



STUDIJŲ KOKYBĖS VERTINIMO CENTRAS  
CENTRE FOR QUALITY ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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## COMMUNICATION FIELD OF STUDY

European Humanities University (EHU)

### EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT

**Expert panel:**

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Report prepared in 2024  
Report language: English

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# I. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1. OUTLINE OF THE EVALUATION PROCESS

The study field evaluations in Lithuanian higher education institutions (HEIs) are based on the following:

- Procedure for the External Evaluation and Accreditation of Studies, Evaluation Areas and Indicators, approved by the Minister of Education, Science, and Sport;
- Methodology of External Evaluation of Study Fields approved by the Director of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (SKVC);
- Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG).

The evaluation is intended to support HEIs in continuous enhancement of their study process and to inform the public about the quality of programmes within the study field.

The object of the evaluation is all programmes within a specific field of study. A separate assessment is given for each study cycle.

The evaluation process consists of the following main steps: 1) self-evaluation and production of a self-evaluation report (SER) prepared by a HEI; 2) a site visit of the review panel to the HEI; 3) the external evaluation report (EER) prepared by the review panel 4) accreditation decision taken by SKVC and its publication; 4) follow-up activities.

The main outcome of the evaluation process is the EER prepared by the review panel. The HEI is forwarded the draft EER to report on any factual mistakes. The draft report is then subject to approval by the external Study Evaluation Committee operating under SKVC. Once approved the EER serves as the basis for an accreditation decision. If a HEI is not happy with the outcome of the evaluation, HEI can file an appeal.

On the basis of the approved EER, SKVC takes one of the following accreditation decisions:

- **Accreditation granted for 7 years** if all evaluation areas are evaluated as exceptional (5 points), very good (4 points), or good (3 points).
- **Accreditation granted for 3 years** if at least one evaluation area is evaluated as satisfactory (2 points).
- **Not accredited** if at least one evaluation area is evaluated as unsatisfactory (1 point).

## 1.2. REVIEW PANEL

The review panel was appointed in accordance with the Reviewer Selection Procedure as approved by the Director of SKVC.

The composition of the review panel was as follows:

1. Panel chair: Prof. dr. Ana Gaio
2. Academic member: Dr. Alberto Luis García García
3. Academic member: Prof. dr. Toni-Matti Karjalainen
4. Social partner: Artūras Olšauskas
5. Student representative: Adrian-Vasile Lăzărescu

## 1.3. SITE VISIT

The site visit was organized on 23 April 2024 onsite.

Meetings with the following members of the staff and stakeholders took place during the site visit:

- Senior management and administrative staff of the faculty(ies)
- Team responsible for preparation of the SER
- Teaching staff
- Students
- Alumni and social stakeholders including employers.

There was a need for translation during the meeting with alumni and social stakeholders including employers.

## 1.4. BACKGROUND OF THE REVIEW

### Overview of the HEI

The European Humanities University (EHU) was originally founded in Minsk (Belarus) in 1992 although, following forced politically motivated closure in 2005, it relocated to Vilnius where reopened in 2006 and continues to operate as a Lithuanian university. EHU is a public institution fully established according to Lithuanian law and as such it participates in the Bologna process and European Union mobility programmes so that its study structures and awards are fully recognised across the EHEA. As a non-state self-governed institution, EHU enjoys academic, administrative, economic and financial autonomy. EHU's two academic departments of 'Humanities' and 'Social Sciences' include a combined offer of 14 programmes across BA, MA and PhD cycles of study and subjects ranging from heritage to visual art to theatre (Humanities), and from media and communication to international business, law, history, politics, economics, policy, gender studies, and informatics (Social Sciences).

### Overview of the study field

Although the Media and Communication Bachelor's is the only media and communication offering in EHU's educational portfolio, the programme is a fast-growing study subject with a current cohort of 365 students (up from 207 in 2019) and an increasingly international profile. The programme is delivered in Russian, Belarusian and English in the Department of Social Sciences.

### Previous external evaluations

The Bachelor's Media and Communication programme was launched in 2005 and in the years to 2023 it was the object of SKVC evaluations in 2006, 2009, 2012, 2015 and 2019 – all had positive evaluation outcomes. The team explained how they addressed the previous experts evaluation recommendations on pp.20-21 of the SER.

### Documents and information used in the review

The following documents and/or information have been requested / provided by the HEI before or during the site visit:

- *Self-evaluation report and its annexes*
- *Final theses*

### Additional sources of information used by the review panel:

The following additional sources of information have been used by the review panel:

- Study program 'Media and Communication (6121JX076) - Drop-out rate, 2019/20-2023/24

## II. STUDY PROGRAMMES IN THE FIELD

### First cycle/LTQF 6

Title of the study programme	<b>Media and Communication</b>
State code	6121JX076
Type of study (college/university)	University studies
Mode of study (full time/part time) and nominal duration (in years)	Full-time, 4 years Part-time, 5 years
Workload in ECTS	240
Award (degree and/or professional qualification)	Bachelor of Social Sciences
Language of instruction	Russian, Belarusian, English
Admission requirements	Secondary education
First registration date	2019-04-19
Comments (including remarks on joint or interdisciplinary nature of the programme, mode of provision)	

### III. ASSESSMENT IN POINTS BY CYCLE AND EVALUATION AREAS

The first cycle of Communication study field at European Humanities University is given a positive evaluation.

No.	Evaluation Area	Evaluation points <sup>1*</sup>
1.	Study aims, learning outcomes and curriculum	4
2.	Links between scientific (or artistic) research and higher education	4
3.	Student admission and support	4
4.	Teaching and learning, student assessment and graduate employment	3
5.	Teaching staff	3
6.	Learning facilities and resources	3
7.	Quality management and public information	4
<b>Total:</b>		25

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1\*

**1 (unsatisfactory)** - the area does not meet the minimum requirements, there are substantial shortcomings that hinder the implementation of the programmes in the field.

**2 (satisfactory)** - the area meets the minimum requirements, but there are substantial shortcomings that need to be eliminated.

**3 (good)** - the area is being developed systematically, without any substantial shortcomings.

**4 (very good)** - the area is evaluated very well in the national context and internationally, without any shortcomings.

**5 (exceptional)** - the area is evaluated exceptionally well in the national context and internationally.

## III. STUDY FIELD ANALYSIS

### AREA 1: STUDY AIMS, LEARNING OUTCOMES AND CURRICULUM

#### 1.1. Programmes are aligned with the country's economic and societal needs and the strategy of the HEI

##### FACTUAL SITUATION

##### 1.1.1. Programme aims and learning outcomes are aligned with the needs of the society and/or the labour market

Not applicable for HEIs in exile, according to Annex 1 (Methodology).

##### 1.1.2. Programme aims and learning outcomes are aligned with the HEI's mission, goals, and strategy

EHU is a student-centred university with a mission to promote civil society development through Humanities and Liberal Arts for students from Belarus and the region, bringing them together and offering international and study experiences of quality. It caters primarily to civically minded students from Eastern Europe and is committed to European values and Liberal Arts and to offering a rich on-campus life and alumni network.

Delivered in Russian, Belarusian and English, the Bachelor's Media and Communication generally aims to train specialists in the field of audiovisual communication and media technologies who have the competences both to work in the media and to research digital media and audiovisual culture in contemporary society. The programme covers a wide range of subjects reflecting current media and communications skills and issues (modules include e.g. 'Politicization of Independent Culture in Belarus', 'Diversity, Equality, Inclusion in Media'), providing a mix of theoretical, practical and work-based learning (eg. 'Practice') opportunities to students.

The programme is fast-growing with a current cohort of 365 students (up from 207 in 2019) and an increasingly international profile which, in addition to Lithuania, attracts regional students from Belarus, Ukraine, Latvia, Russia as well as EU exchange students via the Erasmus programme. Academic staff also map onto this inter-national profile with research activity, networking and partnerships including summer schools, conferences and projects with HEI partners from Lithuania, Germany, Austria, Poland, Czech Republic, Sweden, Ukraine and Georgia. In this framework, staff research and student papers explore various aspects of the digitisation and mediatisation of society, culture, education and politics in Belarus and the wider region (eg. 30% of theses focus on Belarus media, politics and culture), with particular emphasis on media convergence, regional geo-political challenges, gender issues (eg. 20% of theses address gender issues), or urban transformations among others. The network of alumni and social partners work with faculty to ensure the programme's relevance to industry and to provide opportunities for industry immersion to students.

