



NVAO • THE NETHERLANDS

EUROPEAN POLITICS AND SOCIETY  
VÁCLAV HAVEL JOINT MASTER PROGRAMME

Charles University Prague, Jagiellonian University Kraków, Pompeu Fabra University  
Barcelona, Leiden University

PANEL REPORT

*FEBRUARY 2023*



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CHARLES UNIVERSITY PRAGUE, JAGIELLONIAN UNIVERSITY KRAKÓW, POMPEU  
FABRA UNIVERSITY BARCELONA, LEIDEN UNIVERSITY

NVAO RE-ACCREDITATION ACCORDING TO THE EUROPEAN  
APPROACH FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE OF JOINT PROGRAMMES

*FEBRUARY 2023*



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# 1 Executive summary

This report is issued by the panel appointed by the Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO) and assesses the conditions for re-accreditation of the 'European Politics and Society: Václav Havel Joint master programme' (EPS) as submitted by Leiden University (the Netherlands) on behalf of the EPS consortium which also features the Charles University Prague (Czech Republic), Jagiellonian University Kraków (Poland) and Pompeu Fabra University Barcelona (Spain).

The application concerns a joint English-language master's degree of 120 ECTS credits (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System), which is offered as a full-time two-year integrated multi-university programme in the Czech Republic, Poland, the Netherlands and Spain. Given these specific features, the panel based its assessment on the standards of the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes in the European Higher Education Area of October 2014, approved by the EHEA ministers in May 2015, which in turn are based on the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance.

The application documentation, programme materials and discussions with delegations from all Consortium Partners have provided the panel with a comprehensive view of the programme. The site visit was organised online because of the risk of Covid-restrictions. It became clear to the panel that the programme is implemented and continuously developed further by a group of highly motivated Consortium Partners with a shared ambition to prepare students to understand and interpret the challenges that Europe currently faces in the global arena. Based on the documentation presented and the online site visit on 16 December 2022, the panel concludes that the EPS Programme meets almost all standards of the assessment framework. Two standards are partially met. Consequently, the panel's overall assessment of the quality of the EPS Programme is conditionally positive. The panel is highly confident that the programme will be able to meet the two conditions within a maximum period of two years. The two conditions advised by the panel are intended to stimulate further improvement of the programme.

EPS is a programme offered by four renowned universities in four countries, whose national frameworks enable each institution to participate in the programme. The partners involved are recognised public institutions with joint responsibility for the design and implementation of the programme. The joint character of the programme is restricted by the absence of Teaching and Examination Regulations at the programme level. The Consortium Agreement covers all the required components, but its regulations replace joint Teaching and Examination Regulations by local ones and they require to be updated to better represent current practice.

The EPS Programme combines substantive knowledge of political and social developments in Europe with research skills and professional competencies. The documentation shows how the intended learning outcomes are aligned with international frameworks at master's level and are adequately translated into learning objectives at a course level. The programme offers a professional (Leiden, Prague, Kraków) and an academic track (Barcelona). A number of activities relevant to meet the learning objectives are offered as extracurricular activities which implies these are not awarded ECTS-credits. At the same time, the formal curriculum includes language courses and electives. In order to do justice to the additional activities and to guarantee the master's level of all curriculum components, the panel advises reconsidering the position of the extracurricular activities and the language courses, by allocating the credits dedicated to language learning to the extracurricular activities, and formally ensuring the master's level of the electives chosen by students by the Exam Board.

The programme produces good results. The panel studied a representative sample of theses. These convincingly show that the learning outcomes are achieved. The panel advises the programme to systematically monitor the graduates' success in the labour market.

The curriculum structure and contents are appropriate for an academic master's programme. The first three semesters consist of taught courses, while the fourth is devoted to the thesis. The panel appreciates that the curriculum has been designed by all partners and meets the aims of the programme, in line with the expertise of the partners involved. In addition to the courses, the

curriculum includes several extracurricular activities that are partly obligatory and certainly relevant to the students' professional development.

The EPS Programme applies the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System properly. The overall workload of the programme meets the standards. The difference in workload per university is manageable for students. The panel advises taking the extracurricular activities into account when determining the acceptable workload for students at each respective university, as well as for the programme as a whole.

The admission requirements are clearly stated and in line with the programme's objectives. The selection process is well laid out and managed. The recognition of previous qualifications and prior learning is adequately provided for in the EPS Programme.

The programme design corresponds with the learning objectives; it truly provides the intended international, intercultural and multidisciplinary learning experience. The programme is student-centred and students feel supported and stimulated by their lecturers. Lecturers use a range of didactic methods, organising both large and small-scale classes. The diversity in students' backgrounds is taken into account. Overall, the panel concludes that the teaching and learning approaches allow for meeting the intended learning outcomes, but also notes the course syllabi tend to be primarily academic-focused. The panel encourages the consortium and programme management to reflect on the learning outcomes as specified in the two tracks (professional and academic) and whether the programme delivers on both of these.

The course assessments are in line with the intended learning outcomes and a sufficient variety of assessment methods is used. Since there are no shared Teaching and Examination Regulations for the joint programme, quality control of assessment is the responsibility of each university. This model entails the risk that there is no full alignment in terms of assessment as required by a joint programme. This is already evident in the different thesis requirements between the partner universities. The programme partners should increase joint and consistent assessment by adopting a shared set of Teaching and Examination Regulations and strengthening the role of the Exam Board.

The EPS student support mechanism works well. The Student Handbook and the local Programme Coordinators provide essential information, and students can turn to local Programme Coordinators with all their questions or issues.

The CVs of the teaching staff show that they are renowned researchers with diverse backgrounds well suited to the interdisciplinary master's programme. All of them have international academic experience and combine a high scientific and didactic level. They display an impressive commitment to the programme and their students. The workload for lecturers and coordinators is high, although they express satisfaction at being able to work with broad-minded students. The facilities at the four partner universities are appropriate and adequate.

The transparency and documentation meet the expectations. Documentation is available on the Consortium website and the Partners' websites as well as in the Student Handbook and Thesis Handbook. The information is transparent and clear.

The system of internal and external quality assessment is sufficiently well-developed and ensures the quality of the EPS Programme. Course evaluations are the prime responsibility of the Partner Universities, while evaluation at the programme level has been taken up by the student representatives. The panel advises the programme management to play a more active role in programme evaluation, to integrate it more fully into the Consortium activities and not to leave this to students only.

The panel concludes that the judgement of the academic European Politics and Society: Václav Havel Joint Master Programme at Leiden University (the Netherlands), Charles University Prague (Czech Republic), Jagiellonian University Kraków (Poland) and Pompeu Fabra University Barcelona (Spain) is positive with conditions. The conditions that need to be met are:

- adopt a joint set of Teaching and Examination Regulations, make informal guidelines, rules and regulations more formal and monitor their implementation;
- strengthen the role of the Exam Board: in supervising (1) not only the procedure but also the content and level of the assessments, (2) the quality assurance of the assessment, and (3) the level of the optional courses selected by students.

The panel will advise the NVAO to give a maximum of two years to the programme to meet the conditions. The panel is convinced that the programme will be able to meet the conditions within that period.

The Hague, 21 February 2023

On behalf of the Accreditation panel convened to assess the academic European Politics and Society Václav Havel Joint Master Programme at Leiden University,

Prof. Dr. Robert Wagenaar  
(Chair)

Dr. Marianne van der Weiden  
(Secretary)

## 2 Introduction

In July 2022, the NVAO received a request for an accreditation procedure regarding the master programme of academic orientation (wo-master) European Politics and Society Václav Havel Joint Master Programme (EPS). As this concerns a joint programme issued by four higher education institutions in Czech Republic, Poland, Spain and the Netherlands, this request was submitted on behalf of the EPS Consortium by Leiden University.

