



**RE-ACCREDITATION OF THE  
POLYTECHNIC OF ŠIBENIK**

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## COMPOSITION OF THE EXPERT PANEL

The evaluation of the Polytechnic of Šibenik has been carried out by the following expert panel:



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(chair)

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Jürgen Bruns is a professor of marketing and statistics at the Niederrhein University of Applied Sciences in Germany. In addition to his academic career, professor Bruns has accumulated over 25 years of experience in the business sector mainly at Marketing Manager and Export Manager positions.



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Bojan Hlača received MBA in ports and shipping and a PhD from the University of Zagreb, Faculty of Transport and Traffic Engineering. Currently, he is Managing Director of the Rijeka Port Authority and a part time professor at the University of Applied Sciences and the Faculty of Maritime Studies in Rijeka.



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Andreas Polk is a professor of economics at the Berlin School of Economics and Law in Germany. Professor Polk has received his first degree at the University of Heidelberg, Germany, and a PhD from the University of Zürich in Switzerland. His area of expertise is industrial economics and the economic analysis of politics.



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## INTRODUCTION

### *Short description of the evaluated institution*

The Polytechnic of Šibenik (hereafter referred to as the “**Polytechnic**”) was set up in 2006 by the Croatian Government. It has been founded to put together and/or replace a number of either autonomous or dislocated study programs operating in the Šibensko-kninska county. The Polytechnic superseded the former High School for Management in Tourism as its legal successor. Furthermore, in 2006 a former University of Split Centre for Professional Studies, operating in Vodice as a dislocated study teaching Administrative Law, was affiliated to the Polytechnic. Finally, since its founding, the Polytechnic has been working under a conditional license issued by the Croatian Ministry of Science, Education and Sports (hereafter referred to as the “**Ministry**”).

Given the above, unlike start up institutions, the Polytechnic inherited a certain number of constraints – either with respect to the curriculum, staff or formal certification by the government – which influenced its development. Nevertheless, the Polytechnic has demonstrated notable success in both providing the infrastructure needed to set up a new higher education institution as well as in aligning the inherited study programs with the operating paradigms and business concepts of the Polytechnic.

The Polytechnic is organized into three departments, namely Department of Business Economics/Management, Department of Transport and Department of Administrative Law. The three departments correspond respectively to the study programmes taught at the institution. These are:

- professional study “Management” with specialisations in either Tourism Management or IT Management,
- professional study “Transport” with specialisations in either Road Transport or Postal Services,
- professional study “Public Administration” as a dislocated study program taught in the town of Vodice.

In addition to the above professional programmes, in 2009 the Polytechnic started of a new specialist graduate professional study programme in the field of business economics. Table 1.1 provides more information on the study programmes taught at the Polytechnic.

Table 1.1: Study programmes of the Polytechnic

Study programme	Specialisation	Duration	Title obtained	ECTS
<i>Professional</i>				
<b>Management</b>	Tourism management	6 semesters	Bachelor of economics	180
	IT management	6 semesters	Bachelor of economics	180
<b>Transport</b>	Postal services	6 semesters	Bachelor of traffic	180
	Road Transport	6 semesters	Bachelor of traffic	180
<b>Public administration</b>	-	6 semesters	Bachelor of public administration	180
<i>Specialist graduate professional</i>				
<b>Management</b>	-	4 semesters	Professional specialist of economics	120

The Polytechnic is governed by its management consisting of the Dean, two vice-deans – namely vice-dean for academic affairs and vice-dean for business affairs – and the department heads. The management is supervised by the Supervising/Governing Board and the Polytechnic Council. The former elects the Dean and represents the founders, whereas the latter approves proposals set forth by the Management and authorises the Management to realise the proposed.

Students influence the work of the Management via their representatives in the Polytechnic Council by means of having the right of vetoing Council decisions. The student representatives are chosen in the elections held every other year. This entire process is regulated by the Polytechnic Statute.

In addition to the Management, a number of supporting services provide logistics to both academic and business related processes and activities.

## Work of the expert panel

The expert panel consisted of five members: the panel chair, three academic members and one student member. The quality assessment was undertaken against the criteria set forth by the Agency for Science and Higher Education Croatia (hereafter referred to as the “**Agency**”) for each of the following groups of stakeholders:

- the management of the Polytechnic
- quality management committee
- students
- academic staff (teachers and assistants)
- administrative and logistics staff.

