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STUDIJŲ KOKYBĖS VERTINIMO CENTRAS

KAZIMIERO SIMONAVIČIAUS UNIVERSITETO

VEIKLOS VERTINIMO IŠVADOS

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW REPORT OF KAZIMIERAS SIMONAVIČIUS UNIVERSITY

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The review of the Kazimieras Simonavičius University (hereafter referred to as KSU or the University) was organised by the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (SKVC) and carried out in 2015 by a team of Lithuanian and international experts (the Review Team or the Team). It was conducted in accordance with the Procedure for the External Review of Higher Education approved by Government Resolution No. 1317 of 22 September 2010 and the Methodology for Conducting an Institutional Review in Higher Education approved by Order No. 1-01-135 of the Director of the SKVC of 25 October 2010 (the Methodology).
2. At the preparatory stage of the review, the Team received KSU's Self-Evaluation Report (SER), other University documents as requested, and the results of the evaluation of KSU learning resources and associated infrastructure conducted by MOSTA (Research and Higher Education Monitoring and Analysis Centre) (Decision of 12 June 2015). The site visit was preceded by a briefing session and a preparatory meeting of the Team at the SKVC. The visit to the University (the Vilnius campus) took place between 10 and 12 November 2015. During the visit, the Team had meetings with all key internal and external stakeholders of the University and a tour of facilities. After the visit, it met to agree final review conclusions and recommendations, and the review report was finalised by correspondence.
3. The self-evaluation as part of the review involved representatives of all key groups of the KSU community. The SER provided the Team with the evidence necessary to define lines of enquiry for the site visit. Overall, it offered a good insight into the University's activity in the areas to be explored, though unnecessary verbosity and / or repetition obscured the content of some sections. The SER showed how KSU had evolved in recent years. At the same time, it could have given more consideration to new strategic priorities, emerging from recent and current discussions, which indicate how the University may evolve in the near future (and which are likely to be integrated into its Strategy to be revised in the coming months). Some self-critical comments in the SER and, in particular, the SWOT analysis and open and frank discussions during the visit showed that the University was actively engaged in an ongoing process of self-analysis and self-reflection and well aware of where change or further development was necessary or desirable.
4. In line with the Methodology, the review focused on the four areas addressed by the evaluation criteria: Strategic Management, Academic Studies and Lifelong Learning, Research and / or Art Activities, and Impact on National and Regional Development. In exploring the four areas of KSU's activity, the Team also made appropriate reference to the recommendations of the previous review of the University (2012) (see par. 15). The review report contains a number of recommendations which KSU is expected to implement, and some suggestions (underlined in the text) which it may consider when reflecting on its further development.
5. The Review Team consisted of the following members:
 - Dr Michael Emery (Chair), United Kingdom: International higher education adviser, evaluation / accreditation expert and chairman of international evaluation / accreditation teams (QAA and UKAS, UK; FINHEEC, Finland; SKVC, Lithuania; ESF and AIKA, Latvia; EKKK, Estonia; PKA, Poland; Ministry of National Education, Indonesia; Hussein Fund for Excellence, Jordan)
 - Prof. Dr. jur. Jürgen Kohler (Team member), Germany: Former Rector and Dean; former Chairman of the German Accreditation Council; member of evaluation / accreditation teams (EUA; FIBAA and ZEvA, Germany; SKVC, Lithuania) and advisory boards at national accreditation agencies (HAC, Hungary; PKA, Poland);

- Prof. Turo Virtanen (Team member), Finland: Associate professor / Senior lecturer in Political Science, University of Helsinki; chair / member of international evaluation / accreditation teams (EAPAA; FINHEEC, Finland; SKVC, Lithuania);
- Saulius Olencevičius (team member, social partner representative), Lithuania: director and owner of LTD 'Prime Consulting'; focus area: feedback management; PhD student; member of institutional and programme review panels in Lithuania and Latvia since 2010, and of the SKVC Study Evaluation Commission 2011-2014;
- Mr. Andrius Zalitis (Team member, student representative), Lithuania: Vice-President of the Lithuanian National Union of Students; member of the SKVC Study Evaluation Committee and SKVC evaluation teams;
- Ewa Kolanowska (Team secretary), Poland: higher education consultant, secretary to ENQA and SKVC review teams.

