



Strategic Implementation for the future Sustainability

DUALMON - Strengthening capacities for the implementation of dual higher education in Montenegro Higher Education

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Abstract	This document plans the strategic implementation for the future to ensure the sustainability of the project.
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Table of contents

Abstract	5
Introduction	6
Key Objectives	6
Sustainable Outcomes	6
Sustaining Impact Beyond the Project Lifetime	7
1. Institutionalizing the DUALMON Model	7
2. Capacity Building and Knowledge Transfer	7
3. Mainstreaming and Expanding Results	7
Financial Sustainability and Funding Strategies	8
Monitoring, Evaluation, and Feedback Mechanisms	9
Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)	9
Continuous Monitoring	9
Independent Audits	9
Dissemination Plan	9
Target Audiences	9
Communication Channels	9
Conclusion	10



Abstract

This document explains how exploitation activities will ensure optimal use of the results within the project's lifetime and afterwards. It explains how the impact of the project will be sustained beyond its lifetime. It lists the outcomes that the project consortium considers sustainable and describes the strategy to ensure their long-lasting use beyond the project's lifetime. It also explains how the results will be mainstreamed and multiplied at the national/regional level. It further describes the strategy foreseen to attract co-funding and other forms of non-EU support for the project.



Introduction

The DUALMON project represents a transformative step in improving Montenegro's higher education system through the implementation of dual higher education. This initiative ensures that project results are optimally utilized during its lifetime and beyond, fostering a sustainable and resilient framework for dual higher education. By addressing the challenges of misalignment between higher education and labor market needs, DUALMON aspires to position Montenegro as a regional leader in innovative educational practices. This strategic plan lays the groundwork for long-term socioeconomic development and a modernized educational landscape.

Key Objectives

The overarching objectives of the DUALMON strategic plan are:

1. To ensure the scalability and longevity of project outcomes, including systemic institutional and legislative reforms.
2. To integrate project results into national and regional education frameworks for maximum impact.
3. To secure co-funding and explore alternative financial resources beyond EU funding mechanisms.
4. To institutionalize dual higher education as a core model in Montenegro's higher education system.
5. To promote international collaboration for knowledge transfer and adoption of best practices.

Sustainable Outcomes

The project's long-term success hinges on several key sustainable outcomes:

1. **DUALMON Model Framework:** A versatile framework adaptable to various academic disciplines and industries across Montenegro's higher education institutions (HEIs).
2. **Legal and Quality Assurance Frameworks:** Comprehensive reforms, including accreditation standards and legislative amendments, to institutionalize dual higher education.
3. **Capacity Building for Stakeholders:** Robust training and knowledge-sharing initiatives to enhance the competencies of HEI staff, policymakers, and industry partners.
4. **Pilot-Tested Dual Models:** Proof-of-concept programs implemented at select HEIs, setting a benchmark for broader application.
5. **Toolkits for Implementation:** Comprehensive guides and resources to standardize the implementation of dual higher education across institutions.
6. **Enhanced Graduate Employability:** Curricula aligned with labor market needs to ensure graduates are equipped with relevant, workforce-ready skills.



Sustaining Impact Beyond the Project Lifetime

To ensure a lasting impact, DUALMON's sustainability strategy is divided into three key pillars:

1. Institutionalizing the DUALMON Model

- **Policy Integration:** Incorporate dual higher education into national higher education policies and strategic goals.
- **Standardization:** Establish clear accreditation standards and guidelines for consistent adoption across HEIs.
- **Continuous Professional Development:** Ensure educators and industry mentors undergo regular training to maintain quality and relevance.
- **EU Alignment:** Align with EU higher education frameworks to foster international collaboration and recognition.

2. Capacity Building and Knowledge Transfer

- **Workshops and Seminars:** Facilitate continuous learning and exchange of best practices among stakeholders.
- **Strategic Partnerships:** Strengthen collaborations between HEIs, industries, and government agencies to ensure a unified approach.
- **International Collaboration:** Leverage expertise from European HEIs to adopt innovative practices.
- **Mentorship Networks:** Establish sustainable mentorship programs to guide educators and industry representatives.

3. Mainstreaming and Expanding Results

- **Regional Scaling:** Extend the dual higher education model to additional HEIs within Montenegro and neighboring regions.
- **Awareness Campaigns:** Promote dual higher education's benefits through targeted outreach initiatives.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** Actively involve students and employers in refining curricula and co-developing internship opportunities.
- **Digital Resources:** Develop accessible online platforms for knowledge sharing, training, and dissemination.