Prior to the assessment meetings, the panel had consulted the available documentation focusing primarily on the self-evaluation document produced by the Polytechnic itself. Closed panel sessions were then held at which the panel members could confront their opinions on issues which either needed attention, clarification by a given stakeholder or further supporting documentation. The

issues raised were then collected, either by the chair or the Agency staff supporting the work of the panel, and circulated over to the panel members.

The stakeholder assessment meetings were moderated by the panel chair. Each of the panel members had the responsibility to cover the issues raised in the pre-assessment panel sessions as well as to, if needed, amend the list with new issues which got raised in the course of running the assessment meetings. Finally, upon each meeting, the work of the Polytechnic was analysed against the corresponding evaluation criteria and scored accordingly by each of the panel members. The overall/final score for a given criterion was discussed and mutually agreed between the panel members. The final score is not the average of the individual scores provided by each panel member.

## **DETAILED ANALYSIS BASED ON STANDARDS AND CRITERIA FOR RE-ACCREDITATION**

### **1. Institutional Management and Quality Assurance**

- 1.1. Despite the fact that both the vision and the mission of the Polytechnic are expressed in a concrete manner, outlining a realistic position of the institution and have clearly been visible in various official documentation, the key strategic document – the so-called “Dean’s Working Program” that all strategic planning refers to – is rather generic, difficult to get access to and can hardly be deemed as a source of any long-term development planning. Therefore, the strategic planning as a process has indeed been initiated and partly implemented. Nevertheless, it still lacks formalisation and progress monitoring.

*It is recommended that a formal strategic plan for the next five years is developed, negotiated and agreed upon all stakeholders. It must outline development priorities and the corresponding measures to reach the development goals as well as control mechanisms to monitor the development progress. The plan needs to be freely available and easily accessible.*

- 1.2. The Polytechnic has achieved a lot in a relatively short timeframe which clearly indicates that the organisational structure has been effective. Nevertheless, despite the obstacles such as the hiring freeze set forth by the Ministry, the Polytechnic should have addressed the problem of vice-dean for research and professional activity vacancy sooner.
- 1.3. Study programmes follow the principles set forth by the mission of the Polytechnic. Nevertheless, there is still room for improvement primarily in undertaking research, business related studies and workforce mobility.

- 1.4. Study programmes indeed take into account needs of the local economy. Given the lack of a strategic development planning explained in 1.1., it is highly recommended that detailed market research, benchmarking and business forecasting is undertaken prior to setting up new study programmes.
- 1.5. As a result of the re-accreditation process, the Polytechnic introduced the ISO 9000:2008 quality assurance system approved by the SGS Adriatica Ltd certification company. This is, by all means, a positive step forward in positioning the Polytechnic as a central point of academic and professional excellence in the county. However, the quality assurance business conduct is yet to be fully implemented in every day practice. Being a member of the Partnership council for the county labour market the Polytechnic has demonstrated its dedication to address and meet local business needs. But, its relationships with external businesses, partners and other stakeholders must go beyond formal memberships in various public/government bodies.
- 1.6. Both students and academic staff confirmed that formal mechanisms for improving teaching quality have been introduced and exercised. However, there is a lack of a formal feedback loop upon introducing an improvement. It is therefore recommended that a formal notification on a given improvement is communicated over to students, academic staff and all other parties concerned via different communication channels.
- 1.7. The Polytechnic has introduced a Code of Ethics as guideline for the professional and public work of its academic staff. As of 2012/2013 academic year, in addition to the academic staff, the students will be required to provide their formal consent to the terms and conditions given in the Code of Ethics.
- 1.8. Despite the positive circumstances explained in the previous section, majority of the teaching staff are not aware of the actual content of the Code of Ethics document.

*Such a practice needs to be greatly improved and the Polytechnic must make sure the guidelines set forth in the Code of Ethics document are understood and followed in everyday academic and business practice. Both the Management and the academic staff need to promote ethical behaviour among students. In this regard, to support effective exercising of the Code of Ethics, it is recommended that trainings, seminars and/or workshops aimed at the corresponding mindset change are introduced.*

## 2. Study programmes

- 2.1. Further to information provided in 1.1 and 1.4, the enrolment quotas can hardly be deemed as to reflect the needs of the local labour market.