Students engage with the programme full time over 4 years (5 years if part time) at the end of which they will have earned a credit volume of 240 ECTS.

##### ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 1.1.)



The evidence from programme documentation and performance supports the claim that the Bachelor’s programme is aligned with EHU’s mission, goals and current strategic plan 2021-26 and namely the goals to increase the overall student enrolment to 2500 by 2026; to strengthen its international profile; to enhance the quality of EHU’s research and policy outreach; to support innovative and socially relevant research; to support research dissemination; and to enhance research collaborations and new research networks (cf. Strategic Plan 2021-26). One aspect that was striking in the meetings this panel had with the various stakeholders during the institutional visit was the internalisation of and commitment to the mission of EHU and the situatedness of its educational and research activity. This came across especially clearly in the meeting with students and as they talked about their studies, the subjects studied and mix of theory/practice, internships, extra-curricular activities e.g. conferences, activism etc they engage in during their time at EHU.

1.2. Programmes comply with legal requirements, while curriculum design, curriculum, teaching/learning and assessment methods enable students to achieve study aims and learning outcomes

## FACTUAL SITUATION

### 1.2.1. Programmes comply with legal requirements

The programme is compliant with the relevant study regulations as shown on Table 1 below.

Table 1. Bachelor’s Media and Communication compliance with legal requirements for first cycle study programmes

Criteria	Legal requirements (ECTS)	Programme compliance (ECTS)
Total programme workload	240 ECTS	240 ECTS
Study field	No less than 120 ECTS	120 ECTS
Studies specified by the University (including optional study)	Remaining credits	120 ECTS
- Final thesis	No less than 15 ECTS	15 ECTS
- Internship / ‘Practice’ module	No less than 15 ECTS	15 ECTS
Contact hours	No less than 20% of learning	22.7%
Independent student learning	No less than 30% of learning	76.8%

### 1.2.2. Programme aims, learning outcomes, teaching/learning and assessment methods are aligned

The Media and Communication programme aims ‘to train specialists in the field of audiovisual communication and media technologies, who have the theoretical knowledge, analytical, creative, practical skills and competencies necessary to work in the media sphere, as well as to conduct research on digital media and audiovisual culture in contemporary society’. The EHU’s Media and Communication programme’s aims and learning outcomes are comparable to similar subjects and degrees in other European universities.

The relationship between programme aims, competences (knowledge and application, research- and specialist skills, social- and personal abilities) and the respective learning outcomes that students need to achieve to complete the programme successfully and the 37 subjects/modules (SER Annex 1) that deliver them is mapped on Table 3 (p.15) of the SER.

Teaching and learning on the programme is delivered through a variety of methods, from creative workshops to interactive lectures, seminars, literature reviews, creative work and practical tasks which both reflect and implement the theoretical and practical aims of the programme; and, correspondingly, assessment involves mid-term (cumulative) and summative (final) assessments, each normally contributing 50% to a final module grade. The documentation provided did not map assessments against subjects or learning outcomes though the assessment types used on the programme were listed in the SER (pp.37-39) as comprising of: individual and group work, project presentations, creative work, essays, reports, exams, presentations, self-assessment tasks, oral/written tests and work/thesis defence.

### 1.2.3. Curriculum ensures consistent development of student competences

The programme is structured into 3 blocks of study: foundational 'General university subjects' (e.g. English, Language and thinking) are offered in semesters 1-2-3, 'Core and compulsory subjects' are mostly (but not only) offered in semesters 1-2-3-4, whilst 'Specialised subjects' including compulsory and elective modules are delivered from semester 4 onwards (one in semester 3). This enables students to progress or 'spiral' (to use the EHU team's own words) from the discipline's fundamentals to more specialised and more practically oriented application of the (theoretically informed) knowledge; for example, Film History (semester 3), Film Analysis and Theory (semester 4), Film Industry: Production, Promotion, Festivals (semester 6). Competences and learning outcomes map across all levels, blocks of study and module subjects. However, assessment is part and parcel of learning and the development of competences and a learning outcomes/ subject/assessment mapping would have enabled a comprehensive appraisal of the delivery's consistency.

### 1.2.4. Opportunities for students to personalise curriculum according to their personal learning goals and intended learning outcomes are ensured

The programme enables students to personalise their educational experience and outcomes according to their needs and career goals. This happens through the choice of specialised elective subjects providing advanced knowledge of particular topics in media and communication; the choice to write a thesis or a media project as well as its focus; the choice to select an internship from the social partner' list or to find one by individual means; the opportunity to engage in ERASMUS mobility.

### 1.2.5. Final theses (applied projects) comply with the requirements for the field and cycle

Students choose between a conventional (research) thesis and a creative diploma (media project). The final thesis preparation process is described in detail in the SER (p.19), from students identifying and developing a research topic in the second year of their studies to obtaining approval for the topic and supervisor/s in semesters 5 and 6, to the preliminary/acceptance and final thesis defence in semester 8. The defence committee includes faculty members, specialist from external HEI and social partners. The list of theses provided the SER (Annex 3) reflects the range of topics, theoretical and empirical, that students learn in the programme.

## **ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 1.2.)**

On the whole, the programme's learning outcomes meet the wide range of knowledge, skills (research, specialist), social and personal competences that are relevant to the programme aims. These are delivered across a broad range of module subjects which are representative of the diverse and multifaceted nature of

the contemporary media and communication sector. There was mention of AI on the visit meetings although there did not seem to be a consistent view on this key development/reality in the media sector. Teaching and learning activities seem standard for the subject and programme aims, although these as well as the types of assessment delivered on the programme were listed in the SER but not mapped against learning outcomes and subject modules limiting a comprehensive evaluation of the constructive alignment within and between the programme’s provision (teaching, learning, assessment) and learning outcomes.

The curriculum is organised progressively, starting with foundational and more theoretical subjects and gradually advancing to more specialised subjects at the same time as providing opportunity for students to pursue subjects of personal interest. The degree of freedom and additional opportunities provided to students to customise their studies according to personal interest or career plans is a positive aspect of this programme that is valued by and was praised by students and alumni in their respective stakeholder meetings, namely the opportunity to taste different things before moving on to choosing their specialisms. However, students raised some concern with the emphasis on research whereas they would welcome greater flexibility and more authentic, practice-oriented modules around, for example, producing, and curating.

## AREA 1: CONCLUSIONS

AREA 1	<b>Negative - 1</b> Does not meet the requirements	<b>Satisfactory - 2</b> Meets the requirements, but there are substantial shortcomings to be eliminated	<b>Good - 3</b> Meets the requirements, but there are shortcomings to be eliminated	<b>Very good - 4</b> Very well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings	<b>Exceptional - 5</b> Exceptionally well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings
<b>First cycle</b>				X	

### COMMENDATIONS

1. The programme’s alignment with the mission of EHU and its strategic priorities.
2. The opportunities afforded to students to immerse and engage with the sector and EHU’s mission and concerns.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

#### To address shortcomings

1. Not identified.

#### For further improvement

1. To enhance the practical skills element of the programme so as to address the needs of career-focused students.
2. To incorporate the topic of Artificial Intelligence into the curriculum.

## AREA 2: LINKS BETWEEN SCIENTIFIC (OR ARTISTIC) RESEARCH AND HIGHER EDUCATION

### 2.1. Higher education integrates the latest developments in scientific (or artistic) research and technology and enables students to develop skills for scientific (or artistic) research

#### FACTUAL SITUATION

##### 2.1.1. Research within the field of study is at a sufficient level

At the University level, EHU has taken active measures to strengthen the research culture as well as to increase both the quantity and the quality of the research outputs. EHU Senate and Administration developed in close cooperation with the faculty of the study programs internal normative documents in 2019-2021. These set the principles and criteria of the effectiveness evaluation of individual faculties in line with the national standards. This stresses research activities in the form of academic publications and artistic works. The EHU internal principles and criteria also addressed the University's mission to cooperate with the Belarusian civil society. Research and art activities at the EHU are regulated by numerous documents from the strategic to the executive level. According to the Research/Art Strategy 2019-2024, EHU aims to carry out long-term research and art activities relevant to the development of the region's culture, society, political and legal system. The University promotes disciplinary and interdisciplinary, fundamental and applied research in the humanities, social sciences and the arts.

