



DUALMON

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

Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union



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6.4 FINAL CONFERENCE REPORT

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Abstract	This document is the report about the final conference of DUALMON project, held in Podgorica on September 20 th 2024.
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Final conference

The First Conference on Dual Higher Education in Montenegro was successfully organized as part of the final phase of the project "Strengthening Capacities for the Implementation of Dual Education in Montenegrin Higher Education – DUALMON." The conference was organized on September 20th, 2024, at the Faculty of Economics, University of Montenegro, bringing together over 50 participants, including representatives from academia, industry, government institutions, and students, all united in their commitment to advancing dual higher education in Montenegro. This event represented a significant milestone in promoting an innovative educational model aimed at strengthening the synergy between higher education institutions and the business sector in Montenegro. During the conference, the key outcomes of the DUALMON project were presented, alongside the experiences of various stakeholders, achieved results, sustainability plans, and a set of recommendations and guidelines for the continued implementation of dual education in Montenegro.

The conference highlighted the importance of fostering collaboration between academia and industry to enhance the quality of education and improve the employability of young people. By providing a platform for networking and the exchange of experiences, the event contributed to building a shared vision for the future of dual higher education in the country. Participants engaged in meaningful discussions, examining the potential benefits of dual education, including legislative changes and measures to ensure the project's long-term sustainability. This exchange of ideas laid the foundation for advancing a model of education that aligns academic programs with the demands of the labor market, while also addressing the broader socio-economic needs of Montenegro.

Welcoming the participants, the Dean of the Faculty of Economics, prof. Mijat Jocović PhD, emphasized the strategic importance of the DUALMON project in aligning Montenegro's higher education system with labor market requirements. He noted the valuable infrastructural contributions to the University of Montenegro, made possible by the acquisition of state-of-the-art equipment through the project. His remarks underscored the transformative potential of dual education in creating a modern educational framework that prepares students for the challenges of the contemporary job market. Prof. Mirko Savić PhD, the project coordinator, highlighted the success of DUALMON as one of the most impactful projects he has been involved in, extending gratitude to the Montenegrin team and international partners for their collaboration. He underscored the role of regional cooperation, noting that Montenegro, alongside Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, is among the first countries in the region to implement such a program under the Erasmus+ framework, drawing significant expertise and support from Slovenia and Austria.

The participants were also addressed by prof. Boban Melović PhD, the project coordinator at the University of Montenegro, who provided a comprehensive overview of the project's key outcomes, including the development of a generic dual education model tailored to the Montenegrin context. He outlined the challenges encountered during implementation and highlighted the opportunities for further advancing this educational approach. Prof. Melović emphasized that dual education is not merely an academic concept but a strategic investment in the future of Montenegro's educational and economic systems. By equipping students with practical skills and knowledge, dual education can create a dynamic, competitive economy capable of adapting to global trends. He concluded by calling for the joint efforts of all stakeholders to ensure the success and sustainability of this model, which promises to provide generations of young people with the tools they need to thrive professionally.

Representing the Ministry of Education, Science, and Innovation, Acting Director for Higher Education and Student Standards, Ms. Dragana Četković, addressed the significance of dual education and the Ministry's commitment to its implementation. She highlighted the Ministry's active role in the DUALMON project, emphasizing that this initiative is a crucial step towards modernizing Montenegro's higher education system and aligning it with labor market needs. By developing a generic dual education model and creating a supportive legal framework, Montenegro is laying the foundation for an innovative approach that combines theoretical knowledge with practical skills to enhance student employability and provide companies with a qualified workforce. Ms. Četković also drew attention to successful dual education models in countries like Austria, Slovenia, and Switzerland, where graduate employment rates reach up to 100%, showcasing the potential for similar success in Montenegro. She praised the broad network of partners involved in the project, including multiple faculties, companies, and institutions, and stressed the importance of such collaborations for the long-term sustainability of dual education. Acknowledging the challenges of implementation, Ms. Četković highlighted the Ministry's efforts in proposing amendments to the Higher Education Act to enable more flexible and innovative approaches. She noted that these legislative changes will allow students to gain practical skills aligned with market needs while empowering companies to actively shape the educational process. She also emphasized the importance of collective efforts among all stakeholders to ensure the success of dual education, highlighting the importance of this conference in terms of offering insights into the specific challenges and opportunities associated with implementing dual education across various academic disciplines.

The conference also addressed the challenges of implementing dual higher education across different academic disciplines, with faculty representatives sharing their experiences regarding the specific application of this model at their respective institutions. Associate prof. Zdenka Dragašević, from the Faculty of Economics, emphasized the significant benefits the implementation of the DUALMON project brought to this faculty, particularly in fostering closer collaboration with industry partners. She highlighted the tailored adjustments made to integrate practical training into the curriculum and acknowledged the initial challenges in aligning academic and corporate expectations. These challenges were successfully overcome through structured communication with partner companies and continuous feedback from students, who expressed high satisfaction with the hands-on learning opportunities. Companies involved also

noted the value of engaging with students who brought fresh perspectives and a strong theoretical foundation.

On the same occasion, prof. Vesna Popović Bugarin PhD, from the Faculty of Electrical Engineering underscored the transformative impact of dual education on this university unit, where practical application of theoretical knowledge is particularly important. She shared that the faculty faced specific challenges related to the technical requirements of student placements and the rapid pace of technological advancements in the industry. Through close cooperation with partner companies and the introduction of specialized training modules, these obstacles were effectively addressed. Feedback from both students and industry partners has been overwhelmingly positive, with students reporting a deeper understanding of their future professional roles and companies appreciating the chance to identify and mentor potential future employees.