Given the particular features of this application, the NVAO convened an international panel of experts consisting of:

- Prof. dr. Robert Wagenaar, *chair*, Director International Tuning Academy, Professor of History and Politics of Higher Education, University of Groningen, the Netherlands;
- Dr. Laura Horn, Associate Professor, Department of Social Sciences and Business, University of Roskilde, Denmark;
- Prof. Salvador Parrado, Professor Department of Political and Administration Sciences, UNED, Spain;
- Prof. dr. hab. Anna Paczeński, Professor European Political Processes. University of Wrocław, Poland;
- Michał Goszczyński, *student member*, Student Magister Administration, Warsaw University of Technology, Poland.

The composition of the panel reflects the expertise deemed necessary by NVAO for this accreditation exercise. The panel composition is also in line with the procedural requirements in the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes (C.2. Review Panel). On behalf of NVAO, ir. Lineke van Bruggen and Yvonne Overdevest MA were responsible for the coordination of the assessment process. The secretary, dr. Marianne van der Weiden, drafted the panel report in close cooperation with all panel members and in agreement with the chair. All panel members and the secretary signed a statement of independence and confidentiality.

The panel based its assessment on the Standards for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), issued in October 2014 and approved by the EHEA ministers in May 2015. This European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes should be applied to quality assurance of international joint programmes if any of the cooperating higher education institutions require external quality assurance at the programme level. The standards to be assessed are based on the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the EHEA (ESG). This procedure allows the possibility that only one procedure can lead to accreditation in several countries.

The panel members studied the application documentation of the programme and reported their preliminary findings before the site visit to the secretary. The secretary collected and processed them for the preparatory meeting on 28 November 2022. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the risk of new restrictions on physical meetings, it was decided to organise online both the preparatory meeting and the site visit. At the preparatory meeting, the panel analysed the preliminary findings, identified the most important issues for discussion, gathered points that required further information from the consortium prior to the site visit, and prepared the sessions with the delegations.

The online site visit took place on 16 December 2022. The panel met with delegations of the management of the consortium and the programme, as well as with lecturers, members of the examination board, including admission and student support staff, students, graduates and representatives of the professional field. The schedule of the site visit is presented in annex 2. Annex 3 lists the materials made available by the Consortium before the site visit.

Immediately after the meetings with the delegations, the panel discussed the findings and formulated its considerations and preliminary conclusions separately for each standard. These are based on observations during the site visit and the assessment of the programme documents. At the end of the site visit, the chair presented the panel's preliminary conclusions to the representatives of the programme.

Based on the findings, considerations and conclusions, the secretary wrote a draft advisory report that was first presented to the panel members. After the panel members had commented on the draft report, the chair endorsed the report.

On 20 January 2023, the advisory report was sent to the institution, which was given the opportunity to respond to any factual inaccuracies in the report. The institution replied on 13 February 2023. Subsequently, the final report was endorsed by the panel chair. The panel composed its advice fully independently and offered it to NVAO on 21 February 2023.



## 3 Description of the programme

### 3.1 General

Countries	Czech Republic, Poland, Spain, the Netherlands,
Institutions	Charles University Prague (Czech Republic); Jagiellonian University Kraków (Poland); Pompeu Fabra University Barcelona (Spain); Leiden University (the Netherlands)
Programme	European Politics and Society, Václav Havel Joint Master Programme
Level	master
Orientation	academic (wo)
Specialisations	Traditions and Future of a Multi-level Europe (Prague) Maintaining a Leading Role for Europe in the World (Leiden) Centre and Periphery (Kraków) The Future of the EU: Ever Growing or Falling Apart? (Barcelona)
Degree	Master/Master of Arts
Locations	Prague (Czech Republic), Leiden (the Netherlands), Kraków (Poland) and Barcelona (Spain)
Study Load	120 European Credits (EC)
Fields of Study	Interdisciplinary (ISCED Field sectoroverstijgend)

### 3.2 Profile of the consortium

The application is filed by a Consortium of four higher education institutions in four countries: (1) Charles University in Prague, Czech Republic, (2) Jagiellonian University in Kraków, Poland, (3) Pompeu Fabra University in Barcelona, Spain and (4) Leiden University in Leiden, the Netherlands. The partners signed the first Consortium Agreement in February 2017, and updated it in January 2022.

The degree is offered by these four academic and degree awarding partners. Charles University Prague has been the Coordinating Partner from the beginning. The European Politics and Society, Václav Havel Joint Master Programme (EPS) had its first student cohort in 2017. The intake of first year students has grown from 16 in 2017-2018 to 45 in 2021-2022.

Charles University in Prague is a research university, founded in 1348. The University comprises seventeen faculties in a wide range of disciplines. Charles University has nearly 50,000 students enrolled in more than 300 accredited degree programmes. Over 7,000 students come from other countries. The University employs almost 4,500 academic and research staff.

Leiden University was founded in 1575 and is a research university. The University has seven faculties and a campus in both Leiden and The Hague. Currently, over 34,000 students are registered, and over 5,800 staff are employed.

Jagiellonian University Kraków was founded in 1364. It comprises sixteen faculties, the oldest of which is the Faculty of Law and Administration as the continuation of the Faculty of Law. Over 34,000 students are registered in bachelor and master programmes. The University employs more than 8,700 staff members, 4,700 of whom are academic teachers.

Pompeu Fabra University Barcelona was created in 1990 by the Generalitat de Catalunya to establish a public university aimed at academic excellence and to contribute to the development of the country. The University concentrates its research and teaching on the various dimensions of the human being, including biological, communicative and social, and is organised into eight faculties. Over 12,000 students are registered, and almost 600 academic and 670 administrative staff are employed.

### 3.3 Profile of the programme

European Politics and Society, Václav Havel Joint Master Programme (further: EPS) combines the strengths of the four Partner Universities in the fields of European politics, contemporary history and culture, economics, international relations, public policies and policy making in a joint master's degree programme. In this programme, students acquire knowledge and skills that are essential to understanding and interpreting the challenges that Europe currently faces in the global arena. EPS prepares the students for a career in the international labour market, capable of building bridges both within Europe and with countries outside Europe.

The programme is a two-year full-time study programme of 120 ECTS credits. Throughout the programme, the language of instruction is English. The programme consists of four semesters of 30 ECTS credits each. The first semester, taught in Prague, familiarises the students with key challenges Europe faces, giving attention also to cultural and historical dimensions, and provides a first introduction to the methodology and the key academic disciplines. It lays the foundations for the rest of the programme. At the end of the first semester, students choose the topic of their master's thesis and write the first version of the master's thesis project proposal.

The second semester is spent in Leiden or Kraków and provides the opportunity for students to start their specialisation. It consists of compulsory courses on several aspects of European Union studies, in particular EU law and EU economics, a European language course and a methodology course. In addition, students have a choice of optional courses provided by the local university.

For the third and fourth semesters students may choose to study at a partner university, not being the one in which the student was enrolled in the 2nd. Semester, and specialise in one of the four areas of expertise associated with the consortium partner. The third semester includes also an internship (Prague, Leiden, Kraków) or the acquisition of advanced research skills (Barcelona) as well as the preparation for the thesis through seminars and optional courses. Students finish their thesis in the fourth semester.