The research activities in the field of Communication and Information are in line with the strategic goals, and the research output in the field of Communication and Information has increased significantly in terms of numbers and quality. The research activities are in line with Research/Art Activity Key Performance Indicators defined by EHU. All faculty members register their publications and creative projects in a shared database and submit annual reports on their research and creative/media activities. Moreover, most courses are taught by active scholars or media professionals in the related fields, which aims to ensure an effective integration of research and studies. Of the 24 faculty members in the academic year 2023-2024, 16 hold a Ph.D. degree (in the fields of Sociology, Philosophy, Linguistics, Anthropology, Political Sciences).

Faculty members publish their works in different languages with priority given to publication in internationally recognized journals (registered in SCOPUS and WOS databases) as well as in local (Lithuanian), regional (CEE), and international conferences. Many faculty members are affiliated with various EHU research centers and laboratories and participate in thematic research groups. Students are also actively involved in the research projects of several EHU research units, particularly by working as assistants in research centers and laboratories. A notable share of the research work occurs in a wide and diverse international environment. The network of strategic institutional partners has been steadily growing.

There are effective incentives in place to boost research activities, including individual research packages, mobility funds, publication support, and personal bonuses for high-level publications. This has clearly increased the amount and quality of research output in the evaluation period.

##### 2.1.2. Curriculum is linked to the latest developments in science, art, and technology

Effective integration of research and studies is ensured by various means. For example, the majority of courses are taught by active scholars or media professionals. The programme also allows students to

specialise in the research areas of interests in the course of studies, including the areas of mass communication research, cultural research and research of media as art, social research of digitalization, socio-cultural communication research, and creation of media products (with emphasis on film).

The faculty members conduct research in the subfield of mass communication, with a wide array of research themes and focus areas, following the University's mission that prioritizes civic and critical focus on mass communication. This research by the faculty members provides the foundation for the content of the Program's course offerings, preparing students for careers in PR and Media Management. The mass communication subfield in specific is characterized by the faculty members' active connections with the professional field of journalism in Belarus, which strengthens the University's role as a hub for future critical professionals in the repressed Belarusian mass media. The faculty is active also in the subfield of cultural research and research of media as art. This also provides contents for the Program's courses and involves cooperation with cultural sector partners who specialize in media. The research aims to provide students with a broad and deep understanding of media as well as to foster their creativity skills. The research and course contents cover a wide range of artistic media practices and formats, from cinema and media art to cultural heritage and journalism, to name a few. Thirdly, the faculty is active in the subfield of social research of digitalization, including both conceptual and methodological approaches to social innovations.

Following the University's mission, this subfield stresses the issues of digitalization and politics, digitalization and power, and digitalization and education. EHU also organized an international conference "Contemporary Communicative Practices in the University's Digital Environment" in the fall of 2023. There is also ongoing development concerning the sub-field of socio-cultural communication research, with regards to various topical themes, questions, concepts, and methodologies of socio-cultural communications. This is important, as the sub-themes address the position of the University as a vulnerable project with a strong civic commitment located in a highly diverse cultural environment. In addition, the subfield of the creation of media products concerns special perspectives on documentary film, TV reportage, creation of educational video, as well as in music and sound multimedia projects and radio broadcasts, conducted in cooperation with the major Belarusian free media and independent film festivals in Belarus and abroad.

### 2.1.3. Opportunities for students to engage in research are consistent with the cycle

Overall, the student-centered mission of EHU applies to the research culture too. For example, students are working as assistants in the research work of the University's centers and laboratories and in the applied work of the MediaHub. This involvement is financially supported by the University's internal resources like the Student Mentorship framework or by the external resources. The Program's students are also actively involved in the research projects of several EHU research units. The Program also provides the opportunity for the faculty and students to participate in applied research projects in the media and cultural sector. Students are also continuously involved as social media specialists to address the administrative communication and marketing needs of the Program. Moreover, EHU fosters a project culture to support student-led research projects, festivals and other events, and high-level artistic productions. EHU also organizes student-centered research and applied workshops, training and summer schools in the various research subfields of the Media and Communications program.

## **ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 2.1.)**

The research environment and practices of the program are evaluated as very strong. Higher education integrates well the latest developments in scientific and artistic research and clearly enables students to develop their skills for scientific and artistic research. Research within the field of study is at a good level, the curriculum is linked to the current themes and developments in the field, and there is a richness of opportunities offered for students in terms of engaging in research activities throughout the study cycle.

The Program has a strong mission-driven and versatile research portfolio. The research work of the program's faculty is disseminated in a wide and diverse international environment. There has also been a strong increase in research outputs. This is clearly impacted by the research supporting EHU strategies – the whole institutional culture of EHU has transformed towards more research-oriented approaches during the last five years – as well as the research package and other incentives offered for the faculty members. The staff is reported using the support very actively. A great variety of research subfields is covered by the faculty, resulting in highly diversified offerings from the student perspective.

Teaching is also strongly research-driven, regardless of the field of practice; there is a strong conceptual and theoretical base provided in most courses and activities. There are many disciplines that are taught by experienced practitioners and scholars in the related fields and subfields. This research-based approach seems to be highly valued also by students, their comments signalling that there is a good balance between theory and practice adopted in teaching. Students are exceptionally well integrated into research thinking and practice. They have a variety of possibilities to engage in and deliver their academic work and practice-based research, including publishing. The courses also address the University's "third mission" – the study of Belarus – in cooperation with Belarusian civil society. At the same time, the network of institutional partners is constantly growing. As a minor point of development, the share of practical competencies could be increased in teaching contents to ensure better fit between student capabilities and working life requirements.

In the previous evaluation, there were two recommendations given. First, to consider the policy of recruitment teaching staff in connection with the quality assurance of the Program. Second, a more systematic process of evaluation and annual review shall be implemented to ensure that the Program meets the needs of the field of study in terms of faculty and research. These recommendations have been well addressed. For the latter recommendation, in particular, the University have adopted measures to cultivate the research culture and to increase the quantity and the quality of the faculty research output. In 2019, the EHU Senate and the administration developed the principles and criteria of the individual faculty effectiveness evaluation, complying with the national standards. Furthermore, the internal EHU principles and criteria of the effectiveness evaluation prioritized research activities in the form of academic publications. The principles and criteria also addressed the University's third mission, i.e. cooperation with the Belarusian civil society. This has resulted, as discussed, in increased research output in the field Communication: from 7.92 and 3 points in 2018 and 2019, respectively, to 15.71 points in 2020, 47.78 points in 2021 and 23.42 points in 2022 (confirmed by the Lithuanian Research Council).

## AREA 2: CONCLUSIONS

AREA 1	<b>Negative - 1</b> Does not meet the requirements	<b>Satisfactory - 2</b> Meets the requirements, but there are substantial shortcomings to be eliminated	<b>Good - 3</b> Meets the requirements, but there are shortcomings to be eliminated	<b>Very good - 4</b> Very well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings	<b>Exceptional - 5</b> Exceptionally well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings
<b>First cycle</b>				X	

### COMMENDATIONS

1. Mission-driven, versatile and highly relevant research portfolio.
2. Good incentives in place for the faculty to support research activities. The provided research package clearly stimulates new research activities.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

#### To address shortcomings

1. Not identified.

#### For further improvement

1. Continuous development of more versatile evaluation criteria and mechanisms for diverse research outputs (in addition to internationally ranked academic publications).
2. Further strengthen the links between the research conducted by the program faculty and the applied work in the media sector.
3. Strengthening of the international research collaboration and increase in the participation in the international EU-funded and national research projects.
4. Increasing the share of practical competences in student training to help them to provide them with better fit into working life requirements.

