

UTILIZATION OF EU PROGRAMS DEDICATED TO THE WESTERN BALKAN COUNTRIES: A CASE STUDY OF KOSOVO

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to explore and to determine the level of EU programs of education in Kosovo emphasizing the effect of how these programs have stimulated the program of Kosovo's public universities, including students, academic staff. The existence of the EU, as a complex community, and thus the existence of their programs for encouraging and motivating education in the countries under development, is of great importance for the establishment of a high degree of equality. Building a Europe of knowledge is a priority for all countries, including countries such as Kosovo. Thus the EU as a very rich community created numerous programs pursued to establish a high level of communication through various forms of education, training, youth and sport. For the realization of this paper the method of primary data has been used to demonstrate the level of utilization of EU programs of education dedicated to Western Balkans, especially to the Kosovo. Based on the obtained data, we can with great certainty say that by applying the programs offered by the EU, education in Kosovo has reached a satisfactory level of quality, so that we came to the conclusion that as much as the future cooperation with the EU is, thus more better quality education Kosovo will have.

Keywords: Kosovo, Transition, European Union, Programs, Education, Public Universities

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this paper is to determine the impact of utilization of the EU programs for education dedicated to the third countries, whose main aim is to promote European higher education on the one hand and on the other hand to help countries in transition in building their education capacity in order to gain the quality needed to be ranged between most European universities. Gaining and using these programs, every University should be capable to cooperate with other

education institutions in region and wide, to enhance quality in higher education, to promote the intercultural understanding through cooperation, to adapt European education system, to exchange academic staff with other institutions, but also to exchange students and to produce much more quality rather than quantity. But, the most essential part of the benefits should be the increment mobility streams between the European Union and Third Countries.

Many Third Countries, including Kosovo, believe that the role of EU programs for education have great advantage and opportunity for the stimulation of the development of their education system. So, all countries in transition are taking various measures to gain these programs, trying their luck in developing the education system and also stimulating their economic development. Bearing this in mind, the aim of this study is to determine and explain in which cases EU programs have a positive effect on the education development and also economic development in country of Kosovo.

For the realization of this paper we have used the method of primary data, were throughout the questionnaire we have research five (5) Public Universities of Kosovo. And according to the data we collected, almost every Public University in Kosovo have been involved in such kind of programs and benefited from it in every possible aspect of education and each of them in different ways. But, had the utilization of these programs have positive or negative impact on the Kosovo's Universities and their education quality it is something that we are going to specify and determine in the continuation of this paper.

According to this, our hypothesis is based on one dependent variable; Level of Education and Quality of Education, and one independent variable; EU programs, thus the research questions are mostly oriented on an essential direction: *What are the effects of EU programs on the Level and Quality of Education in Kosovo's Public Universities?*

LITERATURE REVIEW

EU Programs for Education Dedicated to the Third Countries

The European Union is not only an important political and economic institution, but a community of nearly 500 million citizens and one of the largest markets in the world. As the European Union continues to grow in size and influence, understanding the EU and the countries seeking membership, becomes key to understanding Europe and our world (European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, 2009).

Besides the many roles that the EU plays, development of education is one of the essential fields under study. Through its political, practical and economic support, the EU plays a key role in building the educational capacity of the Western Balkans, or the countries in transition.

The Union is committed to human rights and works to ensure they are respected universally. The EU has made human rights a central aspect of its foreign relations and expresses this focus in political dialogues with third countries, in its development policy and aid (European Union, External Action). As far as human resources are the main factor for any kind of development, the EU devotes many programs for education and training to students and academics. The aim of these programs is that all educational institutions of third countries to be equivalent with those in developed countries.

The EU programs for educational institutions, directed to the transition countries, are of great importance for these countries. Primarily because in that way, they are not only helping in the development of the institution as a whole, but also in the development of all its constituent elements starting from the students until the administrative and academic staff. The programs that this community provides to underdeveloped countries are diverse in character, and by periods. EU programs can be classified as follows:

- 1) EU programs 2009 - 2013 – The Erasmus Mundus program aims to enhance the quality of higher education and promote dialogue and understanding between people and cultures through mobility and academic cooperation.
- 2) EU programs 2014 – 2020 – The Erasmus+ program aims to boost skills and employability, as well as modernizing Education, Training, and Youth work.

EU programs 2009 – 2013

EU programs for the period 2009-2013 are focused on specific objectives to enhance the quality of higher education and promote dialogue and understanding between people and cultures through mobility and academic cooperation. The programs for this period were divided into two parts: 1. Tempus 2. Lifelong Learning

The Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) is responsible for the management of all three actions of Erasmus Mundus, under the supervision of the Directorate-General for Education and Culture (DG EAC of the European Commission) and Europe Aid Development and Cooperation (DG DEVCO).

Tempus Program

Tempus is the European Union's program which supports the modernization of higher education in the EU's surrounding area. Tempus promotes institutional cooperation that involves the European Union and Partner Countries and focuses on the reform and modernization of higher education systems in the Partner Countries of Eastern Europe, Central Asia, the Western Balkans and the Mediterranean region (European Commission, EACEA).

