MORIN

ERASMUS-EDU-2023-CBHE
Project number: 101128376
MOBILITY RECOGNITION
FOR INTEGRATION

MORIN

WP2. Mobility recognition via learning outcomes

D 2.3 – A self-assessment tool for the recognition of study periods abroad

Version	Type	Date	Authors
1.0	First draft	May 17, 2024	Jasmina Đorđević, Vesna Lopičić
1.1	Second draft	May 21, 2024	

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Project title: Mobility recognition for integration

Acronym: MORIN

Coordinator: University of Vlora "Ismail Qemali", Albania
Project number: 101128376

Topic: ERASMUS-EDU-2023-CBHE

Type of action: ERASMUS LS
Project Starting date: 01 December 2023
Project duration: 24 months
Work packages: WP1. Management, coordination and evaluation of MORIN
                         WP2. Mobility recognition via learning outcomes
                              WP3. Mobility recognition in practice
                         WP4. Impact and dissemination of MORIN

DELIVERABLE DESCRIPTION

Work package: WP 2. Mobility recognition via learning outcomes

Deliverable: D2.3 A self-assessment tool for the recognition of study periods abroad report

Lead beneficiary: University of Niš, Serbia

Dissemination level: Public

Type: Report

Due date: 31.05.2024

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Abbreviations

AAB College	AAB
Biznesi College	BC
ESN Nis	ESN Nis
Common Regional Market	CRM
European Commission	EC
European Union	EU
European University of Tirana	UET
Learning agreement	LA
Learning outcomes	LO
Palacky University in Olomouc	UP
Professional College, Tirana	KPT
Qendra ESN AL	ESN AL
University of Nis	UNI
University St Kliment Ohridski Bitola	UKLO
University of Vlora "Ismail Qemali"	UV
Western Balkans	WB
Work package	WP

1.   Introduction

Activities in WP2 – Mobility recognition via learning outcomes include Deliverable 2.3 which is building a self-assessment tool for the recognition of study periods abroad. As stated in the project description, the project partners first conducted a grey literature review during January, February and March 2024 to gather information on the impact of student mobility (surveys, reports, results from previous/recent projects and various recent studies) and to identify aspects pertinent to the impact of mobility recognition on the student beneficiaries. The literature review is an expanded collection of more recent studies/reports/surveys, especially those published during 2023. The collection also includes literature that covers the whole WB6 area. (The literature review report is available **here**.)

Based on the information collected from the grey literature sources review, the partners could construct a questionnaire referred to as "Mobility recognition: A self-assessment tool". The tool also leans on the data collected from the needs analysis conducted during the writing of this proposal and on deliverable D 1.8 which provided new insights after a year. The tool aims to pave the way for improving institutional recognition practices. The tool also enables a thorough assessment of internal recognition practices at WB HEIs to highlight areas to work on. The self-assessment methodology encourages WB partners to reflect on their recognition practices in a self-guided, formative and sustainable way. Finally, the tool can also aid WB partners in monitoring the progress of recognition practice improvement and quality assurance.

The self-assessment tool will be implemented and utilised by the partner institutions who will administer it to conduct a thorough assessment of their internal recognition practices to highlight areas for improvement. As planned, it will also be used for the following two purposes: 1. Internal self-assessment (involving project partners); 2. For the mapping report (beyond the consortium). For the assessment of internal recognition processes, the tool will be used by the WB HEIs at least twice during the project lifetime: 1. to produce a state-of-the-art review before working on the revision of the learning outcomes for recognition practices, and 2. after the revision of the learning outcomes to mark the achieved progress and its degree.

2.   Procedure

A workgroup was set up at the beginning of April 2024. It comprised two academics from two different subject areas and a student from each partner institution (Table 1).

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Table 1: The self-assessment tool team

All contact persons were included in the correspondence. In addition, the workgroup also included two representatives from ESN, one from Albania (Lutjona Lulu) and one from Niš, Serbia (Milena Kostić). They were asked to provide external feedback on the self-assessment tool regarding its validity, reliability and usability. However, their support was also needed to reach out to as many respondents as possible. In addition, the ESN representatives will aid the subsequent mapping survey results dissemination planned as a follow-up activity.