## AREA 3: STUDENT ADMISSION AND SUPPORT

### 3.1. Student selection and admission is in line with the learning outcomes

#### FACTUAL SITUATION

##### 3.1.1. Student selection and admission criteria and procedures are adequate and transparent

The admission procedure at European Humanities University is quite different from other universities in Lithuania.

The procedure for admission of students to the undergraduate program in the field of Communication consists of 5 main steps: the submission of documents, and the Examination of the documents (it is

included an evaluation of academic qualifications of the applicants), the Invitation to the admission competition, the interview with the Admissions Committee and last one, the decision of the Admissions Committee.

According to the SER, and having into account that the study program is in Russian, Belarussian and English, applicants who do not have proof of an A2 level of English have the opportunity to take an English placement test at the University during the admission process. If their English language skills are not at the required level, the students commit themselves (by signing a contract) to study English additionally during the first year of study and to reach A2 level, and to continue their English language studies up to the B2 level according to the program. Also, citizens of Lithuania can apply through the LAMA BPO system, but the majority of students are not from Lithuania.

The applicant's score in the competition consists of the average of the grades on the certificate or other document proving secondary education and the result of the admission interview (recommended/not recommended). For non-Lithuanian applicants whose secondary school grade point average is at least 7 (seven) points are invited to the admissions interview.

EHU has part-time (PT) and full-time (FT) study programmes in Communication study field. Since the academic year 2020-2021, the number of full-time admitted students increased significantly from 28 in 2020, to 47 in 2021, to 79 in 2022 and to 100 in 2023. Also the number of full-time admitted students increased. In 2020-2021, EHU had 19 students admitted to part-time studies, in 2021-2022 they had 29 and in the last two academic years around 40.

The average admission scores were 8.44 in 2021-2022, 8.56 in 2022-2023 and 8.60 and 2023-2024.

The dropout rates increased since 2019-2020 very much. In 2019-2020, the dropout rate was 2.24% and next year Media and Communication Study Program at EHU had a 3.8% drop out rate. In 2021-2022, the drop-out rate increased again at 5.02% and last year the dropout rate was registered at 13.25%.

### 3.1.2. Recognition of foreign qualifications, periods of study, and prior learning (established provisions and procedures)

According to the SER, the vast majority (about 90%) of the students of EHU are citizens of Belarus, whose qualifications for studies are recognized in Lithuania in accordance with the laws of the Republic of Lithuania, international treaties, and the procedure of recognition of education of the University.

Information on the academic recognition of foreign qualifications for study purposes at the University is published on the EHU website, together with information on the conditions and procedure of admission. The applicant who does not agree with the decision of EHU on the academic recognition of foreign qualifications has the right to appeal to EHU.

EHU evaluated the qualification of 116 entrants to the bachelor's study programs in Communication studies, but only 97 of them became students of EHU.

According to the SER, since May 2021, when the University started to evaluate qualifications acquired abroad, there have been no cases of nonrecognition of qualifications for those who applied to become students of Communication.



In 2020-2021, EHU had a 3,8% drop-out rate and it reached 5,02% in the next academic year. Last academic year, the drop-out rate increased at 13,02%. Having into account that the total number of students also increased from 179 (in 2020-2021) to 208 (in 2021-2022) and to 262 (in 2022-2023), there is an evidence that the actual number of students that drop out is increasing considerably.

### **ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 3.1.)**

The procedures are well outlined, and the criteria are clear.

The average of competition score has slightly increased since 2021-2022, even though also has increased the number of admitted students, so we can observe that students are better prepared for academic life.

The drop-out rate increased considerably in the last three academic years, and there is a need to find the reasons for which students decide to dropout and to take some measure to decrease this phenomenon.

## **3.2. There is an effective student support system enabling students to maximise their learning progress**

### **FACTUAL SITUATION**

#### **3.2.1. Opportunities for student academic mobility are ensured**

As revealed during the evaluation visit, ESU students are informed about Erasmus mobilities for both study and practice. During the evaluated period, EHU had 41 outgoing students across Europe for study and received 11 incoming students.

For practice/internship, ESU had 10 outgoing students since 2019-2020. It was a decrease in 2020-2021, due to pandemic situation.

The information about such possibilities is published on website and can reach students in a number of ways: social media, peer to peer, during campus/online activities etc.

#### **3.2.2. Academic, financial, social, psychological, and personal support provided to students is relevant, adequate, and effective**

EHU provides academic, financial, social, psychological and personal support to students in different ways, according to their personal needs.

At the University, academic and administrative support for students is provided by the Academic Support Center, the Student Service, academic departments, and other administrative staff.

Students are informed about the study process, final thesis and renewal of studies, students opportunities, personalization of studies, tuition fees, financial and other support, participation in scholarship competitions etc.

Each study program has a tutor appointed by the academic department to oversee the academic process of students in that program, coordinate the preparation of term papers and theses, prepare and coordinate individual study plans, discuss student internship matters, inform students of scholarship and grant opportunities and, generally, be the first person to whom students turn with any questions.

Students of all study programs can submit their portfolio of academic and social achievements and volunteering activities and they can apply for a grant to cover 100% or 50% of the tuition fees. According to the SER, a social scholarship can be awarded to students who are in difficult financial circumstances. The amount of the social scholarship is 123 EUR per month.

The Emergency Support Fund provides support to University students who or whose families have suffered political hardship, as well as to Belarusian students who have experienced repression and/or have been expelled from universities for political reasons and who are therefore unable to continue their studies in Belarus. Oppressed students from Belarus can receive a study support which consists in the opportunity not to pay for studies at EHU for the first 1 or 2 semesters.

EHU also provides legal assistance through the Legal Clinic and the Centre for Constitutionalism, which operate on the initiative of legal scholars, and in exceptional cases, when needed by EHU students, the University helps by reimbursing the fees paid to lawyers in connection with administrative and criminal political cases in Belarus.

EHU also provides its students with support that no other university usually provides – visa support. This is also a part of the University’s student support portfolio. EHU assists students in obtaining study visas, and, in some cases, humanitarian visas.

### 3.2.3. Higher education information and student counselling are sufficient

Students admitted at the study program are informed about the subjects, requirements, the exams and other information relevant to students in several ways: on the University website, directly by sending information messages via e-mail, by posting information on Moodle and using social media channels.

EHU organises several meetings with the freshman students in the first semester. First year students are supported not only by the program curator, but also by mentors – senior students.

The university creates annually a Student Satisfaction Survey, which is given at the end of the academic year. According to the SER, this survey shows that EHU students are generally positive about the administration, material resources, information methods and means, and forms of student support. The same vision was revealed in the visit.

### ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 3.2.)

During the assessment visit, it became evident that students have information about the various forms of support, including about the exchange opportunities at their disposal and are aware of whom to approach for further information

The students receive adequate introduction to their studies at the University, as well as to their study programmes. As the studies progress, the students are able to consult with their teachers and other responsible staff on a variety of issues.

## AREA 3: CONCLUSIONS

AREA 1	<b>Negative - 1</b> Does not meet the requirements	<b>Satisfactory - 2</b> Meets the requirements, but there are substantial shortcomings to be eliminated	<b>Good - 3</b> Meets the requirements, but there are shortcomings to be eliminated	<b>Very good - 4</b> Very well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings	<b>Exceptional - 5</b> Exceptionally well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings
<b>First cycle</b>				X	

### COMMENDATIONS

1. Very good social, financial, psychological and academic support.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

To address shortcomings

1. Not identified.

For further improvement

1. Make efforts to decrease the drop-out rate.
2. Increased motivation is required for students to participate more actively in mobility and exchange programs, particularly in fields like Communication, to enrich their academic and professional experience.

## AREA 4: TEACHING AND LEARNING, STUDENT ASSESSMENT, AND GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT

### 4.1. Students are prepared for independent professional activity

#### FACTUAL SITUATION

Many elements collectively contribute to a learning environment that not only prepares students with the necessary skills and knowledge for their professional fields but also empowers them to operate effectively and independently in their future careers.