The aim of this program is to promote voluntary convergence of the higher education systems in the Partner Countries with EU developments in the field of higher education. With regards to the Western Balkans, Tempus contributes to preparing the candidate and potential candidate countries for a participation in the integrated.

Beside many above mention aims, Tempus also promotes a people-to-people approach. Tempus provides support to consortia of institutions composed mainly of universities or university associations, but also non-academic partners can also be part of a consortium.

Lifelong Learning

The Lifelong Learning Program (LLP) enables individuals at all stages of their lives to pursue stimulating learning opportunities across Europe. It is an umbrella program integrating various educational and training initiatives (European Commission, EACEA). It is divided into four main sub programs which are focused on different stages of education and training, such as:

- ✓ Comenius – for schools
- ✓ Erasmus – for higher education
 - Action 1 – (Scholarships – Master courses and Doctoral programs)
 - Action 2 – (Partnerships)
 - Action 3 – (Promotion projects)
- ✓ Leonardo da Vinci – for vocational education and training
- ✓ Grundtvig – for adult education

EU programs 2014 – 2020

Erasmus Mundus is a cooperation and mobility program in the field of higher education (European Commission, Erasmus Mundus 2009 – 2013). EU programs for the period 2014 - 2020 include all existing programs, which are framed in one program or ERASMUS +. A new Erasmus+ program aims to support actions in the fields of Education, Training, Youth and Sport for the period 2014-2020. The Erasmus+ program replaces seven existing programs bringing them together, and these are:

- ✓ The Lifelong Learning Program (Erasmus, Leonardo da Vinci, Comenius, Grundtvig and Jean Monnet),
- ✓ The Youth in Action program,
- ✓ Five international cooperation programs (Erasmus Mundus, Tempus, Alfa, Edulink, the program for cooperation with industrialized countries), and
- ✓ The new sport action.

METHODOLOGY

There are different methods of research, and each in itself contains certain purposes and in such manner to implement them. The purpose of this study was to analyze the educational situation in Kosovo, and to find out the level of the implementation of EU programs dedicated to education of Kosovo.

For the realization of this paper I have used the qualitative method or the questionnaire, as it was the most appropriate in terms of working conditions and environment. The questionnaire consists of 11 questions which include general details about the universities in Kosovo and the level of implementation of EU programs dedicated to education (Annex – Questionnaire). Total of 5 (five) public universities were surveyed for collecting primary data.

EMPIRICAL RESULTS

Inclusion of public institutions, countries in transition, in the process, which provides the EU, is not an easy task, especially when it comes to education, as one of the most sensitive fields of each state. Primarily because these countries, although not sufficiently developed and resistant, they must have and possess basic elements and the ability to realization of issues whether it comes to the field of education or any other field that make a country stable. However, on the other hand, every country like these must take advantage of every opportunity for a better quality of social life. EU programs devoted to education of countries in transition are of great contribution to the development of educational institutions in Kosovo.

According to the questionnaire, from total of 5 (five) surveyed public universities, each of them has been involved in this type of program (as can be seen in the tables below and the graph), some more, some less.

Table 1: Name of the Institutions

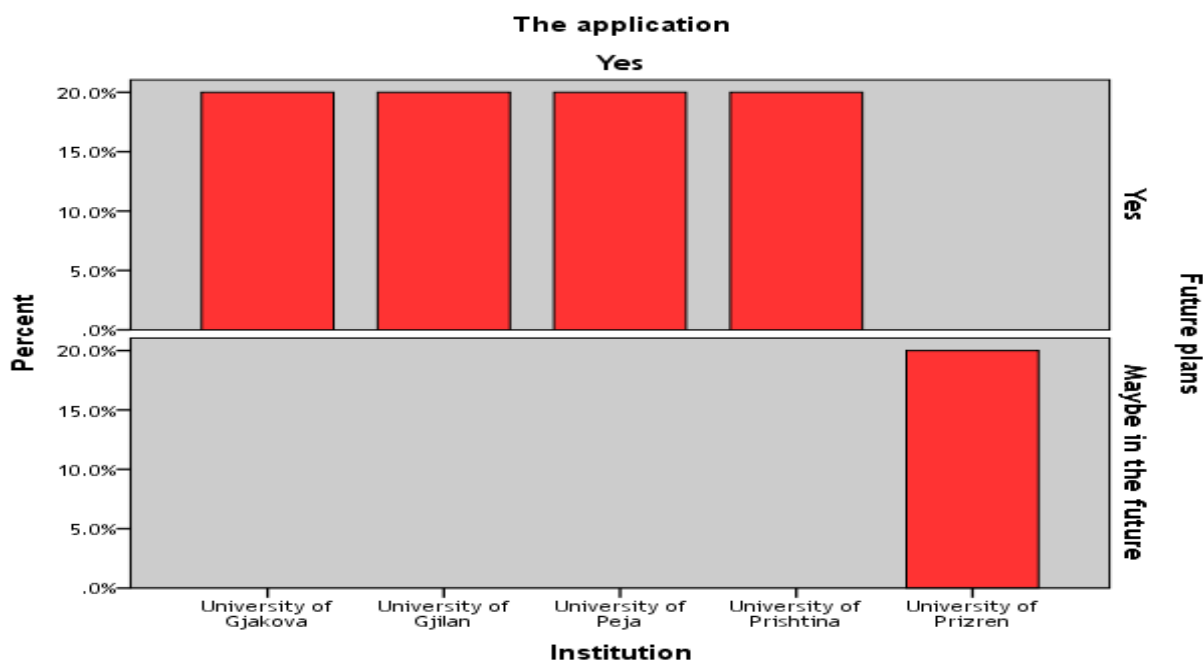
Institutions		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	University of Gjakova	1	20,0	20,0	20,0
	University of Gjilan	1	20,0	20,0	40,0
	University of Peja	1	20,0	20,0	60,0
	University of Prishtina	1	20,0	20,0	80,0
	University of Prizren	1	20,0	20,0	100,0
Total		5	100,0	100,0	