*It is therefore recommended that forecasting, market research and benchmarking is undertaken when either setting up new study programmes or defining enrolment quotas for existing programmes. With respect to the former, it is not, for instance, clear what analysis preceded the strategic objective of setting up a new graduate study programme of nursing.*

*Furthermore, as initial positive signs of the Polytechnic being ranked among students higher than other similar institutions in the vicinity, the Polytechnic must intensify efforts to brand itself as centre of excellence for the study programmes taught.*

- 2.2. The enrolment quotas are in line with the institutional resources for quality teaching. Pass rates are not continuously monitored and analysed.

- 2.3. Student learning outcomes clearly describe knowledge and skills of the graduates and are communicated over to the students and others concerned via multiple communication channels.

- 2.4. It is up to the teaching staff to define methods for assessing student learning progress. The students however witness a lack of the corresponding practical work which impedes their learning progress and, eventually, employability.

*It is hence recommended that a special emphasis is put on assessing the practical skills (e.g. internship) and business pragmatics when assessing student learning outcomes.*

- 2.5. Originally, it was down to the lecturer responsible for a given module to define the number of ECTS points which would correspond to the total student's workload. The Polytechnic however recognises certain discrepancies in ECTS scoring and suggests its revision. This is however impeded by the legislative constraints relevant to the ECTS structure for which the operating license has been issued by the government.

- 2.6. The expert panel has been left under impression that local circumstances prevail over the international recognition of the Polytechnic.

*It is recommended that a corresponding benchmarking procedure is introduced and undertaken regularly to position the Polytechnic with respect to similar higher institutions in the region and globally. Furthermore, by introducing more foreign/English titles as mandatory literature in the syllabi, the Polytechnic will encourage the use of English and indirectly stimulate both students and academics to engage in international cooperation.*

- 2.7. The expert panel has witnessed a respectable set of teaching methods and strategies being exercised when undertaking lectures. However, as more state-of-the-art teaching tools and technology gets implemented in lecturing practice, the less involvement is required from the student which impedes students meeting the expected learning objectives.



*It is therefore recommended that students should be encouraged to take notes when attending lectures, even though the corresponding teaching materials are available in an electronic form.*

- 2.8. By formally joining forces with the local City Library, the Polytechnic has made available significant sources of information to its students.

*It is recommended that professional magazines, databases of the professional and/or research papers and other such sources are available to the students in addition to the sources provided by the City Library.*

- 2.9. The expert panel has been left under impression that the management does not appreciate enough the severity of graduate students lacking the corresponding practical experience. This is particularly daunting given that the Polytechnic operates in a region densely populated with respectable firms from the tourism sector, and one of its key study programmes is the Tourism Management programme.

*It is hence recommended that far more effort needs to be invested by the University Management in activities helping students gaining practical experience. This includes setting up formal collaborations with the local firms and businesses, introducing a body responsible for student internship matters, student involvement in the life-long learning programmes undertaken by the Polytechnic and other such activities.*

- 2.10. As suggested earlier, there are no formal processes and procedures for setting up new study programmes. The case studies detailed in Section 2b of the self-evaluation document exemplify study programme monitoring and improvement activities. However, it is not entirely clear to what extent stakeholders such as business representative mentioned in the document have participated in the “thorough analysis” undertaken.

*It is therefore recommended that formal procedures and bodi(es) responsible for initiating, proposing, design and monitoring of the study programmes are introduced.*

### 3. Students

- 3.1. Both the interviewed students and those visited during the lectures have witnessed that a sufficient amount of information on the Polytechnic have been available in different information packages (Internet, newspaper adds, radio broadcasting, job fairs etc.) which influenced their decision on choosing the polytechnic to do their first degree at.

*It is however recommended that more information is provided with respect to the employability of the graduates, professional specialist graduate study programmes, alumni services and other such information.*

- 3.2. Admission criteria have been recognised as an issue at all Universities of Applied Sciences and Polytechnics operating in Croatia as they tend to be targeted by a population of young people finishing off vocational schools rather than gymnasiums. As such, the admission criteria reflect the level of knowledge of such prospective students which is generally lower than the knowledge of the corresponding students coming from gymnasiums.