The curriculum within the Media and Communication program is practice-oriented, providing students with a solid foundation in theoretical knowledge while emphasising practical applications.

In addition, the university supports independent student activities and projects that align with their professional interests. This is facilitated through resources like the MediaHub and collaboration with external partners, providing a platform for students to engage in meaningful, career-related projects.

- 4.1.1. Teaching and learning address the needs of students and enable them to achieve intended learning outcomes

The program supports learning in three languages — English, Belarusian, and Russian. This approach caters to a diverse student body and enhances students' communication skills in different linguistic contexts.

EHU has established a Media Hub in cooperation with international partners like IREX Europe and BBC MEDIA ACTION, which provides students with modern facilities and equipment to practise and hone their media production skills.

The curriculum includes a significant component of practical training through modules like "Media Production I-IV". These courses ensure that students can apply theoretical knowledge in practical settings, preparing them for real-world media and communication tasks.

However, it is unclear whether the studies are conducted online or face-to-face, based on the ambiguous information presented in the SER and collected during the site visit.

#### 4.1.2. Access to higher education for socially vulnerable groups and students with individual needs is ensured.

EHU demonstrates commitment to inclusive education, ensuring that students from all backgrounds have the necessary support to succeed academically and personally.

**Physical Accessibility:** The university's physical premises are adapted for people with disabilities. This includes step-free access to the first floor, elevators to other floors, specially equipped restrooms, doors of appropriate widths, and computer classrooms with special controls and desks suitable for wheelchair users.

**Support Services:** EHU offers several support measures for students with disabilities and special needs, including specialized desks, computer controls, and visual aid equipment such as video magnifiers. These measures aim to facilitate both academic and general campus activities .

**Financial and Psychological Support:** The university provides financial support, psychological help, and other supportive measures to cater to the needs of vulnerable social groups. This includes individualized study plans and social scholarships to assist with the educational expenses of these students.

**Flexibility in Education:** EHU allows students to study according to individual plans tailored to accommodate health, economic, or family circumstances. This flexibility ensures that all students, regardless of their personal challenges, have the opportunity to pursue and complete their education.

Worth noting, that EHU flexibly adapts to foreign students who, for objective reasons, cannot get visas on time (from the beginning of September) and come to lectures. Studies start later or distance learning is used for this.

#### **ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 4.1.)**

Students are prepared for independent professional activity because of Practice-Oriented Curriculum. EHU creatively uses distance learning to solve students' problems.

However, it should be an option for each subject to be taught exclusively in one language. Working in several languages within the same subject may be detrimental to the learning of some students who are not fully proficient in one of the languages.

To boost visibility and attract a diverse student body, it is essential to more effectively share information about EHU programs with international audiences. Expanding outreach efforts through digital platforms and global partnerships can further enhance the university's presence. Additionally, hosting international webinars and participating in global education fairs can increase awareness and engagement among prospective students.

## 4.2. There is an effective and transparent system for student assessment, progress monitoring, and assuring academic integrity

### FACTUAL SITUATION

#### 4.2.1. Monitoring of learning progress and feedback to students to promote self-assessment and learning progress planning is systematic

EHU mechanisms collectively ensure that the feedback to students is systematic, enabling effective self-assessment and aiding in the planning of their learning progress.

**Active Interaction for Learning Assessment:** The evaluation of students' achievements involves active interactions between the assessor and the student, focusing not just on assessing knowledge but also on helping students recognize their strengths and areas for improvement.

**Diverse Evaluation Methods:** Students' performance is assessed through various forms including homework, creative assignments, project presentations, and exams. This varied assessment approach ensures a comprehensive evaluation of student abilities across different formats.

**Cumulative Grading System:** Grades are determined through a combination of midterm assessments and final exams, with clear criteria communicated at the start of each course. This system encourages ongoing engagement and accountability throughout the semester.

**Feedback and Appeals:** Students receive timely feedback on their assignments and have the opportunity to appeal grades through a formally structured Board of Appeal. This process ensures transparency and fairness in grading.

**Continuous Monitoring and Consultations:** Monitoring of student progress is continuous throughout the semester, with provisions for individual or group consultations if a student is at risk of not meeting learning objectives.

**Survey-Based Feedback:** At the end of each course, students are surveyed about their experience. The results are used to discuss and potentially adjust teaching strategies and course content, ensuring that the curriculum remains responsive to student needs.

#### 4.2.2. Graduate employability and career are monitored

3 insights reflect the university's effectiveness in preparing students for professional environments and its impact on fostering competences relevant both within and beyond Belarus.

Surveys conducted among graduates reveal that about 30% of graduates begin their careers while still studying. Approximately 80% of graduates who participated in the last survey (conducted in March 2022) express satisfaction with their level of professional preparation, and nearly 90% rate their acquired professional competences as good or very good. Moreover, about 80% of the respondents are employed, and roughly 72% work in fields related to their specialization.

A significant study, 'EHU Impact on the Country of Origin (Belarus)', initiated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Lithuania, shows that EHU graduates highly value their education at EHU for fostering critical, liberal thinking and democratic values. This study underscores the university's role in preparing graduates who significantly contribute to the socio-economic and cultural developments of Belarus, particularly in civil society, independent research, and entrepreneurship.

The opinion of employers is gathered through direct visits to graduates' workplaces and indirectly assessed by the duration of employment in the same place. This feedback suggests a positive evaluation of the graduates' preparedness and their impact in the workplace.

However, there is a need to improve the collection and analysis of detailed data concerning graduate employment. This includes collecting exact statistical data on the employment of graduates to better assess and enhance the effectiveness of the educational programs.

#### 4.2.3. Policies to ensure academic integrity, tolerance, and non-discrimination are implemented

EHU has established 3 main policies to ensure academic integrity, tolerance, and non-discrimination.

Code of Academic Ethics was adopted by the EHU Senate in 2015 and updated in 2018 (Resolution No. 30-04), this code sets standards for academic ethics applicable to teachers, students, and administrative staff, fostering an environment of integrity and ethical behavior.

Secondly, the university has an Academic Ethics Committee that addresses violations of academic ethics.

Last but not least, EHU ensures non-discriminatory conduct of studies and research as outlined in their Code of Academic Ethics. This includes the implementation of the EHU Equal Opportunities and Gender Equality Policy along with its action plan, approved in 2019, which aligns with the National Program for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (2015-2021) set by the Lithuanian government.

#### 4.2.4. Procedures for submitting and processing appeals and complaints are effective

The procedures for submitting and processing appeals and complaints at the EHU are well detailed in SER:

Appeals can be submitted against the evaluations of learning results and non-compliance/violation of procedures. Appeals against evaluation results must be submitted within three days from the publication of the final evaluation of the study subject.

The head of the department convenes a special Board of Appeal to examine the specific appeal. The Board of Appeal is composed of faculty members with relevant qualifications and a student representative, with a total of 3-5 persons including a Chairperson. The Board reviews the appeal within five business days of receipt and issues an opinion on the merits of the appeal no later than one week after review.

Students have the right to participate in the review and are notified of the meeting date. The decision is recorded in minutes signed by the Chairperson and forwarded to the Head of the Department. Students are notified of the decision within five days. If an appeal is found valid, the study results must be re-evaluated in favour of the student.

Statistical Data on Appeals shows that in the 2021-22 and 2022-23 academic years, there were no student appeals in the BA in Media and Communication program. The process for handling appeals and complaints seems to be transparent and fair.

### ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 4.2.)

System for student assessment, progress monitoring, and assuring academic integrity meets the requirements. Some improvements aim to strengthen the existing frameworks and ensure a more consistent application of the university's policies.

For example, there could be more active involvement of chat moderators to prevent violations of academic ethics, especially in student communication platforms like Telegram chats.

Last but not least, additional training sessions on academic integrity and non-discrimination policies should be implemented to ensure all university members are familiar with the standards and expectations.

More thorough tracking of alumni employment status would offer insightful feedback on how well the curriculum prepares students for their careers.