Table 3. The application

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	5	100,0	100,0	100,0

Studies have shown that all of these universities have acquired certain skills, and thus applied to the respective programs, retaining not only on that, but also they are planning to not give up in the future. For example, the University of Prizren, as can be seen on the chart 1, has made clear that in the near future is planning to apply for other similar programs. What we can conclude, is that this programs for education have resulted very productive when it comes to the quality of educational institutions, which is why our institutions tends to even better quality.

Chart 1: The Application and Future Plans

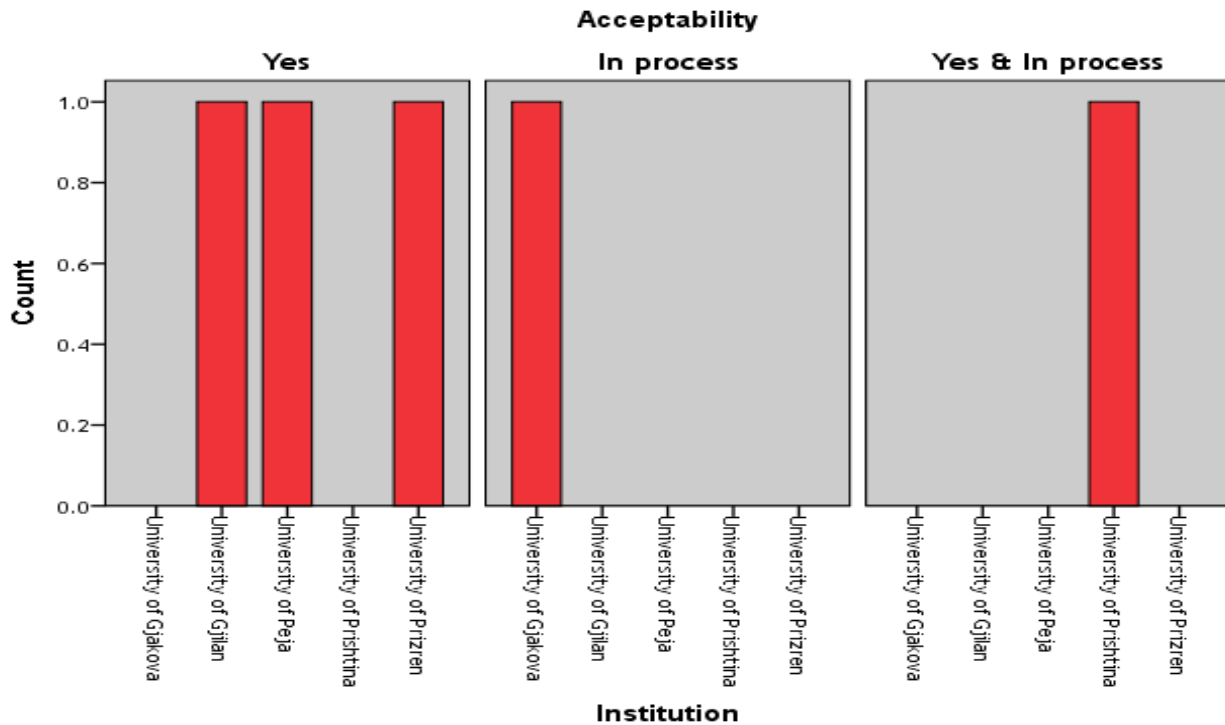


The eligibility of the program varies from institution to institution. Several of them have for some time been accepted and implemented, and also we've got some of those who are still in the selection process. In Chart 2 it can be seen all of these options, except the refusal.

University of Gjilan, Peja, Prizren and Pristina are among those Universities whose programs are approved by the EU, thus the quality of the institutions improved at a much higher level. However, there are also those programs that are still in the process of acceptance, such as the programs of the University of Prishtina and Gjakova, but certainly there are no those who

are not accepted by the EU, which suggests that although we are a country in transition, our educational institutions still have the basic elements for the promotion and improvement of education.