*It is recommended that the Polytechnic should gradually improve its reputation thus attracting more and more interest among highly capacitated prospective students by use of systematic long term planning advocated in 1.1., strong liaisons with the local business community and commitment to students acquiring practical skills and knowledge. – hopefully coupled with the corresponding legislation which would allow students to move from professional to university study programmes – the Polytechnic will gradually improve its reputation thus attracting more and more interest among highly capacitated prospective students.*

- 3.3. The Polytechnic does not evaluate competences of its prospective students upon admission with respect to the future career of the graduates, and State Matura results have been used as the admission criteria. Even though the Polytechnic has started off an independent research to identify the impact of the State Matura score, sex, social factors and other such influencers on student studying successfulness and employability, it is yet to provide feedbacks which improvements to the admission process would be based upon.

*It is therefore recommended that the Polytechnic should continue with the above research not merely as a source of a content for research work of its academic staff but also as a valuable source of immediate feedback information for improving both the admission criteria and the employability of its graduates. Furthermore, it is also recommended that certain criteria are introduced upon admission relevant to the study programme prospective students are evaluated against.*

- 3.4. The Polytechnic has initiated a partnership with the Family Centre of the Šibensko-kninska County and introduced peer-assistance as a means of student mentorship for certain modules.

*It is recommended that, in addition to the above, formal student supervision by academic staff is introduced to help students negotiate their study path better. Moreover, setting up a student career centre is also highly recommended.*

3.5. The interviewed students underline repeatedly the problem of the dislocated sports hall in Vodice and the latency in receiving information on sport activities timetable change. Students hence travel to the dislocated sports hall in vain just to realise the given class had been cancelled/shifted. Students do indeed mention certain extracurricular activities that they have attended to (eg. the so-called "Ekonomijada" in Istria), nevertheless they were all rather scarce.

It is not entirely clear how come that local natural resources are not utilised to provide alternatives to indoor sports activities (eg. sailing, swimming, cycling ect.).

*It is therefore recommended that students are informed well in advance on the changes of the original timetable for sports and other such activities. Moreover, the management should stimulate further and support student representatives to take a more active role in organising extracurricular events. Finally, local natural resources must be promoted to be utilised as alternatives to the conventional indoor activities.*

3.6. The Polytechnic does not provide enough support in raising the student standard which was witnessed by a numerous complaints and criticism. These are for instance:

- the Polytechnic did not provide any support in resolving issues raised by the students regarding the management of the local student hall approving formally student partying in the middle of an exam period
- the lack of the student restaurant in Vodice and the distance between the restaurant in Šibenik from the Polytechnic
- the lack of a common room (apart from the common area at the very entrance of the main building in Šibenik and the City Library) in which students would be able to spend quality time between lectures.

*It is recommended that the above issues are addressed as well as issues related to improving student mobility both locally (eg. bicycle facilities/storage rooms) and internationally (foreign newspapers accessibility etc.).*

3.7. As explained in the Introduction, the Polytechnic has established formal mechanisms for supporting the work of the Student Council. According to the management of the Polytechnic, the number of student representatives in the Polytechnic Council is higher than the number proscribed by the law.

Nevertheless, in addition to the recommendations provided in 3.5, more needs to be done by to encourage students exercising their rights and taking a more active roles during their study. For instance, students interviewed in Vodice did not know they had a representative in the Polytechnic Council neither were they informed about their rights in the decision making processes. Equally so, the Management underlines that budgeting for the Student Council activities is done annually but the allocated budget is rarely spent.

*Given the above, it is recommended that the management undertakes a certain number of student public awareness campaigns which would inform students in details about their rights, roles and responsibilities. Given that student elections are due to be held in 2012, it is highly recommended one such campaign is held prior to the student elections.*

- 3.8. The Polytechnic has established effective methods and procedures for student assessment and progress monitoring. The Management reported only a few occasions of students being dissatisfied with the assessment outcomes. The appealing procedure was then kicked off and the disputes have eventually got resolved by following the formal procedure. Student questionnaires provide an alternative mechanism for taking into account student complaints.

*Nevertheless, although formal mechanisms have been in place to monitor student progress and assessment, there is a lack of the corresponding feedback to the students upon resolving the issues raised. The lack of the feedback is hence recommended to be addressed properly.*

- 3.9. The Polytechnic does not keep statistics on the employability of its graduates. The re-accreditation process had kicked off the alumni organisation revival hence the organisation may still be considered in its beginnings and is yet to establish a service which would provide information needed to run the employability statistics.