## AREA 4: CONCLUSIONS

AREA 1	Negative - 1 Does not meet the requirements	Satisfactory - 2 Meets the requirements, but there are substantial shortcomings to be eliminated	Good - 3 Meets the requirements, but there are shortcomings to be eliminated	Very good - 4 Very well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings	Exceptional - 5 Exceptionally well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings
First cycle			X		

### COMMENDATIONS

1. Creatively solving study issues for students who are physically unable to obtain a visa and arrive from early September.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

#### To address shortcomings

1. Closer monitoring of the employment status of alumni would provide valuable feedback on the effectiveness of the curriculum in preparing students for the workforce.

## For further improvement

1. There needs to be more widespread dissemination of information about EHU programs among international audiences to enhance visibility and attract a diverse student body.

## AREA 5: TEACHING STAFF

### 5.1. Teaching staff is adequate to achieve learning outcomes

#### FACTUAL SITUATION

The number of professors at EHU has been steadily increasing in recent years, indicating that the institution has a certain level of institutional security. It is worth noting that this increase has been mostly in full-time professors, which consolidates their professional future and encourages them to create more stable projects in the medium and long term.

While the student-to-professor ratio is moderate, there has been a constant percentage growth in this ratio, particularly in the last academic year (2023-2024). This can be attributed to the current geopolitical situation, where the unique character of EHU due to its Belarusian origin has attracted more students from neighboring countries to choose EHU as their preferred study destination.

The teaching staff's specialization for specific subjects is justified and represented, based on the list of activities and research presented. Furthermore, the academic and professional qualifications of the teaching staff are aligned with the teaching needs outlined in the curriculum.

#### 5.1.1. The number, qualification, and competence (scientific, didactic, professional) of teaching staff is sufficient to achieve learning outcomes

The teaching staff at the university are well qualified with around 77% of them holding a PhD degree and 17% possessing a MA degree. While there are experts in law, sociology and philosophy of communication, the majority of faculty specialization is in communication, which benefits the students in terms of applied teaching quality. The curriculum is designed in a way that justifies the theoretical knowledge of the teaching staff, allowing them to impart knowledge with the necessary rigor.

The curriculum is transversal and covers subjects related to communication, audiovisual production, semiotics, research and analysis, politics, and law. With the expertise of the teaching staff, all these areas can be taught with great precision and detail.

In terms of professional application, there are four audiovisual production subjects (Media Production I, II, III, IV) in the curriculum, and the years of professional experience of the faculty help in meeting the expectations of the students. After analyzing the report, we found that the faculty members have both academic and professional experience, which we believe helps them incorporate continuous innovation in the audiovisual sector into their teaching methods. This results in better training for students. It was observed that associate professors, who have direct contact with the professional world, were responsible for the Media Production subjects, which is considered a positive aspect. Additionally, the teachers' curricula revealed that they combine theoretical knowledge with practical projects that students work on, which was confirmed by the students themselves. Therefore, it can be inferred that the teachers can



integrate their research and publications with the professional sector, leading to a better learning experience for students. It has been suggested that teaching can be done in both Russian and English, but it's not clear how the language choice will be determined. While English is supposed to be the primary language of instruction, it would be helpful to have a protocol in place that allows students some flexibility in their language choice. Although students are evaluated for their English proficiency, this could be a distraction from learning the subject matter.

The student-to-teacher ratio is acceptable, but given the unique needs of some students, it may be advisable to reduce the ratio to provide better attention to their needs. The teaching staff is highly qualified, with a majority of them holding PhDs. However, a significant portion of the lecturers are part-time, which affects their overall involvement with the university.

The department has only one committee that coordinates between subjects and shares content. They use Moodle to enable a positive dynamic of cooperation between teachers. Some projects and exercises require the application of theoretical content from other subjects through the use of the Virtual Campus.

### **ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 5.1.)**

The proposed curriculum is fully justified by the profile of the teaching staff. The level of specialization of the same is in direct relation to the characteristics of specialization of the same, both in terms of qualitative aspects (research and teaching capacity) and quantitative aspects (number of specialists per content area of the program). Therefore, the level of the teaching staff is very optimal to be able to brilliantly teach the proposed curriculum.

One drawback encountered is the linguistic diversity expressed by the professors themselves to teach a particular subject. Establishing a priori a single language is sure to optimize the performance of teachers and the understanding of students to understand the specific concepts of each subject. **The students told us that many teachers use different languages in the same subject. We understand that syllabi are unified in one language, but the daily routine does not fully address this premise.**

The study commissions are the point of articulation of the contents of each subject concerning the others. It is necessary, therefore, to ensure that they function correctly so that student projects are transversal to several subjects. This is a very effective way to dynamize project-based training. In this way, one of the main objectives of the Degree, which is to apply theory to practice, will be fulfilled.

The research and teaching training of the professors is optimal, highlighting the number of existing PhDs.

5.2. Teaching staff is ensured opportunities to develop competences, and they are periodically evaluated

### **FACTUAL SITUATION**

It is necessary to know the exceptional situation of this university to understand its special idiosyncrasy.

EHU comes from Belarus, a country from which it had to leave due to its political situation. Students prefer to attend classes in person, but some cannot do so for political and economic reasons. Therefore, teaching is simultaneous face-to-face and online, but not hybrid. The mode of delivery is simultaneous and takes into account the particularities of each student. As it is a practical training, sufficient technical resources

must be used. To deal with these exercises with the handicap of not being face-to-face, teachers adapt the contents to the tools available, such as each student's telephone.

The space they occupy is small and difficult to reform; however, in the meeting, they indicated that they are renting more space due to the increase in the number of students.

The teaching staff is highly qualified, with a majority of them holding PhDs. However, a significant portion of the lecturers are part-time, which affects their overall involvement with the university. The lecturers' areas of specialization are tailored to the syllabus requirements. More than half of the classes are taught in Russian, but some are taught in Belarusian and/or English. The teaching methodology involves integrating theory with practical application. To ensure quality, there is supervision of the content taught by teachers. The projects assigned to students always revolve around issues related to Belarusian or Lithuanian media. The lecturers' areas of specialization are tailored to the syllabus requirements. More than half of the classes are taught in Russian, but some are taught in Belarusian and/or English.

#### 5.2.1. Opportunities for academic mobility of teaching staff are ensured

Faculty mobility is one of the weak points of the EHU. In the last four academic years, only six outgoing research stays have been managed, while there have been ten requests from visiting professors to the institution.

Although there is a plan of motivation for faculty mobility, it seems that it does not sufficiently address the needs of teachers to encourage them to take this important step in their professional development.

They are attached to ERASMUS+ programs and EHU's specific mobility plans are announced at the beginning of each academic year. It does not seem sufficient given the scarcity of stays carried out in these years.

#### 5.2.2. Opportunities for the development of the teaching staff are ensured

The professors themselves indicated in the meeting the need to publish more articles and to seek more collaboration or direction of research projects. From the professional point of view, many professors collaborate regularly in the professional sector, so there is an obvious synergy between both worlds.

At the same time, the social partners explained the close and regular relationship of professors with the professional world and the involvement of professionals in the institution. This collaboration is mainly focused on Belarusian media and communication agencies, given the special situation that EHU maintains with the government of their country of origin.

Some funds allow professors to acquire specialized knowledge necessary to integrate them into the teaching dynamics, but there is no explanation of a concrete program of coordinated actions that would allow for defining a clear strategy for professional development.

In this context, it is important to establish a system for identifying advancements in the professional world (e.g. the current impact of AI) and adapting them to the technical resources available to the University, in line with the future investment plan. Based on this analysis, a set of courses should be developed to address these key and identified needs, aiming to integrate the acquired knowledge into the curriculum. It is worth noting that "An information system is established for teaching staff to ensure the dissemination of

information about free qualification development events outside the University," but this is often ineffective because these courses do not necessarily align with teaching needs.

Therefore, it is recommended to form a committee with the capability to organize at least two training courses per year for the teaching staff. Outside specialists should be hired if necessary, and the courses should have a minimum duration of 10 hours. These courses should be conducted at the University's facilities to tailor the content to the available resources.