Financial Sustainability and Funding Strategies

DUALMON's financial sustainability relies on a diverse funding strategy:

1. Public-Private Partnerships

- **Chamber of Commerce:** Mobilize industry networks to support dual higher education through financial sponsorships and collaborative internships.
- **Corporate Investments:** Encourage private companies to sponsor students and dual higher education programs in exchange for skilled graduates.
- **Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs):** Joint ventures to co-finance dual higher education initiatives.

2. Government Tax Incentives for Companies

- **Corporate Tax Relief:** Offer tax reductions or credits to companies participating in dual higher education programs, incentivizing their investments in training and internship opportunities.
- **Payroll Tax Reductions:** Lower payroll tax obligations for companies that employ students under dual higher education models.
- **Grant Matching Programs:** Provide matching grants to companies co-funding dual higher education initiatives, fostering collaboration between public and private sectors.

3. International Funding Opportunities

- **EU Grants:** Secure follow-up grants under programs such as Erasmus+ and Horizon Europe.
- **Development Banks:** Partner with entities like the European Investment Bank for infrastructure development and capacity building.
- **Bilateral Agreements:** Explore funding through agreements with EU and non-EU countries.

4. Revenue Diversification

- **Consultancy Services:** Offer expertise in dual higher education implementation to other institutions and industries.
- **Research Grants:** Apply for funding to explore innovative approaches in dual higher education.
- **Alumni Support:** Create an alumni fund to sustain scholarships and program development.
- **Fee-Based Training Programs:** Develop specialized courses for industry professionals, generating additional revenue streams.



Monitoring, Evaluation, and Feedback Mechanisms

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

1. Adoption of the DUALMON model across Montenegro's HEIs.
2. Growth in enrollment in dual higher education programs.
3. Employment rates of graduates within six months of completion.
4. Industry participation in internships and curriculum co-development.
5. Satisfaction levels among key stakeholders (students, employers, HEIs).

Continuous Monitoring

- **Progress Reviews:** Conduct periodic stakeholder meetings to assess progress and refine strategies.
- **Annual Assessments:** Evaluate the long-term impact of the project outcomes.
- **Feedback Loops:** Use feedback from students, faculty, and employers to improve dual higher education practices.

Independent Audits

Engage external evaluators to ensure operational and financial transparency, strengthening the credibility and trustworthiness of project outcomes.

Dissemination Plan

Effective dissemination is critical for ensuring the project's broad adoption and impact:

Target Audiences

1. **Students and Parents:** Showcase the career benefits of dual higher education, including increased employability.
2. **HEIs:** Promote adoption through best practices, training, and toolkits.
3. **Industries:** Highlight the value of collaboration for workforce development and innovation.
4. **Policy-Makers:** Advocate for legislative support and increased funding.
5. **General Public:** Raise awareness about the societal and economic benefits of dual higher education.

Communication Channels

1. **Digital Platforms:** Use dedicated websites, social media, and e-learning tools for outreach.
2. **Publications:** Disseminate findings through academic journals, policy briefs, and media outlets.
3. **Events:** Host conferences, webinars, and workshops to engage stakeholders and share outcomes.
4. **Interactive Tools:** Develop case studies and practical guides to facilitate knowledge transfer.

Monitoring Visit in Montenegro: April 23 – May 3, 2023

As part of the DUALMON project's sustainability and strategic implementation activities, a monitoring visit was conducted in Montenegro between April 23 and May 3, 2023. The visit was facilitated by representatives from project partner Academia, Ms. Majda Kralj and Mr. Bojan Dapčević, with the primary objective of evaluating progress, identifying challenges, and gathering feedback from key stakeholders to ensure the long-term success of dual higher education (DHE) integration.

Background of Representatives from Academia

Ms. Majda Kralj

Ms. Majda Kralj is the founder of Academia, College of Short-Cycle Higher Education, and has been at the forefront of innovative education practices for over 25 years. Her contributions include establishing and running an award-winning higher education institution, positioning Academia as a leader in dual higher education and work-based learning. Ms. Kralj has extensive experience in higher education policy development, serving as:

- A **Bologna Process Expert** in Slovenia, contributing to the implementation of the Bologna reforms in the country.
- A member of the **Accreditation Commission** of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Slovenia, shaping the standards for quality assurance in higher education.
- A board member of the **Association of Short-Cycle Higher Education Colleges in Slovenia**, advocating for the recognition and development of short-cycle programs.
- An **evaluation expert** for the Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency in Higher Education, ensuring adherence to international quality benchmarks.
- A participant in various working groups developing legal frameworks for tertiary education in Slovenia.