*In addition to the career centre advocated in 3.4., it is recommended that the Management finds ways to establish an effective alumni organisation which would, among other things, provide information on the employability statistics. Information about employability indicates the effectiveness of current study programmes. It may therefore be a basis for revising or updating existing and/or for introducing new programmes. 3.10 provides more information on the recommended measures.*

- 3.10. *Further to 3.9., in order to stimulate graduate students to participate in the alumni organisation, it is recommended that the Polytechnic covers for the membership fee for the first three years. Another way to encourage graduate students to keep contact with the Polytechnic is to, for instance, open up free e-mail accounts. The accounts may then be used to communicate Polytechnic newsletters to the graduate students and thus attract their interest. Generally, the Polytechnic must raise the awareness and market the importance of keeping a contact with the alumni given that the interview students showed no interest in becoming alumni.*

- 3.11. *As stated earlier (Introduction, 3.7., 3.8.), the Polytechnic has established mechanisms to enable students participating in the decision making process. Their right to influence decision making processes students however scarcely exercise, hence it is recommended that the Management encourages students to play a more active role in that sense.*

- 3.12. The Polytechnic utilises a number of different communication channels to inform the public on the study programmes, qualifications and other such matters, which include radio broadcasting, job fairs, newspaper ads, Internet etc.

- 3.13. The University has established processes to enable students expressing their opinions and proposals for improvements.

- 3.14. As said in the previous section, the Polytechnic has established formal measures to enable students expressing their proposals for improvements. These have reportedly been used and have proven to be sound and fruitful. Nevertheless, what is missing is a formal feedback on the outcome of the proposal which is hence recommended to be implemented.

## 4. Teachers

4.1. The number and qualifications of teachers are on the way to be in line with the strategic goals of the Polytechnic. There is however a shortage of full time senior academic staff holding college professor or similar academic titles. This is about to be partly remedied after a few of the full time teachers will have finished their PhD studies.

4.2. The Polytechnic carries out a policy of growth and development of human resources. According to the management of the Polytechnic, in the next three years, among eight full time teachers currently undertaking their PhD study, up to four of them will have received a PhD and qualify for the grade of college professor.

4.3. Students compliment the expertise of the teachers and are mostly satisfied with the teaching quality and the continuity of teaching and learning.

*However, the student-teacher ratio is below the mandatory minimum and hence need to be improved by employing more full time teaching staff.*

4.4. *As said in the previous section, the student-to-full-time-teachers ratio is suboptimal and needs to be improved.*

4.5. Given the information provided in 4.1. and 4.2., the Polytechnic looks after the professional development of its academic staff. Nevertheless, formal procedures and mechanisms, clearly communicated to the teachers, explaining available opportunities for their professional development do not exist. Instead, the decision on what professional development programme to undertake is rather arbitrary and down to the teacher, whereas the financing correspond closely to the teacher-management relationship.

*It is therefore recommended that formal mechanisms for encouraging academic staff to undertake postgraduate studies and/or participate in professional research activities, as well as mechanisms for financing their professional development, are developed, introduced and communicated over to the teachers.*

4.6. As explained in the previous section, a formal procedure for teachers' advancement does not exist let alone a formal possibility of appealing.

*It is therefore recommended such a formal procedure which would first list development programmes which best correspond with the vision and the mission of the Polytechnic, provide info on the application/appealing procedure and, finally, inform teachers on the funds available to finance their development, is introduced.*

4.7. The teachers interviewed witness that the workload has been carefully balanced leaving them more than enough time for preparing for the lectures, working on improving the teaching quality as well as for individual professional development.

*Given the relatively poor output with respect to the research and professional activity of the teachers, it is recommended that extra care is taken when balancing the workload to stimulate teachers to be more active in undertaking internationally recognised research and professional activities.*

- 4.8. In order to commit to a teaching activity outside the Polytechnic, the teacher needs to get an approval from the Management. The Management thus ensures that the teacher is committed to his teaching and research responsibilities.

## **5. Research and Professional Activity**

- 5.1. As indicated earlier in 4.5., 4.6. and 4.7., the Polytechnic does not have formally adopted policies governing existing and planned professional and research activities.