In addition, extracurricular joint events are organised in each semester: the Prague Welcome Event, the Barcelona Research Seminar, the Brussels Study Trip and the Oxford Spring School. These are aimed at community building and training the students in research and presentation skills, career and network development and debating skills.

Schematic overview of the curriculum (per September 2022)

1 <sup>st</sup> semester	2nd semester	3rd semester	4th semester
Foundation	Start of specialisation	Specialisation including thesis	
Prague	Leiden	Traditions and Future of a Multi-level Europe (Prague)	
	or	Maintaining a Leading Role for Europe in the World (Leiden)	
	Kraków	Centre and Periphery (Kraków)	
		The Future of the EU: Ever Growing or Falling Apart? (Barcelona)	

## 4 Assessment per standard

In this chapter, the panel assesses the EPS programme according to the standards of the European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programmes in the EHEA. The criteria for each standard are mentioned. The panel presents a brief outline of its findings per standard, as well as the considerations that led the panel to a concluding judgement on a three-point scale: the programme either meets, partially meets or does not meet the standard. At the end of this chapter and based on its judgements on the individual standards, the panel issues an overall conclusion on the quality of the entire programme. This conclusion can be either positive, conditionally positive or negative.

### 4.1 Standard 1: Eligibility

#### 4.1.1 Status

*The institutions that offer a joint programme should be recognised as higher education institutions by the relevant authorities of their countries. Their respective national legal frameworks should enable them to participate in the joint programme and, if applicable, to award a joint degree. The institutions awarding the degree(s) should ensure that the degree(s) belong to the higher education degree systems of the countries in which they are based.*

##### *Outline of findings*

The four institutions involved are formally recognised as higher education institutions and accredited by the national authorities and are in the position to offer the joint degree, which is recognised in their country. The accreditation systems and recognition of joint degrees differ between the countries, but this has no effect on the formal recognition of the EPS degree.

##### *Considerations*

The panel considers that the partners who offer the EPS programme are entitled to do so and that completing the programme will lead to a recognised and accredited master's degree of academic orientation.

##### *Conclusion*

The panel assesses that the EPS programme **meets** standard 1.1, status.

#### 4.1.2 Joint design and delivery

*The joint programme should be offered jointly, involving all cooperating institutions in the design and delivery of the programme.*

##### *Outline of findings*

The EPS Programme is the result of a long-term collaboration. All four partners are members of the Europaeum network of leading European universities and together represent the major academic and political traditions in Europe. The geographical, academic and cultural diversity of the four partners represents old and new EU member states and their different histories and academic traditions. The collaboration started in 2013 with the Václav Havel exchange programme between Leiden University, Paris-Sorbonne and Charles University, with Jagiellonian University joining in 2014. Benefiting from this experience, Prague, Leiden and Kraków built the EPS programme structure and curriculum. As Paris-Sorbonne was unable to accredit an English language MA programme, Pompeu Fabra University replaced this university as a full partner in the EPS programme. The EPS programme started in October 2017 and obtained the Erasmus Mundus status just before its first intake of students.

The panel recognises a clear distinction in terms of the programme and organisational matters between the partners. The EPS Management Board consists of seven members and has overall responsibility for ensuring common standards of quality assurance. Charles University is the Coordinating Partner of the EPS Consortium and nominates the Chair, the Director, the Academic Deputy Director and the Financial Deputy Director, subject to approval by all Consortium Members. The remaining three members are the Programme Coordinators of the other partners. The EPS Management Board receives annual reports

from the Programme Committee, which meets twice each year to evaluate the progress of students and to identify areas that need improvement. The Coordinating Partner is responsible for the general coordination of the programme, including administrative, legal and financial aspects, while each consortium partner is responsible for the organisation and realisation of the EPS Programme at their own university. Four permanent working groups, each led by one of the partners, ensure joint commitment and cooperation among the partners and an equal distribution of tasks. Further, each of the extracurricular events in the programme is organised by a different partner.

All students start their studies in Prague and continue either in Leiden or Kraków in their second semester. The panel was informed that the two universities in Leiden and Kraków have taken measures to ensure that their courses are compatible in terms of credits and learning outcomes. For the second year, students may choose among all four partner universities. Each partner has a special focus area, based on its expertise in the definition, analysis and interpretation of the challenges faced by Europe. In the application procedure, students indicate their preference for a partner. Their placement at one of the partner universities is based on this preference, while the consortium at the same time maintains a balanced distribution between the partner universities.

The panel heard in the various discussions during the site visit that the institutions are fully committed to offering the joint degree, which is commendable, but the panel also notes that there is no joint set of Teaching and Examination Regulations. As a result, there is no guarantee that the programme implementation and student assessment methods are sufficiently aligned. For example, there are no formal arrangements for grading modules, such as the final thesis, which are a shared responsibility. Partners repeatedly referred to local rules and regulations to explain the fact that each partner establishes their own rules and conditions for the thesis. Recently, EPS Master Thesis's Guidelines have been developed for more consistency in thesis assessment, but these are not yet made binding. Similarly, arrangements have been made to ensure the equivalence of the learning outcomes of the second semester, which is offered by Leiden and Kraków, but their implementation is based on informal cooperation. This is a potential risk, e.g., in case core teaching staff at one partner university leave and these informal arrangements are not safeguarded. The second year is even more diverse, covering two tracks, professional (Leiden, Kraków and Prague) and academic (Barcelona). The EPS Management Board meets regularly to take joint decisions on changes to the programme. According to the minutes of the last Board meeting, all members take part in the decision-making process concerning the (re)design of parts of the courses. However, the minutes do not reflect the monitoring of decisions taken in previous meetings. It is unclear then how long it takes to implement decisions and whether these decisions are implemented.

#### *Considerations*

The panel considers that the programme builds on a history of collaboration and has established an adequate decision-making and coordination structure. The panel acknowledges that all four universities are making efforts to take joint decisions, from issuing a joint diploma, which is recognised not only in their countries but also in third countries, to joint seminars for students, exchanges of academic staff, working out examination rules, mixed examination boards, and the like. Procedures to ensure implementation and compliance of decisions are less strong, however, which raises doubts about the consistency of implementation of all aspects. The Consortium Leader fulfils its coordinating role, although there is a fair degree of independence for the partners, due to the need they feel to comply with national and local requirements. This seems to restrict a greater level of jointness in the design and delivery of the programme. The panel observes that there is no formal national legislation in place in the countries which prevents having a common set of Teaching and Examination Regulations, and recommends drawing them up. The panel advises a more active approach of the Consortium and its members to achieve adjustment of local rules and regulations that stand in the way of greater jointness in the design and delivery of the programme.

#### *Conclusion*

The panel assesses that the EPS programme **partially meets** standard 1.2, joint design and delivery.

### 4.1.3 Cooperation Agreement

*The terms and conditions of the joint programme should be laid down in a cooperation agreement. The agreement should in particular cover the following issues:*

- *Denomination of the degree(s) awarded in the programme*
- *Coordination and responsibilities of the partners involved regarding management and financial organisation (including funding, sharing of costs and income etc.)*
- *Admission and selection procedures for students*
- *Mobility of students and teachers*
- *Examination regulations, student assessment methods, recognition of credits and degree awarding procedures in the consortium.*

#### *Outline of findings*

The panel has taken note of the Consortium Agreement. The first agreement was signed by all partners in February 2017. It was updated in January 2022. The agreement covers the denomination of the degrees awarded as well as the coordination and responsibilities of the four partners. Each partner is offered responsibilities for part of the management tasks and activities. Coordination and decision making involve the Management Board and Programme Committee. The latter also implicates student representation. The agreement clearly defines the coordination and responsibilities of the partners involved in terms of management and financial organisation (total liability of each of the partners, funding, cost and revenue sharing), decision making, student admission and selection procedures, students and teachers mobility, student assessment methods, recognition of ECTS credits and procedures for awarding degrees in the consortium.