Her expertise spans dual higher education, quality assurance, and fostering industry-academic collaboration, making her a pivotal figure in advancing DUALMON's objectives.

Mr. Bojan Dapčević

Mr. Bojan Dapčević serves as the Head of Work-Based Learning at Academia, where he leads the institution's dual higher education programs, bridging the gap between academia and industry. With over 25 years of C-level management experience in the construction and infrastructure industries, Mr. Dapčević has a proven track record in managing multimillion-euro investment projects, including major infrastructure developments in Slovenia. His professional achievements include:

- Leading initiatives that connect **higher education with industry needs**, ensuring that students graduate with workforce-ready skills.



- Overseeing the implementation of **dual higher education models**, where students gain practical, hands-on experience during their studies.
- Building partnerships between Academia and leading businesses, fostering mutual growth and innovation.

Mr. Dapčević's combined experience in business and education uniquely positions him to drive the practical implementation of dual higher education, focusing on sustainable industry collaboration and skill development.

Together, Ms. Majda Kralj and Mr. Bojan Dapčević bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to the DUALMON project, ensuring the successful integration and sustainability of dual higher education in Montenegro.

Objectives of the Monitoring Visit

The primary goals of the visit were:

1. To conduct in-person interviews with representatives from each national partner institution in Montenegro.
2. To evaluate strategies and resources required to achieve the following key objectives:
 - Implementation of dual higher education in the Montenegrin higher education system.
 - Legislative and accreditation framework adjustments for DHE.
 - Internationalization of Montenegrin higher education institutions (HEIs).
 - Enhanced social inclusion for students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds.
3. To collect input for updating the sustainability plan for the DUALMON project.

Stakeholder Engagement and Activities

Interviews and discussions were organized with the following institutions and representatives:

- **University of Montenegro (UCG):** Meetings were held in Podgorica and at the Maritime Faculty in Kotor with leadership representatives and faculty staff. Discussions centered on integrating pilot dual higher education into institutional practices and addressing practical challenges in implementation.
- **Chamber of Commerce and Industry Partners:** Collaborative sessions were held in Podgorica with representatives from the Chamber of Commerce to explore industry engagement in the pilot dual higher education.
- **Quality Assurance Agency and Ministry of Education:** Representatives such as and key ministry officials participated in discussions focusing on legislative and accreditation updates required for DHE implementation.
- **Hospitality Industry Representatives:** Meetings in Budva with industry stakeholders highlighted the hospitality sector's potential role in supporting internships and dual higher education initiatives.



Key Findings and Observations

1. Institutional Integration:

- UCG and its faculties showcased a proactive approach toward embedding dual higher education within their programs. Pilot implementations provided a strong foundation for scaling the DUALMON model across the region.

2. Legislative and Accreditation Progress:

- Significant strides have been made in drafting amendments to higher education laws and accreditation standards to institutionalize dual higher education. These efforts were supported by the Ministry of Education and the Quality Assurance Agency.

3. Industry Collaboration:

- Industry partners, particularly in hospitality and maritime sectors, expressed interest in co-developing curricula and providing internship opportunities, with potential for sponsorships and resource-sharing.

4. Social Inclusion and Financial Support:

- dual higher education is recognized as a valuable tool for addressing socioeconomic disparities by offering paid internships and scholarships, thus enabling broader access to higher education.

5. Internationalization Efforts:

- Alignment with EU frameworks and best practices was acknowledged as a priority to enhance international collaboration and recognition of Montenegrin HEIs.

Challenges Identified

- Coordination among diverse stakeholders requires further refinement to align objectives and expectations.
- Greater awareness of the benefits of dual higher education is needed, especially among smaller industry players who are less familiar with the concept.



Conclusion

The DUALMON project has established a transformative model for dual higher education that bridges the gap between academia and the labor market. By focusing on institutionalization, capacity building, financial sustainability, and comprehensive dissemination, the project ensures its results will have a lasting impact. As a benchmark for innovation in education, DUALMON is poised to elevate Montenegro's higher education system and contribute to its socioeconomic advancement. Through collaboration, adaptability, and strategic foresight, the project lays a strong foundation for a sustainable and prosperous future.