*In this regard, and as suggested in 4.6., it is recommended that the Polytechnic develops, introduces and monitors the implementation of such policies, giving a particular emphasis on stimulating internationally recognised research and professional activity.*

- 5.2. Further to the information provided in the previous section, the Polytechnic has not implemented formal mechanisms for ensuring efficient operation of its professional and research activities. Although the postgraduate study and the corresponding research undertaken by the academic staff could qualify for the research undertaken by the Polytechnic, it is still not clear how the research undertaken correspond to the strategic development plans and objectives of the Polytechnic. This is particularly important given that the decision on what professional development programme to undertake is rather arbitrary and down to the teachers themselves (4.5.).

*It is therefore recommended that the Polytechnic finds a niche in which it would position itself as a regional centre of excellence. A list of staff development programmes, professional and research activities which best correspond to achieving this goal, together with the corresponding time framework, would then need to be developed. Finally, formal mechanisms and measures for ensuring successful implementation of the above must be put in practice. It is also highly recommended that the Polytechnic should concentrate its plans for research and professional activities in an international rather than local context, taking into account its strongholds such as for instance the experience in the tourism sector and its immense importance for the local/national economy.*

- 5.3. As explained above, there is no research agenda. The Polytechnic has reportedly initiated contacts with a few domestic and international universities and first outcomes of the partnership with the Jagiellonian University in Krakow are about to get realised by means of the Polytechnic hosting a librarian from Krakow. Other collaboration is rather sporadic and down to the teachers' interest primarily in joint publishing of the research papers.

*Further to 5.1. and 5.3. it is therefore recommended that the Polytechnic takes a more proactive role in putting the signed partnerships into practice taking into account its strategic goals and objectives. Finding and developing collaboration and professional work initiatives which would attract EU funding is also highly recommended.*

- 5.4. The Polytechnic is to be congratulated for its activities in providing professional short courses for tour guides and tourist agency managers. These clearly reflect the local strong points of the Polytechnic, namely the geographical location in the very middle of a high potential tourist region, the importance of tourism for the local and national economy etc.

*It is however recommended that the Polytechnic invests more in its branding, marketing and dedication to excellence such that to position the existing and future professional activities as a "must have/undertake". The University is surrounded by massive and renowned tourist resorts (eg. Solaris Šibenik, Krka National Park and others) and it is not entirely clear how come that more research and/or professional projects have not been undertaken jointly with these enterprises (for instance, the financial evaluation of the self evaluation document shows no income under these categories).*

## **6. Mobility and international cooperation**

- 6.1. As being rather recently set up, the Polytechnic has so far been focused on providing basic infrastructure for undertaking its study programmes. As a result, international cooperation and mobility of both its students and academics has been in the early stage of realisation. So far only contacts with certain institutions from abroad have been established apart from the partnership with the Jagiellonian University of Krakow (see 5.3). As for the collaboration/contacts with other Croatian HEIs, the majority of these were influenced by the deficit of senior full time lecturers at the Polytechnic rather than by the Polytechnic actively promoting academic mobility.

*Some evidence of students recognising the Polytechnic as a "better choice" for them and therefore moving from another institution has been witnessed. In this regard, it is recommended the Polytechnic promotes further such examples and market itself not merely locally but also on the national level. As for the academic mobility, as was the case with the academic staff development programmes explained earlier, the Polytechnic should analyse, develop, put into practice and communicate clearly its strategic objectives as well as measures to achieve these objectives related to the international mobility and University international visibility in general.*

- 6.2. Students do not have opportunities to complete some portion of their study abroad. Furthermore, students are not informed on the corresponding options/exchange programmes available let alone capacitated/self-confident to undertake actions on that front.

*In this regard, it is recommended the Polytechnic takes firm actions in capacitating its students to undertake part of their study abroad by means of the following:*

- *introducing foreign (English) course literature as mandatory,*
- *delivering parts of the study programmes in English,*
- *guest lectures held by international experts (from both academia and the business sector) from abroad,*

- *holding internal seminars and workshops on the available exchange programmes with case studies commented by invited experienced students from other universities,*
- *strong commitment to student internships at local tourist resorts and other such large businesses where the use of English is mandatory.*
- *stimulating student exchange for the purpose of undertaking internships,*
- *organising international extracurricular activities such as sport games, etc.*

*In addition to the above as well as other such measures aimed at enabling student international mobility, other institutional measures, for instance setting up a student international affairsoffice, are also recommended.*

- 6.3. With only a few contacts initiated and partnerships signed with universities from abroad, the Polytechnic is indeed in the early stage of encouraging international cooperation and mobility of its academic staff. Even though the interviewed teachers reported attending international conferences as well as paper publishing in collaboration with foreign higher education institutions, the majority of the former was held in Croatia and had Croatian as an official language. As for the latter, the institutions involved were mainly from the neighbouring countries where Croatian could have also been used as a communication language.