The co-ordination and responsibilities are generally well-established and there is adequate cooperation in the most relevant aspects. Yet, as stated in paragraph 4.1.2, no joint Teaching and Examination Regulations are in place. Implementation - including assessment - is based on the local rules and regulations of the partners. This is a conscious choice which is included in the Cooperation Agreement, but the absence of this document is not compensated by clear arrangements in the Consortium Agreement.

The Cooperation Agreement covers all required elements, but does not fully reflect the actual practice of cooperation. The panel recommends updating the agreement, such as by providing a more detailed description of the admission and selection procedures (as they are actually carried out and communicated to students), and the role of the External Advisory Board, including its composition, selection/recruitment and relationship vis-à-vis other parts of the governance structure.

#### *Considerations*

The panel considers the Consortium Agreement a comprehensive document, in which the terms and conditions of the joint programme as well as each partner's responsibilities are clearly laid down. All relevant points are covered. As long as there are no joint Teaching and Examination Regulations for the EPS programme, arrangements to ensure joint decision-making on teaching and assessment should be laid down in the Cooperation Agreement. The panel also recommends updating the agreement to reflect the current practice of admission and selection and the position of the External Advisory Board.

#### *Conclusion*

The panel assesses that the EPS programme **meets** standard 1.3, cooperation agreement.

## 4.2 Standard 2: Learning Outcomes

### 4.2.1 Level {ESG 1.2}

*The intended learning outcomes should align with the corresponding level in the Framework for Qualifications in the European Higher Education Area (FQ-EHEA), as well as the applicable national qualifications framework(s).*

### *Outline of findings*

The programme has defined a set of objectives to ensure that graduates are familiar with the main trends of European politics, culture, history, economics and international relations, combined with the ability to evaluate and interpret the main theoretical and empirical academic and scientific debates in European politics and society. Graduates are also able to use qualitative research methods, to extract relevant information for the analysis of European politics and society, and to design and plan conceptual, theoretical and empirical research related to European politics and society. These aims have been translated into intended learning outcomes at master's level, in line with the second cycle of the Framework of Qualifications in the European Higher Education Area (FQ-EHEA). They also correspond with level 7 of the European Qualification Framework (EQF). The four partners declare that the intended learning outcomes are compatible with their national qualifications frameworks. A matrix shows how the intended learning outcomes are addressed in the programme's courses. The panel notes that, although there are two orientations in the programme: professional and academic, the learning outcomes are more in line with the academic track than the professional one.

Based on the course syllabi, the panel confirms that the learning objectives per course meet the master's level. Nonetheless, there is some room for improvement. In the first place, the language courses, which are an obligatory part in the second semester and are (mainly) focused on language acquisition and training, do not meet level 7 of the EQF or the conditions of the 2nd cycle of the FQ-EHEA. In the second place, the panel only received limited insight into whether the electives are all on the master level. The panel recommends, therefore, (1) making the language courses extracurricular, and (2) giving the Exam Board a stronger position in checking whether the electives meet the master's level requirements. At present, this is left too much to the individual institutions.

### *Considerations*

The panel considers that the learning outcomes are clearly set out and of the appropriate master's level. They have been adequately translated into the educational objectives of the obligatory courses in the curriculum. The curriculum also includes language courses and electives. As the language courses are not part of the intended learning outcomes, the panel advises looking into the position of the language courses and considering a voluntary status for these courses. As regards the electives, the panel encourages the programme to involve the EPS Exam Board more strongly, to assure that the electives chosen by students at the partner institutions are of the required master's level.

### *Conclusion*

The panel assesses that the EPS programme **meets** standard 2.1, level.

## 4.2.2 Disciplinary Field

*The intended learning outcomes should comprise knowledge, skills and competencies in the respective disciplinary field(s).*

### *Outline of findings*

EPS describes itself as a multidisciplinary programme, linking fields from the humanities and social sciences, including European politics, contemporary history and culture, economics, international relations, public policies and policy making. Looking beyond disciplinary boundaries is considered an important characteristic of managers, policy makers and researchers who operate at a European level. The panel commends the programme for its multidisciplinary approach. However, this aspect could be strengthened more, since in effect the majority of the programme tends to be geared towards the social sciences, while cultural studies seem to have a limited role.

The programme claims to prepare for both the professional and the academic fields. The External Advisory Board advised this specific labour market focus, distinguishing EPS from other European and European Union Studies programmes. The panel notes that the academic skills are well represented, both in the methodology seminars and in the master's thesis. The set of practical skills and competences, relevant to the professional orientation, is substantiated less strongly. The programme's intended learning outcomes deal with skills, but many of these skills can be read as knowledge. Important skills are addressed in the extracurricular activities, and, therefore, not part of the formal curriculum. The panel advises ensuring that assignments really enhance professional skills. The panel

also notes that the professional focus is reflected in the internship in the third semester for students who study in Leiden, Kraków or Prague, but not for students in Barcelona: they have an academic track.

#### *Considerations*

The panel considers that the learning outcomes cover the required knowledge, skills and competencies in the relevant disciplinary fields of humanities and social sciences, with a tendency to lean more towards the social sciences. The multidisciplinary approach is a strong point. The programme aims to combine professional and academic skills, based on input from the professional field. In itself, this can be considered a strong point as well, but professional skills are not well visible in course assignments. Furthermore, the conscious choice has been made not to include an internship for students in the Barcelona track, limiting professional development as a result. The panel concludes that the intended learning outcomes comprise relevant knowledge, skills and competences for an academic programme in European politics and society, but the balance in disciplinary fields and the academic vs professional orientation are a point of attention.

#### *Conclusion*

The panel assesses that the EPS programme **meets** standard 2.2, disciplinary field.

### 4.2.3 Achievement [ESG 1.2]

*The programme should be able to demonstrate that the intended learning outcomes are achieved.*

#### *Outline of findings*

The intended learning outcomes are covered in the courses and the final thesis. Throughout the programme, students are tested for achieving the learning goals of the individual courses by appropriate types of exams. An important indicator to check whether the intended learning outcomes are met is the master thesis. Students apply the knowledge and skills acquired during the programme to write their final thesis, of which the learning goals complement the overall programme learning outcomes with a focus on scientific research, analysis, and writing.

Before the site visit, the panel studied a sample of fifteen theses, with a representative distribution of grades and locations. The panel confirms that the theses are in line with the intended learning outcomes and show the required master level. Although some weak theses were observed, only one did not entirely meet academic standards as defined in the intended learning outcomes. This case, however, can be seen as an incident. Both assessors proved to be, according to the completed assessment form, very well aware of the insufficient level and incompleteness of the thesis. Due to the lack of a set of published rules, it is not clear to the panel how the assessors came to the conclusion to give it a pass in the end. Overall, the panel agrees with the grades awarded and the feedback provided by the supervisor and second assessor. Grades and comments are generally in line. The four-eyes principle appears to work, resulting in a fair grade.

The panel notes that the considerable focus on research papers as a final achievement test is of value for the academic labour market orientation. During the site visit, the panel asked about the link to the professional orientation. The lecturers explained that both orientations are linked together: the research questions in the theses are often linked to policy issues. In the assessment of the internship students have to specify their project in the host organisation, and explain what they learned at a more abstract level, connecting their internship to relevant literature. The intended learning outcomes are ambitious for operating successfully in jobs involving a professional career which requires a practical skill set, such as decision-making skills, policy making, leadership and the like. Part of this skill set is developed in the context of extracurricular activities and is not part of the formal assessment of achievement (see also paragraph 4.3.1).