These courses are part of the curriculum of each professor and will serve as continuing education activities.

Teacher productivity is measured based on variables resulting from pedagogical, scientific, and artistic didactic actions and the organization of activities. It would be necessary to include an element and result regarding research to motivate the participation of the teaching staff in externally funded research projects. Let us remember that this section is a fundamental point of the European Higher Education Area.

### **ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 5.2.)**

The faculty members have the necessary expertise in research, teaching, and professional training to deliver the curriculum effectively. The academic program aims to promote diversity in various professional fields, and this objective can be met by paying attention to feedback from faculty, students, and social partners.

However, there are two main challenges that need to be addressed for achieving this goal. The first issue is the language used in the classes, and the second issue is the need to optimize the mobility of the teaching staff.

To address the first issue, it is recommended that classes be improved in English and all subjects be marked in English to facilitate international expansion. It is important to note that all media-specific terminology and bibliography are already taught in English. However, students must be informed of the language in which each subject will be taught during the course. **This is a recommendation, never an obligation.**

Regarding the second issue, it is recommended to activate a plan that would define clear strengths to integrate the institution's faculty into the European university community. This would strengthen ties with other universities and provide opportunities for professional development for the faculty. The mobility limitations due to COVID-19 were for all the countries that make up the EHEA.

**The circumstances of the nationality of the teaching staff represent a limitation on a personal level, but if their University is part of the EHEA they can attend plans such as ERASMUS+. This is indicated in their SER and response. With the data we are told, faculty mobility does not correspond to the level of development that other universities in Lithuania have. Therefore, it is recommended that a plan be activated in this regard. We think it would serve to attract talent and position the EHU.**

## AREA 5: CONCLUSIONS

AREA 1	<b>Negative - 1</b> Does not meet the requirements	<b>Satisfactory - 2</b> Meets the requirements, but there are substantial shortcomings to be eliminated	<b>Good - 3</b> Meets the requirements, but there are shortcomings to be eliminated	<b>Very good - 4</b> Very well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings	<b>Exceptional - 5</b> Exceptionally well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings
<b>First cycle</b>			<b>X</b>		

### COMMENDATIONS

1. N/A

### RECOMMENDATIONS

#### To address shortcomings

1. Reduce the number of part-time professors to full-time contracts in order to achieve greater faculty involvement in university life.
2. Due to the specific characteristics of the student body, we believe it is beneficial to reduce the student-teacher ratio.
3. It is especially relevant to motivate faculty mobility to other European institutions. It would be convenient to create a strategic plan to help the teaching staff in this sense, changing the current one since it is evident that it does not achieve the desirable results.

#### For further improvement

1. Establish a rigorous protocol for the choice of a specific language in the teaching of each subject. In other words, different languages should not be interchanged within the same subject. This would allow both students and professors to focus more precisely on the specific contents of each subject.
2. To deepen the actions necessary to encourage research and the publication of scientific articles by the teaching staff. This will have an impact on the professional development of professors and will increase the level of influence of the EHU itself.
3. Establish a protocol for the functioning of the commissions to integrate theory and practice in different subjects, stimulating transversality in the students' projects.
4. Create a specific training plan to identify the needs and shortcomings of teachers concerning developments (e.g. in AI) to enable them to fulfil the main objective of applied theoretical-practical project-based training regularly.

## AREA 6: LEARNING FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

### 6.1. Facilities, informational and financial resources are sufficient and enable achieving learning outcomes

#### FACTUAL SITUATION

The University's facilities are small and are integrated into a historic building (former monastery) that allows few structural reforms to adapt the spaces. However, the classrooms have enough space for the number of students and sufficient technical means for the correct teaching.

The common areas for the student body are scarce but meet the expectations demanded by the students. The location of the EHU in the center of the city saves this circumstance for the students.

They have Moodle for the integration and distribution of content among students. This platform is the basis on which teaching is articulated. The technical resources and specific spaces for audiovisual production are efficiently integrated into the building.

#### 6.1.1. Facilities, informational and financial resources are adequate and sufficient for an effective learning process

The building has some architectural limitations, but most of the spaces are adapted for people with mobility limitations. However, access to the set may be difficult for people with mobility limitations. All other spaces are easily accessible. The software used for audiovisual production is widely used in the industry, providing students with a good portfolio during their formative years. Teachers are implementing AI in video editing through Premiere while working with SORA. The TV set is small but has sufficient technical means to develop audiovisual products. External practices are organized around social partners with whom the institution collaborates, allowing students to be in continuous contact with professionals. This close collaboration benefits and enhances the work of teachers. TV producers are enthusiastic about this integration of theory and practice. There are no problems with integrating Lithuanian media.

The teacher interacts with social partners through meetings to coordinate events such as festivals and internships. It is common for media companies to involve students in their productions.

The library boasts an impressive collection of books and subscribes to major virtual bibliographic sources. It provides public access computers and is a popular working space for students. The library also offers seminars on Zotero, Mendeley, and other similar tools for students and teachers to improve their research skills.

It would be important for the identification cards for books and shelves to be in more than one language and not just Russian. We recommend English when we have students of different nationalities.

#### 6.1.2. There is continuous planning for and upgrading of resources.

According to the library, the bibliographic resources and online subscriptions are active and get updated every year. These resources are accessible through the SER. Similarly, the licenses for audiovisual productions are renewed periodically. The technical tools available are sufficient and integrated to imitate a professional workflow. However, there seems to be no long-term strategy for updating the resources, and

budget planning is done annually. It would be wise to start defining a plan for managing resources, especially since the introduction of AI in the production and training industry will change the way we manage resources required for teaching.

### ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 6.1.)

The design of educational spaces greatly affects the organization of resources and teaching tools. Technical resources are also adjusted to fit the specific architecture of the building. There are concerns about the integration of AI into the proposed educational model, but teaching staff have begun using SORA as a teaching tool. The library provides specific training in methodology and management of bibliographic resources, which has a positive impact on student training and professional development of the staff. There is no set plan for the development of resources in the coming years, but each year's budget is articulated. Given the unique characteristics of the educational model of the EHU, it would be beneficial to develop a plan that defines the direction of teaching and research to successfully integrate AI into the University's teaching plans.

## AREA 6: CONCLUSIONS

AREA 1	Negative - 1 Does not meet the requirements	Satisfactory - 2 Meets the requirements, but there are substantial shortcomings to be eliminated	Good - 3 Meets the requirements, but there are shortcomings to be eliminated	Very good - 4 Very well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings	Exceptional - 5 Exceptionally well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings
First cycle			X		

### COMMENDATIONS

1. Adequate technical and bibliographic resources adapted to the limited possibilities imposed by the architectural space.
2. Integration of spaces and resources in the library to encourage collaboration between students within the internal space of the University building.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

#### To address shortcomings

1. Identify bibliographic collections in more than one language and not only Russian, to take into account the needs of students of different nationalities

#### For further improvement

1. Activate a plan for updating resources, taking into account the AI and the limited space available in the building where the classes are held.

## AREA 7: QUALITY ASSURANCE AND PUBLIC INFORMATION

- 7.1. The development of the field of study is based on an internal quality assurance system involving all stakeholders and continuous monitoring, transparency and public information

### FACTUAL SITUATION

#### 7.1.1. Internal quality assurance system for the programmes is effective

EHU's internal study quality management system has been improved over the past three years, particularly concerning the strategic level. It complies with the key documents: the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area and the 2019–2026 University Strategy. Quality assurance is also taken into action; the 2021–2026 Action Plan emphasizes study quality assurance as one of its strategic goals. The internal quality assurance system is also defined in the Quality Assurance Policy, Description of the Internal Quality Assurance of Studies at European Humanities University and in Performance Indicators. A chapter on the EHU internal quality assurance system is further presented in the EHU Employee Compass, which ensures that employees can quickly update their knowledge about the quality assurance system and find links to relevant documents. The responsibility for the planning, implementation, and improvement of the quality assurance system is distributed among the structural units of the university through this documentation.