*It is therefore recommended that, as was the case with academic staff development programmes explained earlier, the Polytechnic comes up with a clear set of priorities and measures to stimulate international mobility of its academic staff. The cooperation must go beyond peer individual contacts with the HEIs in the neighbouring countries and should focus on the corresponding EU funds available for encouraging academic mobility. It is indeed appreciated that stimulating teachers to take a sabbatical year abroad is sometimes difficult. Nevertheless, funding postdoctoral or postgraduate research abroad may be appealing enough, especially for junior academics.*

- 6.4. The majority of liaisons with the corresponding international professional association have been rather unofficial and down to individual teacher's undertakings and judgements. The contribution of the Polytechnic to the joint goals of the associations it belongs to has not been witnessed.

*It is therefore recommended that, in addition to its formal membership, the Polytechnic takes a more proactive role in positioning itself as a driving force in meeting the objectives of a given association. For instance, as a member of the Association of Croatian Travel Agencies, the Polytechnic may position itself as a body responsible for organising, hosting and holding thematic international conferences, seminars and trainings.*

- 6.5. The Polytechnic has not ensured conditions for attracting foreign students.

*It is therefore recommended that prompt actions are taken such as the following:*

- *development of an English version of the website*
- *availability of syllabi in English or other foreign languages*
- *active marketing via other communication channels such as social networks or professional magazines*



- *organising road shows in the neighbouring countries*
- *virtual open door days etc.*

6.6. The Polytechnic has not developed cooperation in the EU Lifelong Learning Programme.

*As advocated earlier, it is recommended that an office for international affairs is set up which would work closely with the alumni organisation to keep track on the lifelong learning programmes available and keep the alumni adequately informed. A systematic research should be carried out to benefit from the EU programmes such as Erasmus (for higher education) or Grundtvig (practical learning for adults).*

6.7. As explained in 6.3., the Polytechnic is in its early stage of developing any forms of inter-institutional cooperation.

*To move to a more mature stage it is recommended that the Polytechnic starts utilising the signed agreements, stimulate their teachers, both professionally and financially, to develop new collaboration ideas and models as well as to initiate joint projects and initiatives.*

## **7. Resources: Administration, Space, Equipment and Finances**

7.1. The institution provides appropriate resources for all enrolled students sufficient to support their effective learning.

*It is however recommended the Polytechnic organises a common area and/or group study space for students to be able to study, meet professionally or spend other such quality time between lectures. Also, the institution must address the issue of finishing off the renovation of the new premises in Vodice and make IT facilities available to students as soon as possible.*

7.2. The Polytechnic is in the early stage of developing rules regulating the development of non-teaching staff. The situation is somewhat similar with the academic staff development programmes and policies explained earlier in 4.4.

*It is recommended that non-teaching development programmes are aligned with the strategic objectives, prioritised, and communicated over to the staff members. A set of corresponding measures for stimulating non-teaching staff to undertake personal development courses needs also to be developed. The future office for international affairs advocated earlier must provide information on the corresponding EU funding available (see 6.6.).*

7.3. The Polytechnic ensures that laboratory equipment and usage protocols comply with recognised international standards.

*As the Polytechnic is about to implement video capturing of the lectures, the corresponding privacy issues need to be address in this regard. Also, some laboratories in Šibenik suffered from roof leakage which might raise certain safety issues. This needs to be addressed properly despite the reported ownership disputes over the Polytechnic building.*