II. BACKGROUND INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSTITUTION

6. The Kazimieras Simonavičius University is a non-state university situated in Vilnius, with a branch campus in Klaipėda. It was established in 2003 as Vilnius Business Law Academy (VBLA) providing only one long-cycle / integrated (Master's degree) programme in Law. In January 2012, the shareholders of VBLA changed, which led to a change in legal status, a change of name and major changes in the structure, governance and administration of the institution. In February 2012, the Ministry of Education and Science revised the VBLA licence, providing the basis for the establishment of the Kazimieras Simonavičius University. In August 2012, KSU merged with the Academy of Business and Management, a non-state higher education institution located in Vilnius. Currently, the University operates as a joint stock company whose sole owner is an investment company, *UAB HE Investments*. (SER)
7. The governing bodies of the University are the General Meeting of Shareholders (GMS), the Rector and the Academic Council. The GMS, composed of the KSU Rector, one of the Vice-Rectors and the Chancellor, is the supreme governing body. It, among other things, amends the Statutes; appoints and dismisses the Rector and the Academic Council; takes decisions on the re-organisation of the University and advises the Rector on the University structure; and approves annual institutional activity reports and financial statements. The Rector manages the University as the head of the institution, is responsible for strategic planning and management, including the development and implementation of KSU's Strategy, and presents annual reports to the GMS, the Academic Council and the Senate. The Academic Council is a strategic development body, composed of 9 to 15 members (currently, 10), including the Rector, teachers and students of KSU and other academic institutions, representatives of social and business partners, scientists and public figures. It, among other things, approves the Strategy of the University and directions of its strategic development, including the fields of study for degree programmes and research areas. KSU also has a Senate, an elected and consultative body, which is currently composed of 15 members, including the University Chancellor, teaching and research staff and student representatives. It advises the Rector on issues related to degree programmes and research and approves new degree programmes. Student interests are represented by the Student Representation whose members are elected by the general meeting of University students. (SER, Introduction; SER, Annex 3: KSU Statutes)
8. The vision of KSU is: *'The most advanced private research and higher education institution in Lithuania founded on the principles of academic freedom and harmony, developing the principal research and study areas on the international level with due consideration to global challenges, seeking to create and to provide students with global knowledge and value-based attitudes that would allow the University to become the centre of shaping the future of the state and the society, and that would allow students to be actively involved in creating the future, be*

able to positively influence their own development and the development of the state and the world.'

The mission of KSU is: *'Activities of the University are aimed at increasing the learning leadership and competitiveness of the Lithuanian society by creating new knowledge, implementing the sustainable development principles in life, culture, technology, social relationship, policy and other areas.'*

9. Currently, the main academic units of the University which provide degree programmes and conduct research include: the Law Faculty, the Institute of Creative Society and Economy, the Business School, and the Department of Internet Engineering (to be transformed into a faculty), all based in Vilnius, and the Klaipeda Faculty. A Psychology Institute and a Department of Economic Linguistics are to be established soon on the basis of agreements with the Psychology Academy, a social partner, and the Institute of the Lithuanian Language, an academic partner, respectively. Support services are provided by the Studies Development Department which offers methodological support in the development, review and improvement of degree programmes and conducts surveys among students and graduates; the Research and Development Centre which supports and coordinates research activities; the newly established Project Development Department, with a key task of attracting funding for research and other projects; the Entrepreneurship and Innovation Centre which carries out entrepreneurship promotion and support projects and technology transfer and commercialisation activities; the Competence Development Centre offering adult education and training courses; and the International Relations Department and other units. (SER; Annex 1)
10. KSU currently provides the following degree programmes (SER, Annexes 8 & 9; updates provided by KSU before the site visit):
 - Bachelor's degree programmes (11): International Business Law; Creative and Cultural Industries; Entertainment and Tourism Industries; Fashion Industry; Political Communication and Journalism; Business Management; Internet Engineering; Entrepreneurship and Management; Aviation Management; Marketing and Advertising; and Law and Economic Security, with first students enrolled for the academic year 2015/16;
 - Master's degree programmes (3): Law (an integrated / long-cycle programme); Integrated Creative Communication, and Organisational Innovation and Management.