There are persons and functions established for the process, coordination and monitoring, communication and other aspects of implementation of the study quality assurance process. These include a Quality Coordinator at the University's Academic Support Centre and a Science/Art Coordinator at the Project Management Office. Internal quality assurance takes place at various levels: the university level, the academic units, the level of field of studies committees, teachers, students and other stakeholders/social partners. The system covers all stages of the University's academic process: planning, implementation, usage, evaluation, and quality improvement.

The study programs are developed in accordance with internal regulations, the international ESG standards, external legal acts, as well as internal rules, orders and procedures. Departments prepare study programs quality monitoring reports annually. The programs are continuously being improved also based on expert feedback. Information on program renewal or quality improvement is systematically presented to social partners and other stakeholders. The external evaluation of the programs is discussed and presented to the students and the academic community.

The academic departments ensure the implementation of study programs at all levels, including quality management. All major decisions within the academic department are made collectively; being first discussed by the study program committee and then at the general meeting of the faculty. Teachers participate in the decision-making processes as members of the program committees and departments, but also at various other levels (the Senate, Senate committees, etc.). The main responsibility of the teachers is to develop and improve the contents and the study process of their subjects, and to provide feedback to the students.

As a specific note, to strengthen the quality of distance learning, the University has developed and applied a system for monitoring the quality of study in a virtual learning environment. This comprises regular evaluation of teaching materials and study performance. The performance of studies in the virtual learning

environment is also assessed during each semester. These processes are organized by the Academic Support Center of the university.

#### 7.1.2. Involvement of stakeholders (students and others) in internal quality assurance is effective

All programs are periodically evaluated both internally and externally and besides the faculty, students and social partners are directly and indirectly involved in various ways in the internal quality assurance processes. Direct involvement occurs through study program committees, and indirect participation through student and alumni surveys.

The student survey is an important tool for quality monitoring and self-assessment. Other means include the annual teacher attestation, the data on students' opinions and their study achievements, and the evaluation of teachers' work in the virtual learning environment. Student surveys are conducted twice a year by the Academic Support Center, for example including questions about study programs, study subjects, quality of teaching, work of the administration, satisfaction with studies, opportunities for social activities, and psychological climate. The results are presented to teachers, heads of departments, and broader discussions take place in joint university meetings involving EHU students, teachers and administration. EHU also conducts surveys among social partners, graduates, Erasmus students, and employers. The social partners are also invited to program committee meetings, BA degree defences and reviews, webinars and meetings.

#### 7.1.3. Information on the programmes, their external evaluation, improvement processes, and outcomes is collected, used and made publicly available

Information about studies is continuously collected, analyzed and assessed to ensure effective self-assessment and improvement. The annual analysis of the study performance means that a timely identification of the shortcomings of and the implementation of urgent improvement measures are ensured. The evaluation of teaching in turn provides teachers with the opportunity to monitor the quality of their teaching.

Most information on the University's activities, study programs, admission requirements and qualifications are published in several languages on the University website. The summarized results of student satisfaction surveys are published on the website. The information intended only for the internal use of the university community is published in the virtual learning environment Moodle and Google Drive. Alumni feedback is acquired through the EHU Alumni Association, annual alumni meetings, and open door events.

#### 7.1.4. Student feedback is collected and analysed

Student surveys on the study quality and teaching are done every semester. Results are published on the University website and discussed in the Senate and departments. In the student surveys conducted in the years 2019 to 2022 and in the spring semester of 2022–2023, the Media and Communication students rated the quality of their studies as 'good' and 'very good'. The total score of Media and Communication students' evaluation of the quality of studies and their environment scored 8.6 points (out of 10) in the academic year 2019-2020, 8.5 in 2020-2021, 9.2 in 2021-2022 and 8.2 in 2022-2023.

The program continuously evaluates and updates the expected study results. The content of subjects and practical tasks is constantly supplemented or updated, concerning the changes in the field of media and



communications and also students' own individual interests, skills and knowledge. The personal abilities and needs of the students are of particular importance. The program offers students individual counselling, individualized tasks, and allow them to design individual study plans. Before the beginning of each new semester, the university administration also meets with the students and discusses the results of the previous semester, the strengths and problems of the implementation of the studies, schedules and study progress, their expectations for the new semester, and other matters.

### ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 7.1.)

The development of the field of study is strongly based on an internal quality assurance system that involves all stakeholders and applies continuous monitoring, transparency and public information. The quality assurance system is planned and implemented in an exemplary thorough manner. The internal quality assurance system for the programmes is effective. There is a clear division of responsibilities between various administrative and academic levels responsible for quality. The members of the study program committees and the heads of the departments carry out continuous quality monitoring of the study programmes. Involvement of all stakeholders in internal quality assurance is also effectively arranged. Faculty members and stakeholders of the University are involved in the feedback cycles, which allows for quality support, assurance, and rapid identification of quality issues. In addition, constant student feedback is collected and analysed. The implemented feedback system allows for regular and systematic collection and accumulation of information on the implementation of studies, monitoring of trends and reaction to them.

### AREA 7: CONCLUSIONS

AREA 1	Negative - 1 Does not meet the requirements	Satisfactory - 2 Meets the requirements, but there are substantial shortcomings to be eliminated	Good - 3 Meets the requirements, but there are shortcomings to be eliminated	Very good - 4 Very well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings	Exceptional - 5 Exceptionally well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings
First cycle				X	

### COMMENDATIONS

1. A thorough quality assurance structure with clear responsibilities stated.
2. Strong involvement of student voice and personal needs in the quality assurance.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

#### To address shortcomings

1. Not identified.

#### For further improvement

1. In addition to the implementation level, the involvement of students, alumni and employers could be stronger also on the management level quality assurance.

## IV. SUMMARY

This External Evaluation Report (EER) was compiled by the expert panel and is based on the detailed Self-Evaluation Report (SER) and supporting documentation submitted by EHU as well as the information gathered from the various stakeholder meetings and campus tour during the site-visit. The panel wishes to thank EHU and the stakeholders involved for their efforts in the preparation of the SER and evidence provided and for their engagement with this panel.

These activities enabled the panel to appraise the different aspects of curriculum design, delivery and quality assurance and to identify some of the key strengths of EHU's provision, in particular, the commitment of all the stakeholders we met to EHU's mission and the situatedness of its education and research activity which is also reflected in the staff's research portfolio; as noted by both students and alumni, the opportunities students have to customise their studies to suit their interests or career ambitions; the incentives in place to support research activity; the social, financial psychological and academic support available to students; EHU's online provision for eg visa delayed students until they join the programme in person on campus; the academic staff's level of high qualifications along with the capacity to teach professional practice; the adequacy of the Library's technical and bibliographical resources (building constraints notwithstanding) and the creative management of spaces and resources to encourage collaboration between students; a clear and thorough quality assurance structure and practices that engage with the student voice and needs.

The panel, however, also noted areas needing attention and improvement, namely, the need for a greater balance between theoretical and practical elements of the programme, catering for students more immediately concerned with finding a job; the development of more versatile criteria and mechanisms to evaluate diverse research outputs (in addition to international scientific publication rankings); enhancing the impact or application of the faculty's research to the media sector; to encourage staff's international research participation and collaborations, and mobility; and likewise to encourage students to participate in mobility and exchanges schemes; reviewing professorial staffing and the student/staff ratio; the updating of library resources including labelling language catering for international students; a stronger involvement of students, alumni and employers in the management of quality assurance.

This expert panel's final recommendation acknowledges the impact of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and the cruciality of AI skills for every sector and occupation, specifically, Higher Education and the communication industry. It therefore urges EHU to embrace the topic of AI across its programmes more explicitly: both as a tool for teaching and learning and as a Communication subject-specific area of competency and skill whilst promoting its responsible use by students.

Overall, EHU delivers a strong Media and Communication first cycle study programme which prepares graduates to successfully engage with the job market and industry.

## V. EXAMPLES OF EXCELLENCE

Examples of excellence should include examples exhibiting exceptional characteristics that are, implicitly, not achievable by all.

*If, according to the review panel, there are no such exceptional characteristics demonstrated by the HEI in this particular study field, this section should be skipped / left empty.*