The achievement of the learning outcomes cannot yet be fully corroborated by feedback from the alumni, since the programme is still relatively young. While the documentation offers some examples of jobs achieved by graduates, this is mostly anecdotal. The interviews with alumni during the site visit were positive, but necessarily limited. The panel advises a more systematic analysis of the graduates' success in the labour market.

#### *Considerations*

The panel considers that the theses convincingly show that academic learning outcomes are achieved. Part of the professional skills is developed in the context of extracurricular activities. The panel concludes that the programme in its present design and components (including the extracurricular activities) allows for meeting the intended learning outcomes. The panel advises including the extracurricular elements in the curriculum and organising a systematic analysis of the success of alumni.

#### *Conclusion*

The panel assesses that the EPS programme **meets** standard 2.3, achievement.

#### 4.2.4 Regulated Profession

*If relevant for the specific joint programme, the minimum agreed training conditions specified in the European Union Directive 2005/36/EC, or relevant common trainings frameworks established under the Directive, should be taken into account*

#### *Outline of findings*

This standard is not relevant for the assessment of the EPS programme.

#### *Conclusion*

The panel issues no conclusion as standard 2.4, regulated professions, is not applicable.

### 4.3 Standard 3: Study programme [ESG 1.2]

#### 4.3.1 Curriculum

*The structure and content of the curriculum should be fit to enable the students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.*

#### *Outline of findings*

The EPS Programme is a full-time programme of 120 ECTS credits, characterised by international mobility, and is delivered over four semesters of 30 ECTS credits. The first three semesters consist of taught courses, while the fourth is devoted to the thesis. All students begin their studies in Prague and continue either in Leiden or Kraków in their second semester. For the second year, students may choose among all four partner universities.

The first semester lays the foundations for the rest of the programme and consists of compulsory courses on the contemporary challenges faced by Europe in a global context, a first introduction to the methodology and an extracurricular remedial course on academic writing. At the end of the first semester, students choose the topic of their master's thesis with the assistance of academic coordinators from Charles University, and write the first version of their master's thesis project proposal. The second semester provides the opportunity for students to start their specialisation and consists of compulsory and elective courses, a European language course, and a methodology course. For the third and fourth semesters, the programme offers two study strands: a professionals and practitioners track (Prague, Leiden, Kraków) and a research track (Barcelona). The main elements of the third semester are the obligatory internship of 15 ECTS credits (Prague, Leiden, Kraków) or the acquisition of advanced research skills (Barcelona), as well as the preparation for the thesis through seminars and other optional courses. The master's thesis is primarily the focus of the students' final semester of 30 ECTS credits.

In addition to the coursework and thesis, the programme offers four joint events: the Prague Welcome Event, the Barcelona Research Seminar, the Brussels Study Trip and the Oxford Spring School. These joint events are intended to contribute to community building and train students' debating skills. They are considered central to the programme, but have no credits attached to them.



The panel recognises that the programme has a clear structure. Its content is aligned with the intended learning outcomes. Each learning outcome is covered by at least two course units. However, much of the responsibility for achieving the learning outcomes rests with the students themselves, as a large proportion of the courses are elective ones. During the site visit, the panel was assured that each university offers assistance in making the right choice. The panel advises an additional role for the Exam Board to ensure that each student has achieved the full set of intended learning outcomes.

The panel notes two additional points of attention: the obligatory language courses and the extracurricular activities. The students generally seem to like the 5 ECTS credits language course, and the idea to include language acquisition in the programme resonates with the European cultural perspective running through the programme. However, the panel feels that there is not a sufficient possibility for quality control of these courses. The 5 ECTS credits can be 'earned' e.g., by an introductory level language course, which cannot be considered acceptable for a master level programme. At the same time, there are courses relevant to the professional development of the students (i.e., related to policy and employability) that are taking place as extracurricular activities, such as the Leadership Module introduced in the academic year 2021-2022. There are also mandatory events such as the Barcelona Research Workshop which currently do not bear ECTS credits. A way forward would be to offer language courses as extracurricular activities and instead designate the 5 ECTS credits for professional and/or academic research development. Alternatively, the programme partners could design specific ways in which the language modules can be made relevant for the programme, e.g., by integrating relevant exercises, themes or cases (e.g., European politics, culture, history) into the language acquisition process or by providing them as electives at the proper master level.

#### *Considerations*

The panel appreciates that the curriculum has been designed by all partners and meets the aims of the programme, in line with the expertise of the partners involved and the learning objectives. The panel recommends making the language courses optional. It further advises assigning the credits allocated at present to language learning to the extracurricular activities that are partly obligatory and certainly relevant for the students' professional development and the attainment of the intended learning outcomes. This would further strengthen the structure and content of the curriculum.

#### *Conclusion*

The panel assesses that the EPS programme **meets** standard 3.1, curriculum.

### 4.3.2 Credits

*The European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) should be applied properly and the distribution of credits should be clear.*

#### *Outline of findings*

The EPS curriculum consists of four semesters of 30 ECTS credits each. All courses in semester one consist of 6 ECTS credits, while courses in the other semesters consist of (multiples of) 5 ECTS credits. The distribution of credits per course and semester is determined by the Management Board, considering the local requirements of the different partner universities. The distribution of credits is clear and well-explained in the self-assessment report and the handbook provided to the students.

#### *Considerations*

The panel considers that the EPS programme applies the ECTS properly with regard to the overall programme and the respective programme components. As mentioned above (paragraph 4.3.1) the panel considers the allocation of 5 ECTS credits to the language course questionable, while some of the workshops and meetings are compulsory, but do not entail any credits.

#### *Conclusion*

The panel assesses that the EPS programme **meets** standard 3.2, credits.

### 4.3.3 Workload

*A joint bachelor programme will typically amount to a total student workload of 180-240 ECTS-credits; a joint master programme will typically amount to 90-120 ECTS-credits and should not be less than 60*

*ECTS-credits at second cycle level (credit ranges according to the FQ-EHEA); for joint doctorates there is no credit range specified. The workload and the average time to complete the programme should be monitored.*

#### *Outline of findings*

The workload of the total programme amounts to 120 ECTS credits. Beside the formal programme, students are expected to participate in extracurricular activities which add to meeting the learning outcomes. Although there are no credits allocated to these activities, they are at least partly fitted in the formal working weeks and add to the students' workload. As mentioned above (paragraphs 4.3.1 and 4.3.2), the panel advises acknowledging the workload of the extracurricular activities by allocating credits to them.

Local Programme Coordinators monitor the students' progress during courses and thesis work. Students interviewed during the site visit noticed some differentiation in terms of actual student workload – some partners are more demanding than others – but, overall, the workload is perceived as reasonable.

Students study according to schedule. The success rate has been close to 100% over the past years. This implies that the programme is sufficiently well structured. Only a small number of students needed more time, mainly due to personal circumstances. During Covid-19 times, a number of students requested and were granted extensions to the thesis submission deadlines.

#### *Considerations*

The panel considers that the overall workload of the programme meets the standards. The workload is monitored by the programme, as are the average completion time and completion rates. The difference in workload per university is manageable for students. The panel advises taking extracurricular activities into account when determining the acceptable workload for students.

#### *Conclusion*

The panel assesses that the EPS programme **meets** standard 3.3, workload.