Until the end of the academic year 2013/14, all KSU programmes had been offered as both full-time and part-time. During the enrolment process for the academic year 2014/15 all programmes were offered as both full- and part-time, except the programme in Law which was available only as full-time study. For new enrolments in 2015/16, the following were offered only in the full-time mode of study: Bachelor's degree programmes in International Business Law, Political Communication and Journalism, Business Management, Entrepreneurship and Management, Aviation Management, Law and Economic Security, and Marketing and Advertising; Master's degree programme in Law. Students enrolled in the previous years continue to study in the modes of study chosen.

Four other programmes (a Bachelor's degree programme in Business Sociology, and three Master's degree programmes: Creative Economy, Future Foresight and Strategic Governance, and Geostrategy Studies) have recently been accredited but no students have been enrolled for the academic year 2015/16. Five other programmes, including two Bachelor's degree programmes in Psychology and Economic Linguistics and three Master's degree programmes in Human Rights, Psychology and Cyber Security, have been or are soon to be submitted for accreditation and launched in 2016/17 or 2017/18.

All courses of the Bachelor's degree programme in Aviation Management are now being provided only in English, with first international students recently enrolled outside of exchange programmes. Based on a recently signed agreement, KSU intends to offer a joint

programme in Business Management in English with Helsinki School of Business, Finland. (SER)

11. KSU also offers non-degree adult education and training programmes / courses to both its University community members and the general public or individuals seeking to improve their knowledge and skills. The non-degree education and training portfolio currently includes 11 non-formal adult education and 26 training programmes / courses. The University has recently (2013) adopted a methodology for the assessment and recognition of competences acquired through non-formal and informal learning. (SER)
12. Currently (2015), KSU has 597 students, as compared to 647 in 2014 and 557 in 2012. Almost two-thirds (385, i.e. 64.5%) are full-time students and over one-third (212, i.e. 35.5%) are part-time students, with the proportion of the former increasing recently (59% in 2014). In a more detailed breakdown for 2014, 546 students (84.4%) were studying in Vilnius and 101 (15.6%) in Klaipeda. Almost two-thirds (414; 64%) of all students were enrolled in Bachelor's degree programmes and slightly more than one-third (233; 36%) in Master's degree programmes. Most of the Masters students followed the long-cycle / integrated programme in Law (219; 94%); 6 students were enrolled in the Integrated Creative Communication programme and 8 in the Organisational Innovation and Management programme. The number of students in the individual Bachelor's degree programmes varied significantly: 97 in Creative and Cultural Industries; 83 in Entertainment and Tourism Industries; 73 in Fashion Industry; 35 in International Business Law; 31 in Business Management; 29 in Internet Engineering; 22 in Political Communication and Journalism; 19 in Aviation Management; 13 in Marketing and Advertising; and 12 in Entrepreneurship and Management. (SER, Annex 9; update provided by KSU before the visit)
13. The University currently (2015) employs 122 academic (teaching and research) and administrative staff, including 104 academic staff, with some administrative staff working as lecturers. In a more detailed breakdown for 93 academic staff in 2014, there were 88 teachers and 5 researchers; 40 academic staff (43%) held a PhD. Between 2012 and 2014, the total number of academic staff had increased by 33% (70 in 2012), first researchers had been employed (0 in 2012), and the proportion of those holding a PhD had remained unchanged (42.8% in 2012). (SER, Annex 9; update provided by KSU before the visit)
14. Tuition fees are the main source of income for KSU. Other sources include, in particular, non-degree adult education / training programmes / courses, research and consultancy services, and entrepreneurship and innovation support, research and education projects. Tuition fees as a share of the total income decreased from 91% to 81% between 2012 and 2014 (as compared to almost 98% between 2006 and 2012), with a proportional increase in the income from the other sources in recent years. (SER, Annex 6)
15. The 2012 institutional review of KSU resulted in a 'positive evaluation' given by the review team. However, the University was accredited by the SKVC for only three years as its MOSTA evaluation of learning resources and associated infrastructure was negative, and the outcome of the MOSTA assessment was binding before recent amendments to national legislation.