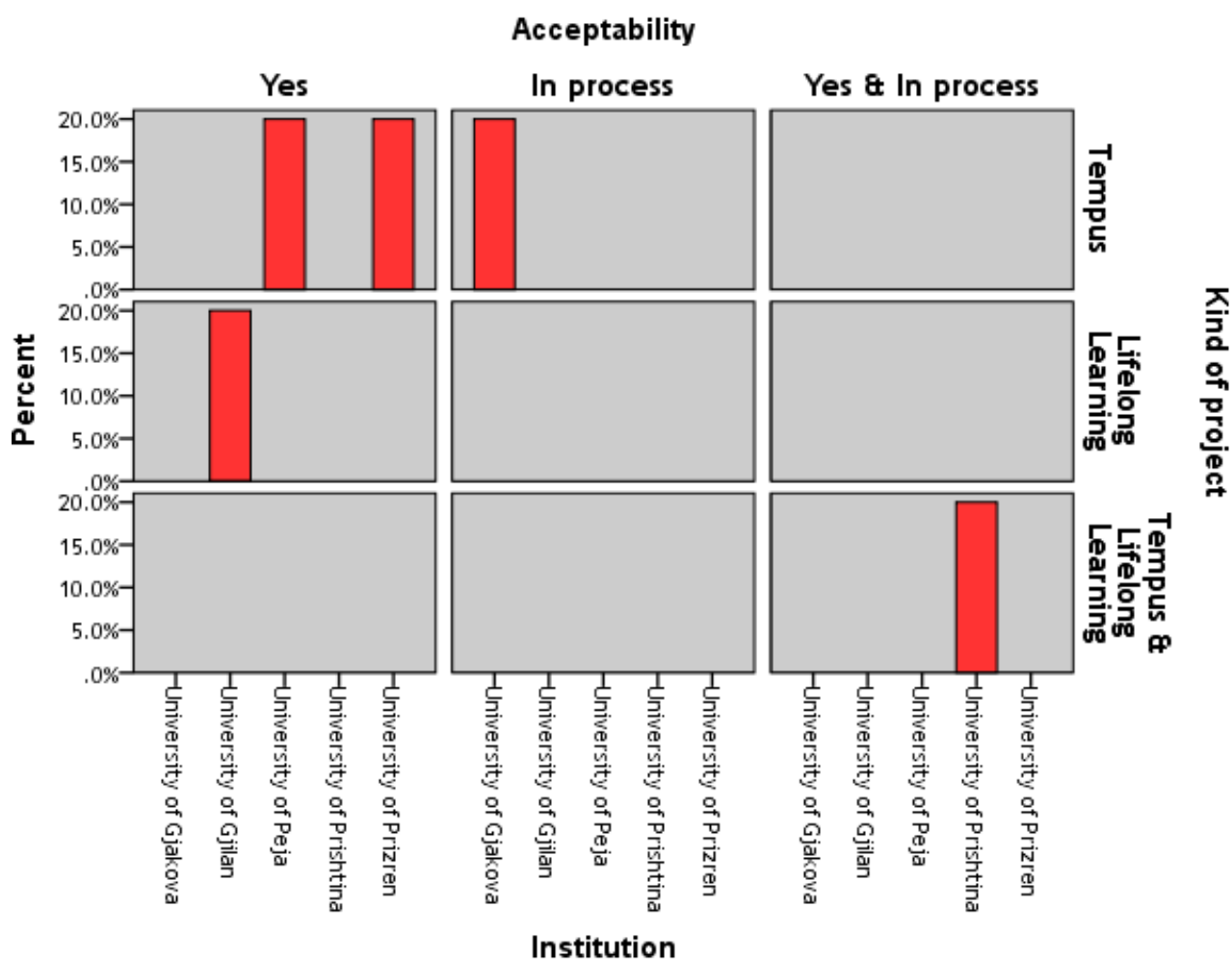
Chart 2: Acceptability of Programs



Studies have shown a lot of diversity in the application program. Taking into account that there are many types of programs offered by the EU for education, therefore the applications are different. Most of the application is sent to the Tempus programs, but neither other programs are not absent.

Chart 3 shows that the majority has applied for Tempus program, singling out the University of Prishtina as the oldest educational institution in Kosovo, which has applied for both types of applications, while University of Gjilan for the Erasmus program, which has been under the former Lifelong Learning composition.