## 4.4 Standard 4: Admission and Recognition [ESG 1.4]

### 4.4.1 Admission

*The admission requirements and selection procedures should be appropriate in light of the programme's level and discipline.*

#### *Outline of findings*

EPS is an international programme, open to excellent students with a bachelor's degree in a relevant subject area. Applicants without a background in the social sciences or humanities may be enrolled, provided they bring highly relevant work experience, strong motivation and very good references. Prospective students can find all the necessary information about the application, selection procedure and enrolment to the EPS programme on the EPS website. Applicants are evaluated on the basis of a set of fixed criteria, including academic background, motivation, personal competences and additional skills. Applications are collected by the Coordinating Partner. Each application is evaluated by two adjudicators, each from a different partner university. An application can score a maximum of 100 points, with a minimum of 70 points needed to be admitted. The application results are jointly decided upon by all partner universities. Approximately twenty students from different categories and with the top marks are offered an Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degree Scholarship. A maximum of 50 students is accepted each year.

Strong features of the joint selection and admission procedure are the centralised handling of the application process, the four-eyes principle and the clearly defined admission criteria. The programme is open to applicants from all countries. A minimum English language proficiency is a requirement.

#### *Considerations*

The panel considers that the admission requirements are clearly stated and in line with the programme's objectives. The selection process is well laid out and managed, the procedures for admission, as included on the website, are sufficiently detailed, and the number of points awarded for each criterion is appropriately balanced. The panel recommends including the detailed admission criteria also in the Consortium Agreement for reasons of formalisation, as stated earlier (see paragraph 4.1.3).

#### *Conclusion*

The panel assesses that the EPS programme **meets** standard 4.1, admission.

### 4.4.2 Recognition

*Recognition of qualifications and of periods of studies (including recognition of prior learning) should be applied in line with the Lisbon Recognition Convention and subsidiary documents.*

#### *Outline of findings*

The selection criteria, recognition of previous education and qualifications, and the admissions procedure (as described in paragraph 4.4.1) are in line with the Lisbon Recognition Convention and its subsidiary texts.

#### *Considerations*

The panel considers that the recognition of previous qualifications and prior learning is adequately provided for in the EPS Programme.

#### *Conclusion*

The panel assesses that the EPS programme **meets** standard 4.2, recognition.

## 4.5 Standard 5: Learning, Teaching and Assessment [ESG 1.3]

### 4.5.1 Learning and teaching

*The programme should be designed to correspond with the intended learning outcomes, and the learning and teaching approaches applied should be adequate to achieve those. The diversity of students and their needs should be respected and attended to, especially in view of potential different cultural backgrounds of the students.*

#### *Outline of findings*

Teaching in EPS is student-centred. Lecturers use a variety of didactic approaches, combining larger group sessions and traditional lectures with small-scale groups, allowing for more interaction with students. The programme is sensitive to the different backgrounds of students and the need to bring students together within and across cohorts, starting with the Prague Welcome Event. The elective courses and some of the obligatory courses are followed together with local students from other master programmes. The panel appreciates that such meeting with students from other cultures and with different study experiences adds further depth to the programme.

The respective administrators and coordinators at various partner show full awareness that the programme involves students with different educational and cultural backgrounds. All partner universities have designated Programme Coordinators, in addition to the regular student-support services, to assist students in their studies, e.g., in choosing electives in line with their thesis topic. To incorporate this diversity in terms of teaching, a number of elements have been introduced, including the extracurricular crash course in academic writing in the first semester. There is a clear commitment to listening to students. As a consequence, students' comments and concerns about parts of the programme are incorporated, as evidenced for example in the Diversity Seminar that is now being co-organised between two partner institutions (Leiden and Kraków) in the second semester. The steps taken in response to the mid-term recommendations include the introduction of a Leadership Module in the first semester.

Lecturers are aware that many students want to work in policy analysis later, and try to include the policy perspective in courses and assignments, e.g., asking students to write short press reviews as an assignment, or introducing the writing of a policy paper as a new form of assessment. The programme has taken steps to facilitate contacts with the professional world, such as an annual conference with EPS Associated Partners and extracurricular events with professionals and practitioners. The panel appreciates these steps. It encourages the programme to reflect on the learning outcomes as specified in the two tracks and to check whether the programme actually delivers on these as it stands. In particular the policy-relevant learning outcomes are not always central in the course syllabi, which tend to be primarily academic-focused. More joint coordination between the partners might be helpful to develop teaching approaches that support the more applied learning outcomes.

#### *Considerations*

The programme design corresponds with the intended learning outcomes; it truly provides the intended international, intercultural and multidisciplinary learning experience. The programme is student-centred and students feel supported and stimulated by their lecturers. Academic staff use different didactic methods, organising both large and small-scale classes. The diversity in students' backgrounds is taken into account. On the basis of the materials made available as well as the discussions of the panel with academic staff, students and graduates the conclusion is justified that the teaching and learning approaches enable students to meet the intended learning outcomes.

#### *Conclusion*

The panel assesses that the EPS programme **meets** standard 5.1, learning and teaching.

### 4.5.2 Assessment of Students

*The examination regulations and the assessment of the achieved learning outcomes should correspond with the intended learning outcomes. They should be applied consistently among partner institutions.*

#### *Outline of findings*

Lecturers use a variety of assessment methods, including essays, policy papers, individual and group presentations, internship reports and research papers. The assessment of achieved learning outcomes generally corresponds to the intended learning outcomes. Project management skills, teamwork and presentations are specifically intended to assess students' professional skills. Lecturers introduce policy-oriented assignments (see also paragraph 4.5.1), but notice that students are not always aware of what they are asked to do and how it is relevant. The lecturers realise that they should explain this better. Theses must be research papers, although they may well be related to a policy question (see paragraph 4.2.3), and are assessed by two examiners from different universities. The programme ensures commonality in marking by having only a small group of dedicated programme staff assess EPS theses, which seems a good policy. It is unclear, however, what happens if there are significantly different grades between the two examiners or in border cases. In addition, operating with a small team involves the risk a partner lacking the expertise to assess a thesis, which indeed has occurred in practice and required an ad hoc solution. No formal procedure is in place to handle such cases. Also, the panel does not endorse the difference between the required length of master's theses between partner universities. In Prague, Kraków and Leiden, its length is expected to be 20,000 words ( $\pm 10\%$ ) including footnotes and excluding bibliography and appendixes, while in Barcelona the thesis is supposed to have 12,000 words ( $\pm 10\%$ ) including footnotes and excluding bibliography and appendixes. It seems unfair that students who do not have an internship in their study programme (in Barcelona) are expected to write a shorter master's thesis than those who have to complete an internship, prepare a report and write a longer thesis. According to the panel, the difference is not convincingly justified.

Grading practices differ between partner universities and students indicate that it is easier to get high grades in one university than in another. The programme uses a system to convert grades awarded by each partner university to an EPS scheme of awards. The students informed the panel that this conversion scheme has been improved recently, following student feedback. Ensuring the quality of assessment is the responsibility of each partner university and is based on local regulations. The result of this choice is that the role of the Exam Board is limited. It checks the progress made by the student and decides whether a student can progress from one institution to the next. The conditions are

documented but not formalised. The Exam Board takes notice of the grading but does not analyse the procedures and outcomes more robustly. The panel considers that the role of the Exam Board needs to be strengthened. A consistent, joint set of Teaching and Examination Regulations should be developed and its implementation should be monitored.