Given that UNI has been allocated to lead the activities related to the self-assessment tool, the two UNI team members prepared the first draft of the tool by 1 May 2024. The draft was uploaded as a Google Doc to the MORIN Google Drive with the invitation to the rest of the team to add suggestions and comments by 10 May 2024. As suggestions were being added, UNI team members amended the draft accordingly. On 10 May, UNI team members, the project coordinator and the representative from UP met online to discuss the draft (Image 1).
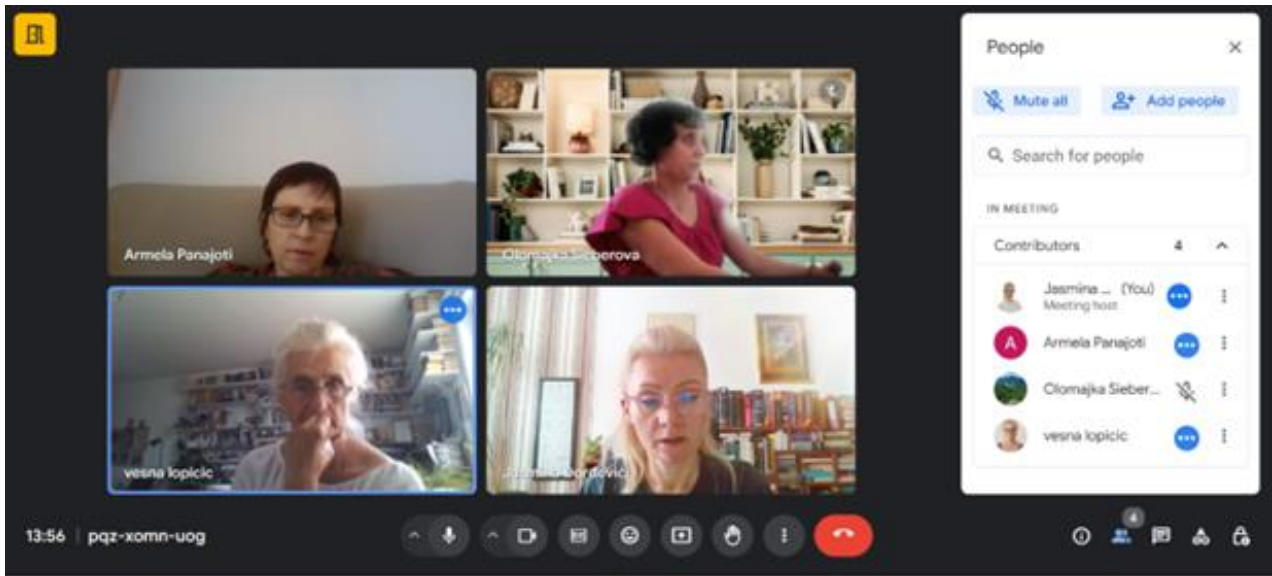
Image 1: Online meeting on 10 May 2024.

The self-assessment tool was amended in accordance with the suggestions made during that meeting. The other team members were informed about the new draft version in an email and asked to consider the amendments. Based on Doodle, the date and time were chosen for all self-assessment tool team members to meet online. The meeting was held on 14 May 2024 to discuss the final version of the self-assessment tool (Figure 2). All team members contributed valuable input. By the end of the meeting, a final draft was agreed on.
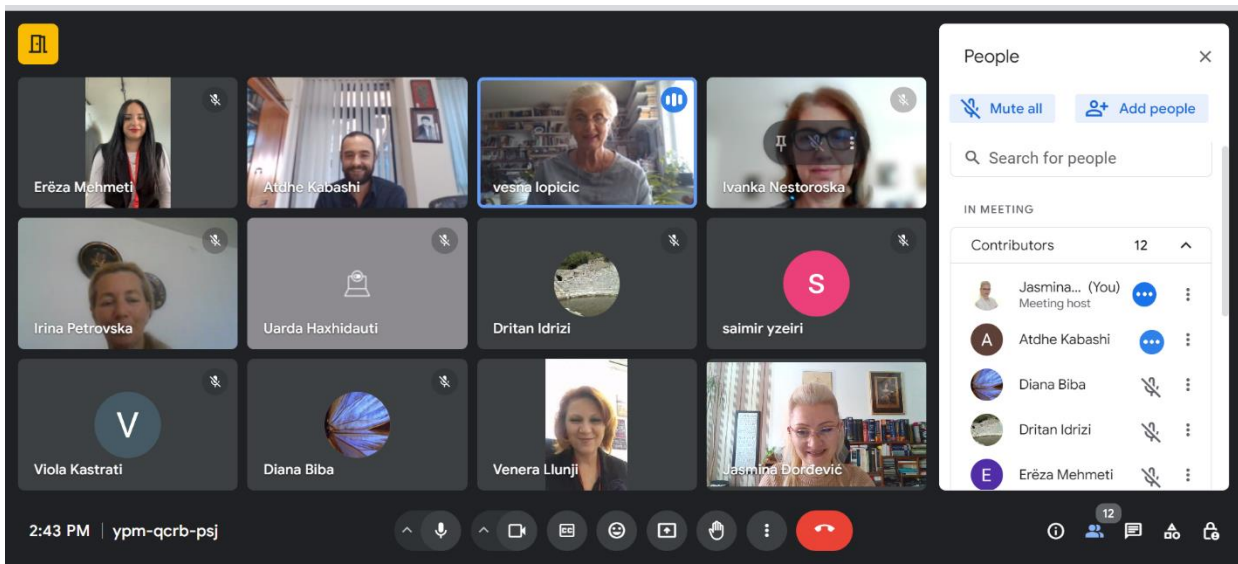