On behalf of the Maritime Faculty, Prof. Špiro Ivošević PhD shared similar sentiments, noting that dual education has provided maritime students with valuable access to real-world applications of their studies. He highlighted the logistical challenges of coordinating internships within the maritime industry, which were managed through strategic partnerships and precise scheduling. Students, he remarked, were particularly enthusiastic about the opportunity to gain practical experience aboard vessels and in maritime companies, while industry stakeholders praised the initiative for addressing a critical need for highly skilled professionals.

During this part of the conference, the teaching assistant Jovana Janinović, PhD, from the Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality Management, emphasized the unique advantages of dual education in his sector, where practical experience is often the cornerstone of professional development. He noted the challenges of ensuring consistent quality in student placements across a diverse industry but stressed that these were mitigated through the establishment of clear guidelines and close monitoring of internships. Students highlighted the value of this approach, expressing confidence in their readiness for employment, while industry partners commended the program for producing highly competent and adaptable graduates.

These testimonies of the representatives of all four UoM units collectively illustrated the broad-reaching benefits of the DUALMON project. They demonstrated how the model of dual higher education can be effectively tailored to meet the needs of different academic disciplines and industries, while simultaneously addressing challenges through collaboration, innovation, and a shared commitment to student success. The high levels of satisfaction among students and companies underscored the program's value in bridging the gap between academic learning and professional practice.

During the final conference, it was also highlighted that the DUALMON project has involved not only Montenegro but also three partner countries—Austria, Slovenia, and Serbia - and engaged a wide network of stakeholders, including four faculties at the University of Montenegro, over 15 companies, and more than 40 students who participated in pilot program. The project also included collaboration with key institutions such as the Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education and the Montenegrin Chamber of Commerce. During the



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conference, participants had the opportunity to hear testimonials from companies, professors, and students who had been directly involved in dual education program. Their experiences underscored the positive impact of this approach on skill development and employability, reaffirming the value of continued investment in dual education.

The conference concluded with an open dialogue, allowing participants to share their views and explore the future of dual education in Montenegro. This interactive session underscored the importance of collective efforts in addressing challenges and leveraging opportunities to further advance dual education. Through these discussions, the participants reaffirmed their commitment to ensuring the sustainability of this innovative educational model, which holds great promise for strengthening Montenegro's higher education system and its overall economic competitiveness.

This event marked a significant step forward in integrating dual education into Montenegro's higher education landscape. By fostering partnerships between academia and industry, creating supportive legal and institutional frameworks, and aligning educational programs with labor market demands, Montenegro is paving the way for a brighter future. Dual education represents a transformative approach that not only benefits students but also contributes to the creation of a skilled workforce capable of driving economic growth and innovation.



APPENDIX:

Dualmon Conference Agenda

**Location: Faculty of Economics, University of Montenegro,
Podgorica, Street Jovana Tomaševića 37, Hall Millennium (II floor)**

Time: September 20, 2024.

September 20, 2024.

9 ³⁰ – 10 ⁰⁰ h	Registration of participants	
	Part I	
	Opening and welcome speeches	
10 ⁰⁰ – 10 ¹⁵ h	Welcome speeches	Prof. dr Mijat Jocović, dean of the Faculty of Economics, University of Montenegro Prof. dr Mirko Savić, University of Novi Sad, project coordinator Prof. dr Boban Melović, project coordinator at University of Montenegro
10 ¹⁵ – 10 ³⁰ h	Presentation of Project Results - Generic Dual Higher Education Model (DUALMON model)	Prof. dr Boban Melović, project coordinator at University of Montenegro
	Part II	
	Challenges of implementing DHE in Montenegro - Description and concept of the specific dual models of HEIs	
10 ³⁰ – 10 ⁴⁵ h	Description and concept of the specific dual model of Faculty of Economics	Prof. Zdenka Dragašević, PhD, Faculty of Economics
10 ⁴⁵ – 11 ⁰⁰ h	Description and concept of the specific dual model of Faculty of Electrical Engineering	Prof. Vesna Popović Bugarin, PhD, Faculty of Electrical Engineering
11 ⁰⁰ – 11 ¹⁵ h	Description and concept of the specific dual model of Faculty of Maritime Studies	Prof. Špiro Ivošević, PhD, Faculty of Maritime Studies
11 ¹⁵ – 11 ³⁰ h	Description and concept of the specific dual model of the Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality	Jovana Janinović, PhD, Faculty of Tourism and Hospitality
11 ³⁰ – 11 ⁴⁰ h	Possibilities of implementing DHE in Montenegro – Proposal for amendments to the law on higher education	Dragana Četković MSc, Acting General Director of the Directorate for Higher Education and Student Standards, Ministry of Education, Science and Innovation
11 ⁴⁰ – 12 ⁰⁰ h	<i>Break</i>	
	Part III	
	Experiences of key stakeholders, changes in legislation and sustainability of the project	
12 ⁰⁰ – 12 ²⁰ h	The company's experience of the participants in the dual high education program	Lejla Hadžikić, MSc, Voli LTD Aleksandra Dujović, Crnogorski Telekom Mihailo Radević, Vega IT
12 ²⁰ – 12 ³⁵ h	The experience of a professor participating in the program of dual high education	Prof. Biljana Rondović, PhD, Faculty of Economics Prof. Senka Šekularac Ivošević, PhD, Faculty of Maritime Studies
12 ³⁵ – 12 ⁴⁵ h	The experience of a student participating in a dual high education program	Ivana Gorović, Faculty of Economics Ana Ašanin, Faculty of Electrical Engineering
12 ⁴⁵ – 13 ⁰⁰ h	Dissemination and Exploitation of Results - Sustainability of the project	Project coordinator
13 ⁰⁰ h	Discussion and closing of the conference	

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