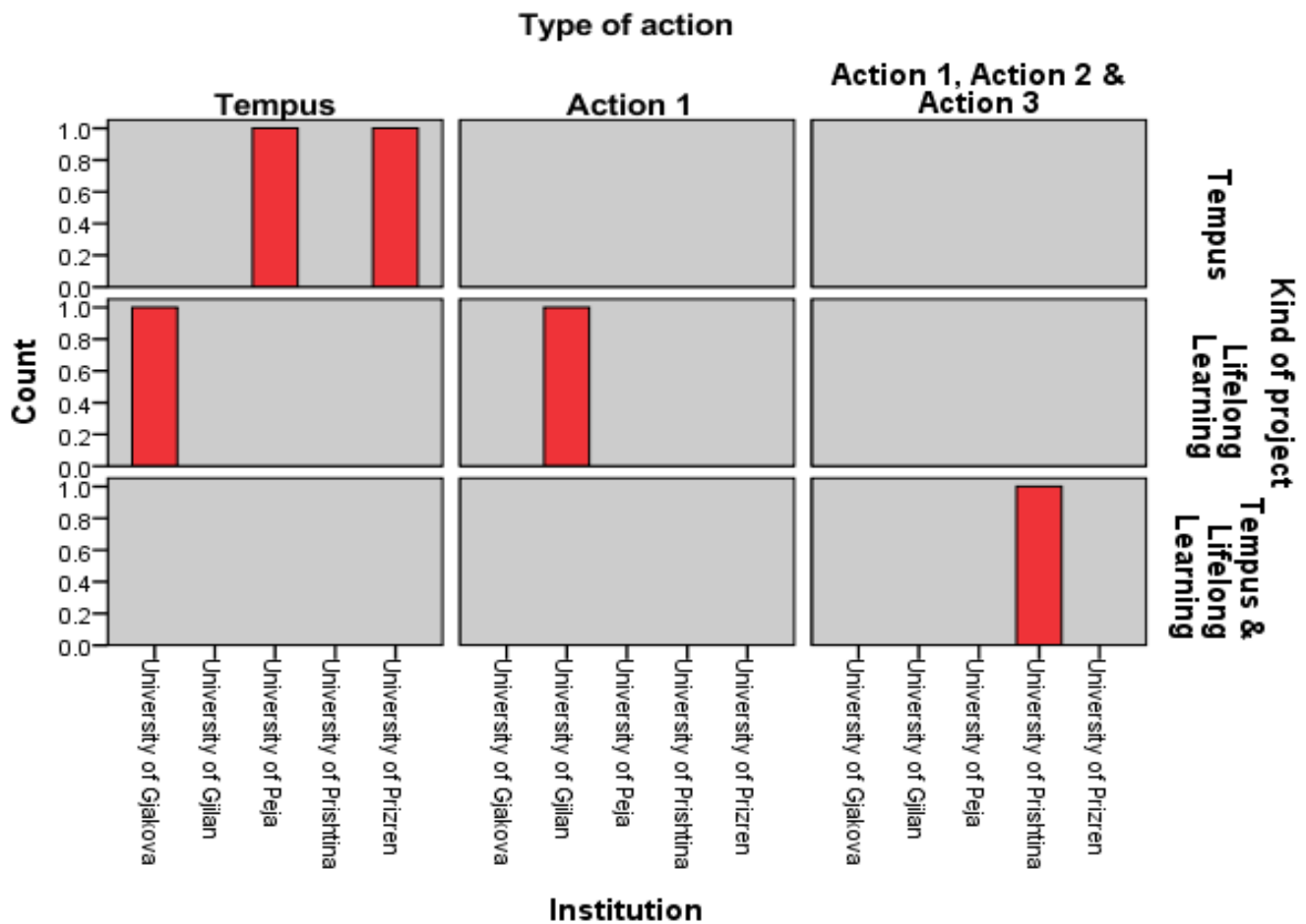
Chart 3: Acceptability in the Relation with kind of Projects



We know that the Tempus program belongs to one particular division, a program that includes the connection and collaboration of higher education institutions, research and practice, while the Erasmus program contains a number of actions of various directives, type of mobility of individuals, cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices, support for policy reforms, etc.