- 7.4. see 7.1.
- 7.5. As indicated earlier, the Polytechnic looks after its resources needed to facilitate effective learning, teaching and research.  
*However, as there is no systematic collection of information relevant to improvement of its activities, it is recommended that the corresponding formal procedures for collecting and analysing such data are introduced and carried out at least annually.*
- 7.6. It is indeed appreciated that running a sizable library with a respectable number of titles available is rather costly and perhaps not economically viable for smaller institutions such as the Polytechnic. In this regard, the partnership with the local City Library is definitely something the institution should be congratulated for.  
*It is recommended the institution offers to its students and academic staff free access to online journals and newspapers as well as to offer certain newspaper and journal titles as hardcopies.*
- 7.7. The Polytechnic has ensured that the teaching vs. non-teaching staff ratio has been carefully balanced (see 3.3?????).  
*However, as this has still not been an effect of a strategic planning cycle, it is recommended the institution sets up formal procedures for monitoring and improving the ratio.*
- 7.8. As a public institution, the financial stability of the Polytechnic is clearly dependent on the corresponding government subsidies.  
*In this regard, as suggested in 5.4., more emphasis should be put on carrying out professional projects with either local, national or regional businesses to provide alternative sources of income.*
- 7.9. Own funds of the institution are used to improve the quality of teaching in line with its mission and other formal documents.

# **FINAL REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS BY THE EXPERT PANEL FOR THE ACCREDITATION COUNCIL**

## ***STRONG POINTS***

- The Polytechnic has achieved a lot in challenging time frame and in a geographical area severely hit by recession, economic instability and recent war sufferings.
- The general atmosphere among both the student population and the academic staff is positive which represents a fundamental prerequisite for further development. Evidence has been shown that the Polytechnic has positioned itself as an institution of a first choice even among students from other counties.
- The academic staff represents a homogenous and motivated team, capable to tackle challenges such as ISO standardisation implementation, state-of-the-art technology implementation such as distance learning and many others.
- Despite the lack of formal student mentorship, the academics are dedicated to the welfare of the students and the learning outcomes are indeed comparable with those from other such institutions in Croatia.
- Staff development is highly supported by the management as a result of which eight full time teachers are currently enrolled in PhD programmes.

## ***WEAK POINTS***

- The lack of student internships, practical work and experience represents a serious threat to an overall quality of the graduates.
- Students are vaguely informed and poorly stimulated to participate in the decision making process as well as to exercise their rights and responsibilities. They tend to act as “objects” rather than “subjects” in common practice.
- Non-existing international mobility both by the students and the academic staff.
- Almost no output from professional works such as business related projects undertaken by the teaching staff.
- The reluctance of the management to leverage more on extracurricular activities and on issues relevant to improving student standard.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- Despite that both the vision and the mission are expressed in a concrete manner, outlining a realistic position of the Polytechnic and have clearly been visible in various official documentation, they are both somewhat generic and can hardly be deemed as a summary of any long-term development planning. Therefore, the strategic planning as a process has indeed been initiated and partly implemented. Nevertheless, it still lacks formalisation and progress monitoring. It is therefore recommended that a formal strategic plan for the next five years is developed, negotiated and agreed upon by all stakeholders, including the local community and business representatives. It must outline development priorities and the corresponding measures to reach the development goals as well as control mechanisms to monitor the development progress.
- A number of processes like staff development have not been formalised and aligned with the strategic goals. Such a formalisation needs to be carried out, but the Polytechnic must take extra care that, despite the introduction of new formal procedures, its organisation remains flexible, fast moving and able to accept new challenges quickly and effectively.
- The Polytechnic must find a niche in which it would position itself as a regional centre of excellence. A list of staff development programmes, professional and research activities which best correspond to achieving this goal, together with the corresponding time framework, would then need to be developed. It is also highly recommended that the institution concentrates its plans for research and professional activities in an international rather than local context, taking into account its strongholds such as for instance the experience in the tourism sector and its immense importance for the local/national economy. This would qualify the Polytechnic as eligible to apply for different EU funding which would enable it to meet its strategic objectives sooner.
- The Polytechnic must provide a framework, lay basis for and put more effort in stimulating its academics and students to participate in different exchange programmes. The expert panel indeed appreciate that the former are sometimes reluctant to undertake actions which would have notable impact on their lives so far. Nevertheless, by stimulating junior academics given their general flexibility, as well as by focusing on part-time and/or distance learning development programmes, it is reasonable to assume that notable progress may be achieved in a relatively short time frame.
- The Polytechnic must take a more active role in initiating, developing and realising new professional works, feasibility studies and other such business related projects. Apart from being alternative sources of funding, these may well serve as a way of accumulating much needed practical knowledge among both students and the academic staff.

- The Polytechnic must establish statistics about the employability of their graduates to get a feedback on the effectiveness of their study programmes and to have a basis for re-designing present programmes and introducing new ones.