#### *Considerations*

The panel considers that course assessments are in line with the intended learning outcomes and that a sufficient variety of assessment methods is used. As stated above (paragraph 4.1.2), a shared set of Teaching and Examination Regulations for the joint programme is missing. Quality control of assessment is the responsibility of each university. Decisions regarding assessments are formally made on the basis of the local Teaching and Examination Regulations of the four partners. This model does not allow for consistent compliance. The panel considers this a fundamental weakness. It entails the risk that there is no full alignment in terms of assessment as required by a joint programme. This is already evident in the different thesis requirements between the partner universities. The programme partners should increase joint and consistent assessment by adopting a shared set of Teaching and Examination Regulations and strengthening the role of the Exam Board.

#### *Conclusion*

The panel assesses that the EPS programme **partially meets** standard 5.2, assessment of students.

## 4.6 Standard 6: Student Support [ESG 1.6]

*The student support services should contribute to the achievement of the intended learning outcomes. They should take into account specific challenges of mobile students.*

#### *Outline of findings*

Students enrolled in the EPS Programme have full access to all academic, welfare and other support services provided by the partners. This ranges from receiving help in arranging accommodation and help with visa and residence permits for non-EU students to the provision of a student counsellor assisting them with legal and financial matters. Charles University has developed a Personal Tutorial System, which has three main goals: introduction to the EPS Programme, academic development of the student, and personal care.

Students can find all relevant information about the EPS programme on the programme website and in the EPS Student Handbook. The Prague Welcome Event at the beginning of their first semester provides them with all necessary information regarding the organisation of study, financial issues, course rules and practical information for living in Prague. In addition to the International Offices of all partner universities, the local Programme Coordinators have a central role in student support during the programme: they are the first point of contact for students with questions or problems regarding their studies. The students confirmed during the site visit that EPS staff reaches out to them in administrative matters and that they know where to go in case of personal problems.

#### *Considerations*

The panel considers that the support mechanism works well. The students are well-supported by highly motivated staff. The required services are in place. There is full awareness that internationally mobile students require additional support in particular regarding obtaining a visa to move between partner countries. The Student Handbook and the local Programme Coordinators provide essential information, social events are organised to make students feel at home and students can turn to the local Programme Coordinators with all their questions or issues.

#### *Conclusion*

The panel assesses that the EPS programme **meets** standard 6, student support.

## 4.7 Standard 7: Resources [ESG 1.5 & 1.6]

### 4.7.1 Staff

*The staff should be sufficient and adequate (qualifications, professional and international experience) to implement the study programme.*

#### *Outline of findings*

EPS staff is locally recruited and selected based on their expertise. The self-evaluation report and the CVs of the teaching staff show that lecturers are renowned researchers with diverse backgrounds well suited to the interdisciplinary master's programme. It is a team of political scientists, lawyers, economists, sociologists, historians, and cultural scholars. All of them have international academic experience and combine a high scientific research record and didactic level. Four members of the key staff are Jean Monnet Chair holders. They are not only experienced researchers and lecturers, but also show an impressive commitment to the programme. There is continuous adjustment and innovation in the programme, and staff members even extend supervision and collaboration to EPS students after they have left their respective institution. The workload for lecturers and coordinators is high, although they express satisfaction at being able to work with broad-minded students.

#### *Considerations*

The panel considers that the academic and coordinating staff are well-qualified and experienced researchers and lecturers. Their commitment is impressive. The panel suggests that the Consortium safeguards that all teaching staff involved in EPS are reimbursed adequately for the teaching and organisational time they spend on the programme, in terms of institutional allocation.

#### *Conclusion*

The panel assesses that the EPS programme **meets** standard 7.1, staff.

### 4.7.2 Facilities

*The facilities should be sufficient and adequate in view of the intended learning outcomes.*

#### *Outline of findings*

Students registered in the EPS Programme have full access to all academic facilities and services provided by the partner universities. This includes access to the internet, libraries, reading rooms, online access to academic journals, computer rooms, group work rooms, and language courses. Students during the on-site visit highlighted that the access to academic resources provided by all the partner universities is a very strong point of the programme, and because of this, they feel like true students of all four universities.

#### *Considerations*

The panel considers that the facilities made available go beyond those for local students and are adequate for meeting the intended learning outcomes.

#### *Conclusion*

The panel assesses that the EPS programme **meets** standard 7.2, facilities.

## 4.8 Standard 8: Transparency and Documentation [ESG 1.8]

*Relevant information about the programme like admission requirements and procedures, course catalogue, examination and assessment procedures etc. should be well documented and published by taking into account specific needs of mobile students.*

#### *Outline of findings*

The main source of information for applicants, students and external partners is the EPS website hosted by Charles University as the Coordinating Partner. It provides all the necessary information regarding the application and admissions procedure and the programme in its entirety (course catalogue,

examination and assessment procedures). The programme and its basic details are also advertised on the partner universities' websites and are part of their campaign to attract new students. Individual partner universities publish the details of the local EPS courses on their websites. All the rules and regulations applying to the EPS Programme are published on the website of each university as well, including the exam regulations applying specifically to them.

Key to the transparency of the programme for students is the Student Handbook, which contains all the essential information for students, including the courses, examinations, and references to location-specific information, rules, and regulations. The procedures regarding the master thesis and thesis assessment are described separately in the Thesis Handbook.

#### *Considerations*

The panel considers that the transparency and documentation meet the expectations. Documentation is available on the Consortium website and the partners' websites as well as in the Student Handbook and Thesis Handbook. The information is transparent and clear.

#### *Conclusion*

The panel assesses that the EPS programme **meets** standard 8, transparency and documentation.

## 4.9 Standard 9: Quality Assurance [ESG 1.1 & part 1]

*The cooperating institutions should apply joint internal quality assurance processes in accordance with part one of the ESG.*

#### *Outline of findings*

Course quality assurance is the responsibility of the individual partners based on mutually agreed standards and procedures. All Consortium Partners have regular evaluation cycles of their courses and share the outcomes for monitoring and reviewing compliance with the Consortium Agreement and maintenance of academic standards. In addition, the student representatives prepare an annual in-depth evaluation based on questionnaires. The evaluation outcomes are discussed biannually by the Programme Committee and result in recommendations to the Management Board. One of the outcomes has been an additional extracurricular activity (Leadership Module) and improvement of the grade conversion. To guarantee sustainability, the panel recommends that the management takes co-responsibility for the programme evaluations. This assures that evaluations are not dependent on the voluntary work of student representatives and that the system of evaluation is fully integrated with the activities of the consortium.

The EPS External Advisory Board meets once a year for purposes of external evaluation. The Board is balanced regarding gender and geographical distribution, and is made up of four experts from both academic and non-academic fields. Its function is to advise and prepare recommendations on the content and the financial aspects of the programme. The External Advisory Board was responsible for the 2021 mid-term review. The panel considers the mid-term review a good sign of the Consortium's willingness to learn and improve.

#### *Considerations*

The panel considers that the system of internal and external quality assessment is well-developed and ensures the quality of the EPS Programme. Course evaluations are the responsibility of the partner universities, while evaluation at the programme level has been taken up by the student representatives. The panel advises the programme management to play a more active role in programme evaluation, to integrate it more fully into the consortium activities.

#### *Conclusion*

The panel assesses that the EPS programme **meets** standard 9, quality assurance.