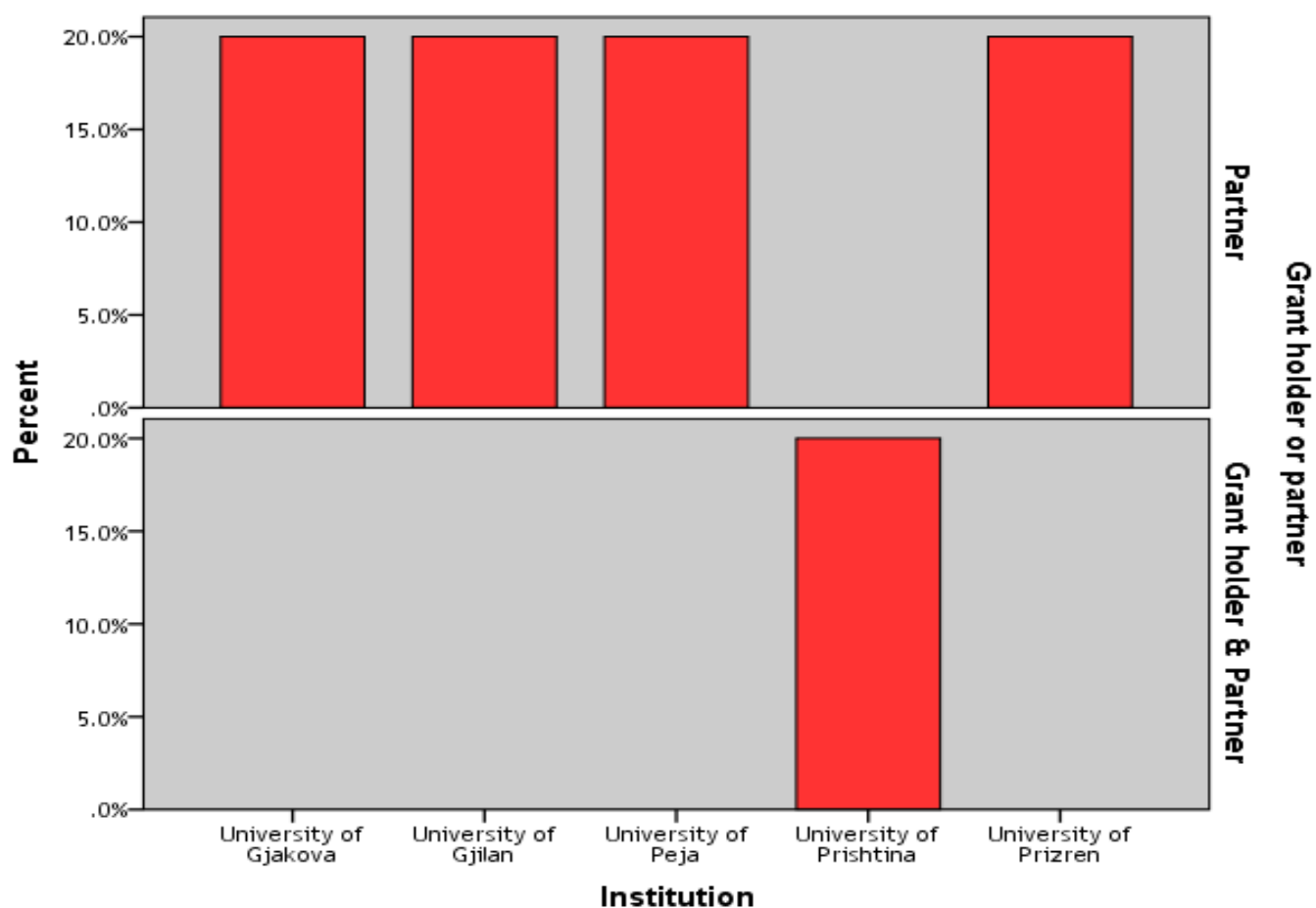
As shown in Chart 3, University of Prishtina has tried its hand in both programs, for the reason is the oldest University in Kosovo, while other universities have mixed character, some of them such as the University of Prizren, Peja and Gjakova tried their capacity only on Tempus projects, while the University of Gjilan only on Erasmus projects.

Chart 4: Kind of Project in Relation with Actions



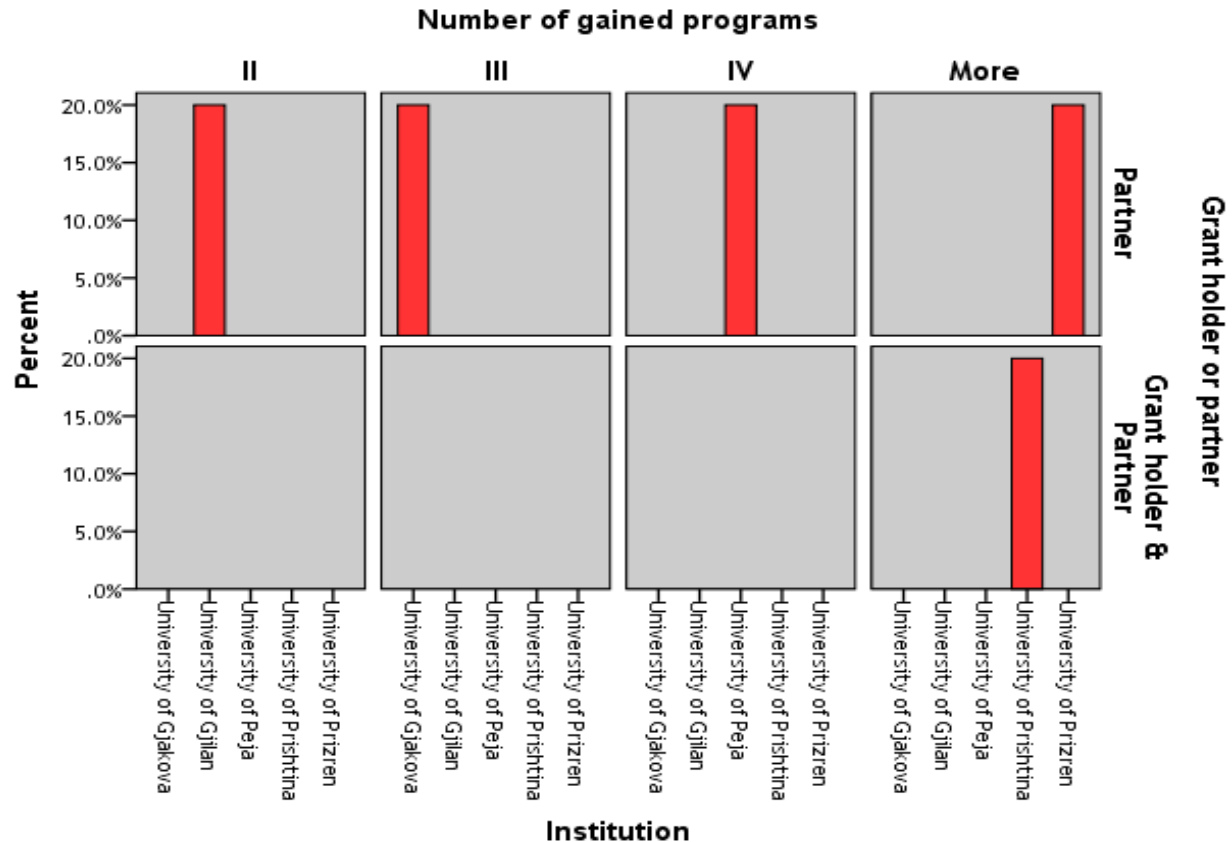
The reason of applying of the education institutions of Kosovo in any of these programs is in a large dependent on the manner of applying. There are two ways through which these institutions can apply for a certain project: as a partner or grant holder. If we look on the chart 5, we can see that all institutions except the one of Prishtina appear to be in the form of a partner, while Prishtina as a grant holder. The reason is primarily situated in the fact that the University of Prishtina is the oldest one, and thus the appearance also as a grant holder it is not surprising. Long years of experience have made this institution to be a participant in the form of a partner and in the form of grant holders.