Image 2: Online meeting on 14 May 2024.

Following the meeting, the UNI team prepared the final questionnaire in Google Forms. On 21 May 2024, the coordinator and four other team members (from Albania and Serbia) met for a third meeting (Image 3) to organise the translation of the questionnaire into Albanian which was completed on 22 May 2024.

Image 3: Online meeting on 21 May 2024

3. The self-assessment tool

The most important consideration for the self-assessment tool was to design a straightforward, easy-to-read and user-friendly instrument applicable in various contexts at different WB HEIs. Departing from the fact that HEIs in the Western Balkans have faced certain challenges regarding student mobility strategies navigating local and broader constraints (e.g. availability of grants, trends in higher education, etc.), this deliverable is aimed to help WB HEIs mature and strengthen their participation in mobilities by enhancing their recognition procedures. Mobilities are meant to provide students with a decisive period contributing to their personal and professional development. Teamwork, self-confidence and knowledge construction are just a few of the trades students gather from mobilities but these are all worthless if, upon their return to their home institution, everything they have learned is not recognised properly.

The first part of the self-assessment tool focuses on collecting basic information about the type of institution and the level of studies or types of programmes offered at those institutions. Bearing in mind the diversity of institutions in the WB region, the tool includes universities, faculties and colleges as the most common types. However, the needs analysis carried out as part of the project proposal and again after the project started, showed that other institutions should be included, such as institutes and academies. Given the possibility of other types of institutions, a field for such information is included in the questionnaire. The second question predicts almost all possible levels of studies and types of programmes, ranging from BA studies at HEIs focusing on academic and professional/vocational studies to Dual Degrees

and PhDs. Again, the possibility of other levels and types is included in the tool.

The second part of the self-assessment tool (further tool) provides insight into more specific data regarding the actual mobility recognition procedures, documents and stakeholders involved. The tool has been constructed in the form of statements rather than questions. Such an instrument offers a wider range of reflection possibilities regarding the nuances present in the variety of existing procedures, documents and stakeholders at the different WB HEIs. Therefore, the responses have been designed following a certain type of scale, thus giving potential respondents more flexibility when choosing the answer most applicable to their context. Assuming that not everybody is involved in the mobility recognition process, i.e. predicting the possibility that individuals might be unaware of existing procedures, documents, etc., the tool includes the response "I do not know" to most of the statements. This response will be considered a red flag if occurring frequently in the context of a HEI because it will indicate that the respective HEI has either not developed procedures relevant to mobility recognition or has not made them public enough. Either reason should be addressed and resolved by the respective HEI.

The tool starts with a statement about institutional support and guidance. Given that such support and guidance can be offered in different ways, the tool provides a scale of responses (full support, partial support, limited support, no support and I do not know) to three different (generally assumed most relevant) types of support a mobility participant would have to rely on: academic advisors, credit transfer office or similar and international office. The three types of support are necessary from the moment the learning agreement is drafted to the moment the achieved credits are recognised upon return to the home institution. Similarly, the second statement refers to the guidelines or regulations for recognition procedures and, again, the intention is to offer the respondent the possibility to reflect on the actual state at their HEI. Potential responses predict the possibilities that these guidelines and regulations are fully developed, partially developed, in the process of being developed, not developed at all or that the respondent might not know about them.

The third statement provides more detailed insight into the specific recognition procedures and documents in addition to determining when they are agreed on and used. The separate items refer to learning agreements, transcripts of records/certificates/evaluations and whether the recognition procedure is automatic. The predicted answers include always, sometimes, rarely, never and I do not know. Under the assumption that a HEI has everything in place when initiating a mobility, the response "always" may be considered as contributing to the mobility and the response "sometimes" would be an indication of the need for a revision of the procedures and documents while the responses "rarely", "never" and "I do not know" would be indications of serious issues that the HEI has to resolve.

