturing or visiting professorship

This has often been the case with professors who live and work in the USA, Germany or Italy. Their contribution has been noteworthy especially in the accreditation of the PhD programme in Mathematics.

- links with the Arbëresh community

One of the most significant collaborations is that with the academic Arbëresh community in Italy, one of the oldest diasporic communities of Albanians in the world. This collaboration has been most notable in the field of philology. Several events have been organized in this respect, namely joint conferences, publications and book promotions.

- maintaining links with the former UV students

Several students who have finished their BA studies at UV and are now studying at other universities abroad have maintained their contacts with their professors at UV. They often return to UV for research purposes. At present the alumni office in UV that collects statistical data about UV alumni among other things is unable to provide any specific information about UV alumni abroad. No such information has so far been officially collected.

At present UV is working towards identifying other Albanian academic communities in the world. More active in this direction has been the Faculty of Humanities who are working towards identifying departments of Albanologic studies and are trying to set up connections with them, the most recent being the collaboration with the Department of Albanology, University of Belgrade.

#### Recommendations

- foster and formalize these connections into more institutionalized entities and organizations.
- establish an alumni network that would identify in concrete data the presence of former UV students overseas.

The network should work with a clear goal for establishing and strengthening links among the alumni and UV and act as a well-coordinated network for promoting UV, for cooperating with UV and also for advising and supporting prospective students of UV who want to study and live abroad.

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### 10. University of Tirana

Alumni network is predominantly organized on a national level. Its specific objective is:

- to open up and maintain communication channels between graduated students and present students.
- to broaden the engagement of alumni.

Individuals who join the Alumni Network are expected to have a desire to support and enhance the contributions that further Tirana University's mission of educating students.

The UT Alumni network connects and engages its alumni in meaningful activities to create initiatives for greater good. Alumni network is a valuable group of the University of Tirana whose activities offer regular opportunities for alumni to stay involved and active in the life of the University.

This national initiative seeks to strengthen alumni ties in order to build up a database of UT Alumni. Those that participate in this network also seek to grow and develop the relationship between the University and the Alumni Network.

Former students, or alumni, are important members of the University of Tirana community. Any individual who has successfully completed a degree, a full year of study, study abroad/exchange program of one semester of study at the University of Tirana can be a member of the University's alumni community. They need to 'sign up' and all alumni who keep their contact details up-to-date with the University will be treated as active members of the University's alumni community.

Alumni network provides opportunities for the graduates to receive information on career opportunities and study. This network creates a network for members to get connected (networking), fosters work opportunities, self-development plans, collaborates in organizing specific activities like thematic workshop and cooperation in general/at large at the University of Tirana. It also encourages the setting up of volunteer groups which will help promote the social, educational and cultural activities, promotes and expands the Alumni network.

Exact figures about scientists living and working outside Albania are unavailable and no systematic analysis or survey of scientific diaspora has so far taken place. In order to involve the scientific diaspora in domestic development programs, awareness among the general public about this population's possible contribution and the setting up of scientific diaspora networks are very important.

Efforts are continuously made both from governmental and national institutions of higher of education to link migration with development goals and to "mobilize" the large Diaspora for cooperation and contribution. However, most often the way from the idea to a concrete realization is far and complex. For this reason, we intend to increase Research activity mainly concentrating on the development impact of migrant remittances<sup>5</sup> and the scientific Diaspora.

There is a first step toward the application of these strategies - The First Summit of Albanian Diaspora. At the decision of the Albanian Government, the First Summit of All - Albanian Diaspora will take place in Tirana from 18 – 20 November 2016.

These findings would help to show ways in which the contribution of alumni and Diaspora for the development of higher education systems in Albania can be reinforced and also feed into the early stages of future programmes.

### Recommendations

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- form an alumni network at the University of Tirana with representatives from the scientific diaspora which could lead to the establishment of a strong scientific group with outreach into various parts of society.
- create a program to connect scientific diaspora Alumni from everywhere around the globe in order to strengthen the links between the Albanian scientists living and working abroad with the scientists living and working in Albania and create a network.
- set up the scientific diaspora alumni database by the University of Tirana and an alumni contact point who might be the main point for the spreading of information to the rest of the members.

### 11. Summary

We have to admit that, despite the fact that some of the WB partners universities have already created the diaspora alumni and some others have an alumni network which operates on a national level, they all share the same goal: to systematically use scientific diaspora for development at home.

We suggest that the partner universities lacking this database, need to create more permanent structures and a list of databases of academics living and working abroad who are willing to come to their home country and contribute to the Institutions of Higher Education in their home countries, engaging in various development projects or undertaking teaching assignments at university. This would result in the constitution of real Alumni networks.

This database system shall enable diaspora to become members filling their profiles in the system. Having created the system, the University could bring scientists from the Diaspora and the scientist from their home countries altogether in different research activities which help develop the scientific research. Through this network, information targeted on research and innovation can be shared with Alumni living and working in the home countries.

Having established the database, the universities (all WB partners) need to implement a diaspora strategy. It is quite obvious that diaspora engagement requires strategies which are mainly based on networks. The best situation is for the governments to create the appropriate conditions for the existence of different kinds of organizations, facilitate the cooperation between networks and provide access to the diaspora for dialogue with the representatives from the government. It is also important that the governments recognize the fact that they need to cooperate with the private sector.

Scientific Diaspora and Alumni associations can play a key role in forming research partnerships and enhance cooperation between scientists. The funding of such a coordinated action would be the key to success.

We cannot say that one diaspora strategy fits all the countries. Obviously countries differ in terms of their macroeconomic circumstances, the history of their diaspora, their size, geography and general resources to successfully pursue a diaspora strategy. While many governments acknowledge the importance of diaspora engagement, many still lack the capacity to design and implement effective policies on a meaningful scale. But, successfully engaging the diaspora is a long-term business that requires perseverance and patience.

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