Chart 5: Grant Holder or Partner



On the other hand the numbers of acquired projects are drastically different from institution to institution. For instance, chart 6 shows that the youngest universities have received the least number of programs. Starting from the University of Gjilan who got two programs, the University of Gjakova with three programs, whose programs are still in the selection process, and the University of Peja with four obtained program, while University of Pristina and Prizren dominated with more than four programs.

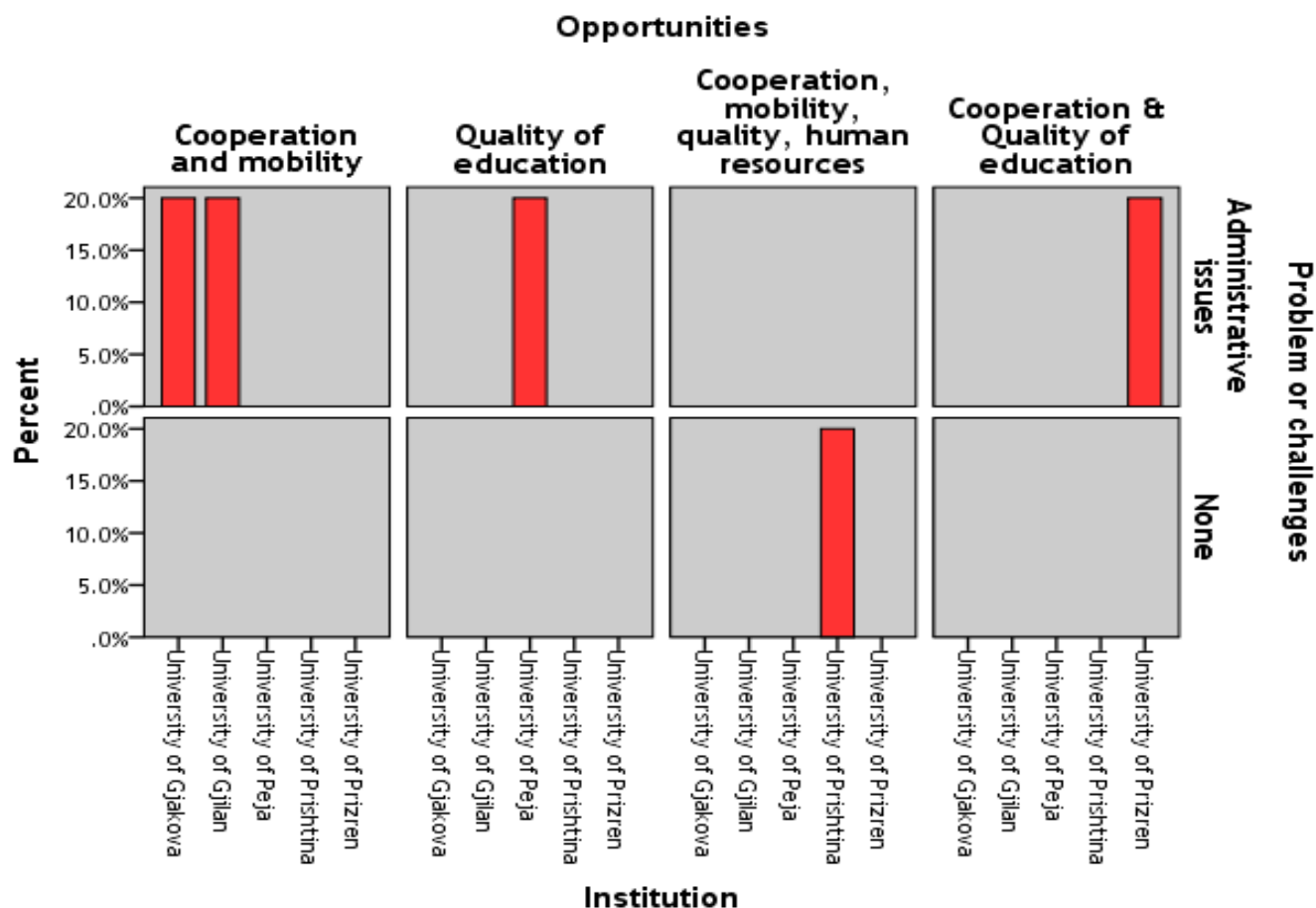
Chart 6: Number of Gained Programs



Like any other field, so field of education carries many advantages and disadvantages, opportunities and weaknesses, especially when it comes to EU programs. The advantages and possibilities are certainly attributed in gaining the projects, however many problems as weaknesses of each institution appear during the application. Thus, these institutions have confronted with all these elements during their application and implementation of the program. As one of the main benefits, the University of Prizren and Gjakova intensified the cooperation and mobility, the University of Pec quality of education, the University of Prishtina: cooperation and mobility, quality of education and developing the qualification of human resources, while the University of Prizren cooperation and quality of education.

On the other hand as the main weaknesses or problems encountered during the construction of projects, most of the institutions have underlined administrative issues, with the addition of the University of Gjilan whose second problem was budget problems, while the University of Prishtina has not met with any kind of problems during the application or implementation for the EU programs.

Chart 7: Opportunities, Problems or Challenges



CONCLUSIONS AND RECCOMENDATION

Based on given results we can state that the role of the EU in the construction of educational capacities is extremely effective, especially when it comes to the state of which the education system is very weak and hindered functional. The benefits of EU programs provided to the countries in transition, as we have seen, are numerous.

Studies have shown that the overall quality of education increased at a higher level than in the period when such programs did not exist. After-war period as well as the phase of drastic transition have made to educational institutions lose their quality and the very essence of education. However, these programs were able to stop this process of education, making it better and more productive.

The quality of education includes many other factors that make it more complete, such as ability of internal and external cooperation, improving the quality of human resources by exchanging students and academic staff, as well as the mobility within the institution.

Based on all these advantages, chances and possibilities, some of the recommendations are:

- Greater engagement – means the maximum engagement in capacity building to obtain the largest possible number of these programs, for even better quality.
- Greater internal and external Cooperation – includes the establishment of cooperation with those universities that are experienced and of which can be obtained any useful information or a proposal for a successful application.