The next two statements establish whether recognition committees or similar exist and the extent of their recognition decisions. The responses to the fourth statement about the existence of recognition committees or similar are fully instated, partially instated, in the process of being instated, not instated and the possibility that the respondents do not know. Again, depending on the frequency of certain responses, the HEI may reflect on the need for those committees, their potential reorganisation or restructuring and implementation if missing. The fifth statement in the tool is more specific and shows the recognition procedures range that the recognition committees rely on. The range may be full recognition when all credits are recognised, partial when some credits are recognised and conditional when credits

are recognised depending on the achievement of some learning outcome. In ideal circumstances, the reliance on recognition decisions will occur always and in less ideal contexts such reliance may occur sometimes, rarely or never, or worse that the respondents may not know at all if such reliance occurs at all.

An important issue is addressed in the sixth statement and it refers to whether a national recognition authority following the Bologna Process Recognition and/or Lisbon Recognition Convention exists thereby including the possibility of adequate procedures. The responses may be fully instated, partially instated, in the process of being instated, not instated and the possibility that the respondents do not know. In case such recognition authority has not been instated, the tool predicts the possibility that the recognition is regulated at the level of the HEI within a month, two months, three months or longer, or the respondent might not know how long it takes. If the HEI does not have a recognition authority to rely on, nor is there a specific period within which such recognition is handled, the HEI will know what to focus on.

The next two statements refer to learning experiences that mobilities provide. The ninth statement focuses on whether non-formal learning experiences (i.e. courses offered as part of a study programme/programmes) are entered into the learning agreement (before and/or during mobility) and whether they are recognised as part of the mobility in diploma supplements. The tenth statement is about non-formal learning experiences (e.g., volunteering, language courses, cultural immersion) and whether they are recognised as part of the mobility in diploma supplements, as contributing to students' understanding of global issues, cultural diversity and international perspectives. In both instances, the responses are fully recognised, partially recognised, in the process of being defined, not defined and the possibility the respondents do not know. Given that both formal and non-formal learning experiences predicted and carried out within mobilities are most crucial, not recognising them as part of the mobility and not having them defined as part of the diploma supplement should be considered an important issue to revise.

The tenth statement is expected to provide insight into whether students receive feedback on their learning during mobility. The statement implies that feedback is provided by guidance officers, teachers, staff at international offices or similar. The potential responses are that feedback can be continuous, partial, limited, missing or that the respondents do not know about it. The best-case scenario is that the students receive continuous feedback. In all other cases, the HEI should revise their feedback practices.

The eleventh statement refers to how documentation regarding individual mobilities is stored. The implication is that documentation can be stored within a dedicated system or platform, i.e. some institutional system or cloud storage service if stored in electronic form, or in archives if stored in paper form. Therefore, the responses include electronic form, paper form, both electronic and paper, neither or that the respondents do not know. Although there are no recommendations regarding how documentation is stored, a general precondition is that it is stored in some way. A second precondition is that stakeholders involved in respective mobilities must have access to the documentation produced within the mobilities. If a HEI does not predict storing such documentation in any way, it should most certainly introduce such a practice.

The last statement considers the possibility of a follow-up questionnaire/survey that stakeholders, i.e. students, home institutions or host institutions complete on the learning achieved during mobilities. The responses in this case are simple: yes, no or I do not know. In ideal cases, all relevant stakeholders complete follow-up questionnaires/surveys, offering

insight into achievements, positive and negative aspects, issues, problems, etc. If HEIs do not predict such surveys, they should consider establishing this practice because feedback from surveys is a valuable contribution highlighting both positive and negative aspects.

4.   Conclusion

The self-assessment tool is expected to provide HEIs with a methodology to analyse their recognition procedures and reflect on positive and negative aspects. Any conclusion drawn from the analysis enabled by the self-assessment tool will serve as a basis for further steps enabling mobility recognition enhancement and improvement at WB HEIs.

As predicted in the proposal, a direct outcome of the self-assessment tool will be task 2.4 in WP2 aimed at mapping WB6 mobility recognition practices across the region based on the tool. The tool will be available to other HEIs beyond the consortium to assess their recognition practices.

Links to Mobility recognition: A self-assessment tool

English:
https://forms.gle/RPLxQQJDr5dWrPw87

Albanian:
https://forms.gle/n83oP71QTEKTAf6z6