## 4.10 Conclusion

The EPS joint master programme is an interesting programme that equips students with relevant skills and competences for analysing societal challenges in and across Europe. The staff and curriculum, as well as the mobility in the programme, clearly inspire students. The consortium team is made up of very committed scholars and staff who realise that, alongside enthusiasm, there is a need to institutionalise and consolidate the programme. Although EPS is a fine programme, it is still weak in its jointness. Because there is no set of Teaching and Examination Regulations at the programme level, too much is based on informal arrangements, which need to be formalised. This involves in particular items 1.2 Joint design and delivery and 5.2 Assessment of students. Further improving the joint nature and consistency of the cooperation will contribute to ensuring the sustainability and relevance of the programme.

The panel concludes that the judgement of the programme is positive with conditions. The conditions that need to be met are:

- 1.2:

Come to a greater level of jointness in the design and delivery of the programme. The panel observes that there is no formal national legislation in place in the countries which prevents having a common set of Teaching and Examination Regulations, and recommends drawing up EPS Teaching and Examination Regulations and making informal rules and regulations and guidelines more formal.

- 5.2:

There is no full alignment in terms of assessment as required by a joint programme. This is already evident in the different thesis requirements between the partner universities. The programme partners should increase joint and consistent assessment by adopting a shared set of Teaching and Examination Regulations and strengthening the role of the Exam Board.

In summary:

- Formulate and adopt a shared set of Teaching and Examination Regulations, make informal guidelines, rules and regulations more formal and monitor their implementation;
- Strengthen the role of the Exam Board in supervising (1) not only the procedure but also the content and level of the assessments, (2) the quality assurance of the assessment, and (3) the level of the optional courses selected by students.

The panel will advise the NVAO to give a maximum of 2 years to the programme to meet the conditions. The panel is convinced that the programme will be able to meet the conditions within that period.

### *Commendations*

- The multidisciplinary approach of the programme;
- The centralised handling of the application process, the four-eyes principle and the clearly defined admission criteria;
- Teaching in EPS is student-centred: lecturers use a variety of didactic approaches, catering to the different student backgrounds;
- The student support mechanism works well;
- The team of academics consists of experienced researchers and lecturers, who show an impressive commitment to their students and the continuous adjustment and innovation of the programme.

### *Recommendations*

In addition to the conditions listed above, the panel issues the following recommendations:

- Adopt a more active approach to achieve adjustment of local rules and regulations that stand in the way of greater jointness in the design and delivery of the programme;
- Clarify the balance between the academic and professional orientation and communicate this more clearly to students;
- Reconsider the position of the language courses;
- Allocate ECTS credits to the extracurricular activities since they add to meeting the learning objectives of the programmes;
- Monitor the graduates' success in the labour market systematically.



## 5 Overview of the assessments

Standard	Assessment
<b>1. Eligibility</b>	
1.1 Status	Meets the standard
1.2 Joint design and delivery	Partially meets the standard
1.3 Cooperation Agreement	Meets the standard
<b>2. Learning Outcomes</b>	
2.1 Level	Meets the standard
2.2 Disciplinary field	Meets the standard
2.3 Achievement	Meets the standard
2.4 Regulated Professions	Not applicable
<b>3. Study Programme</b>	
3.1 Curriculum	Meets the standard
3.2 Credits	Meets the standard
3.3 Workload	Meets the standard
<b>4. Admission and Recognition</b>	
4.1 Admission	Meets the standard
4.2 Recognition	Meets the standard
<b>5. Admission and Recognition</b>	
5.1 Learning and teaching	Meets the standard
5.2 Assessment of students	Partially meets the standard
<b>6. Student Support</b>	
	Meets the standard
<b>7. Student Support</b>	
7.1 Staff	Meets the standard
7.2 Facilities	Meets the standard
<b>8. Transparency and Documentation</b>	
	Meets the standard
<b>9. Quality Assurance</b>	
	Meets the standard
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>Conditionally positive</b>

## Annex 1: Composition of the panel

- Prof. dr. Robert Wagenaar, *chair*, Director International Tuning Academy, Professor of History and Politics of Higher Education, University of Groningen, the Netherlands;
- Dr. Laura Horn, Associate Professor, Department of Social Sciences and Business, University of Roskilde, Denmark;
- Prof. Salvador Parrado, Professor, Department of Political and Administration Sciences, UNED, Spain;
- Prof. dr. hab. Anna Paczeński, Professor European Political Processes. University of Wrocław, Poland;
- Michał Goszczyński, *student member*, Student Magister Administration, Warsaw University of Technology, Poland.

The panel was assisted by ir. Lineke van Bruggen, policy advisor at NVAO, Yvonne Overdeest, policy advisor at NVAO, and by dr. Marianne van der Weiden, secretary.

All members and the secretary of the panel completed and signed a declaration of independence and confidentiality.

## Annex 2: Schedule of the site visit

On 16 December 2022, the panel organised an online site visit as part of the external assessment procedure of the European Politics and Society, Václav Havel Joint Master Programme (EPS). The schedule of the visit was as follows:

### 16 December 2022

8:30 - 9:00	Internal panel meeting
9:00 - 9:30	Meeting with representatives of the Faculty Boards
9:30 - 9:45	Break
9:45 - 10:30	Meeting with Programme Board
10:30 - 10:45	Break
10:45 - 11:30	Meeting with students
11:30 - 11:45	Break
11:45 - 12:45	Meeting with lecturers
12:45 - 13:45	Lunch break
13:45 - 14:15	Meeting with Exam Board
14:15 - 14:30	Break
14:30 - 15:00	Meeting with Admission and student support
15:00 - 15:15	Break
15:15 - 15:45	Meeting with work field (including alumni)
15:45 - 16:30	Internal panel meeting
16:30 - 17:00	Meeting with Programme Board - pending issues
17:00 - 18:30	Internal panel meeting
18:30 - 19:00	Plenary meeting: preliminary findings panel

## Annex 3: Documents reviewed

### *Programme documents presented by the institution*

#### Self-Evaluation Report

#### Appendices:

- Legal status of the partner institutions
- Cooperation agreement 2017 and 2022
- Legal basis for the joint programme
- List of intended learning outcomes
- Course syllabi of all partners
- Structure of the curriculum
- Admission requirements and procedures
- Recognition of qualifications
- Students' assessments regulations
- Academic staff CVs
- Internal quality assurance system
- Diploma supplement (sample)
- Diploma (sample)
- Mid-term review report
- EPS student handbook
- EPS thesis handbook
- List of theses 2020-2021
- List of associate partners
- Student council survey 2020-2021
- Student council survey 2021-2022
- Student council diversity proposals
- Board meeting March 2022

#### Sample of fifteen theses

#### Additional information:

- Course syllabi
- Examples of exams (and the rubrics)
- Teaching staff per course
- Distribution of students over years per partners
- Number of students granted their first choice of the partner university
- Overview of electives
- Follow-up reports on student surveys or programme board meetings
- Organogram
- Policy paper on weight and workload of assignments and assessment in general
- Annual reports of the Exam Board

## Annex 4: List of abbreviations

EC	European Credit
ECTS	European Credit Transfer System
FQ-EHEA	Framework for Qualifications in the European Higher Education Area
EPS	European Politics and Society
EQF	European Qualification Framework
ESG	European Standards and Guidelines
EU	European Union
ma	master
NVAO	Dutch Flemish Accreditation Body
wo	wetenschappelijk onderwijs (academically oriented higher education)

The panel report has been ordered by NVAO for the re-accreditation of the European Politics and Society Václav Havel Joint Master Programme of Leiden University (the Netherlands), Charles University Prague (Czech Republic), Jagiellonian University Kraków (Poland) and Pompeu Fabra University Barcelona (Spain).

Aanvraagnummer: AV 1516



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