- Proper management – is related to the proper management within the unit, to make the process of creating programs proceeded without administrative problems.
- Use of any given opportunity – includes the use of every opportunity that is given to the educational institutions, otherwise it would be understood as a lack of seriousness of the unit.
- The establishment of contacts – is an important part of any business activity, and even of educational institutions. Being in touch with universities in developed countries also means to be closer to the EU. And that is certainly the goal of all countries in transition.

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ANNEXURE

Questionnaire about the EU Programs

Good morning / Good Afternoon / Good Evening. My name is Suada Ajdarpasic. I am a student at the University of Prishtina, at the PhD studies; also I am Assistant at the University "Haxhi Zeka" in Peja. I'm on the verge of realizing a scientific paper in the subject "Economics of European integration". However, for the completion of my paper I had to do a questionnaire, in order to get correct information for the completion of this paper. So I hope that we can account on your help. Please, reply on my questions!

Note: The following information about your University will serve only for the realization of the scientific paper. This information will not be used for any other purpose.

1) What's the name of your Institution?

- a) University "Haxhi Zeka" - Peja
- b) University "Hasan Prishtina" - Prishtina
- c) University "Fehmi Agani" – Gjakova
- d) University "Ukshin Hoti" – Prizren
- e) University "Kadri Zeka" - Gjilan

2) Have you ever applied for any of EU project?

- a) Yes (if Yes, please go to the 3rd question)
- b) No (if No, please go to the 10th question)

3) What kind of program have you applied for?

- a) Tempus (if your option is Tempus, please go to the 5th question)
- b) Lifelong Learning:

Erasmus (If your option is Erasmus, please go to the 4th question)

Comenius (if your option is Comenius, please go to the 5th question)

Leonardo da Vinci (if your option is Leonardo da Vinci, please go to the 5th question)

Grundtvig (if your option is Grundtvig, please go to the 5th question)

4) Based on the applied program, what type of action have you applied for?

- a) Action 1 (Scholarships – Master courses and doctoral programs)
- b) Action 2 (Partnerships)
- c) Action 3 (Promotion projects)

5) Have the program been approved?

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) In process

6) Have you applied as a grant holder or just as a partner?

- a) Grant holder
- b) Partner

7) How many programs have you gained?

- a) 2
- b) 3
- c) 4
- d) More: _____

8) The main problems or challenges during implementation of the Project?

- a) Administrative issues,
- b) Lack of knowledge,
- c) Lack of support from Rectorate (Management of the Universities)

9) What kind of opportunities has your institution got?

- a) Cooperation and mobility
- b) Quality of education
- c) Developing the qualification of human resources

10) Why haven't you applied for any of programs, what was the reason (please specify)?

- a) Budget problems
- b) Administrative problems

11) Have you been planning in applying for any of the EU programs?

- a) Yes
- b) No
- c) Maybe in near future