In the 2012 institutional review report, the review team made a number of recommendations to be implemented by the University. In particular, it recommended that KSU:

Strategic Management

- consider the development of a structured communication strategy;
- in line with its intentions, develop a full QA structure, with due regard to the European Standards and Guidelines, and consider how best to give more formal structure to its student feedback procedures and feedback on actions taken by the University in response;

- continue to give priority to structured staff development in its expenditure planning, with verifiable target setting as a key aspect of this planning;

Academic Studies and Lifelong Learning

- strengthen the written references in its programme learning outcomes to the development in its students of personal competences, research skills, team working and citizenship;
- strengthen the written articulation of the linkages between its statements of institutional vision, mission and strategy and its programme design in terms of defining learning objectives, content, teaching methodology, and highlight this linkage more explicitly;

Research and / or Art

- ensure that the institution's identified priority research areas, designed to support KSU in developing its institutional profile, are widely known and understood both internally and externally;
- embed and ensure fully and clearly the ownership of responsibility, wholly or in part as appropriate, for research activity at all levels across the institution, both vis-à-vis its staff and its institutional partners;
- ensure a common understanding of the way in which academic staff are performance managed / incentivized to undertake research activity for KSU as the primary sponsor;
- review its (full) costing mechanisms for contract research;
- seek to increase the number of doctoral students and explore its own capacity to award the degree;

Impact on National and Regional Development

- formulate a crisper tactical action plan on how it will mobilize its plans for increasing its impact on the Region, including the motivation of staff;
- monitor carefully competing provision by competitor institutions with regard to potential impact of the University's degree awards on the local economy;
- ensure that the University's research activities are identifiably associated with it and are not merely seen as activities of its staff, either as individuals or as employees of other higher education institutions, external companies etc.

III. STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

STRATEGIC PLANNING

Alignment of the strategic plan with the institution's mission, national policies and the principles of the European Higher Education Area and the European Research Area

16. The mission and vision of KSU (see par. 8) are an integral part of its 2012-2018 Strategy. The mission is rather unfocused and generic insofar as it does not define clearly the main areas of activity and does not identify any distinctive features of the University. The mission and vision do not actually reflect the University's own strategic thinking on exploiting the niches which it has already established for itself and on creating new ones. As the Team learned from the Management Team (i.e. the Rector and Administration), the SER Group and those present at the meetings devoted to all four key areas of the review, KSU either offers or is developing a number of niche programmes (Fashion Industry, Aviation, and Cyber Security; see par. 10). It also gives high priority to several transversal elements such as interdisciplinarity in education and research, student customer orientation, graduate employability, responsiveness to, and strong links with, social and business partners, and internationalisation. Careful analysis and integration of these 'bits and pieces' would help the University identify its hallmark(s) – (a) distinguishing feature(s) which could underpin its mission and vision, and guide its strategic decision-making. In this context, the Team also notes that while the vision refers to KSU as 'the most advanced private research and higher

education institution in Lithuania', the Strategy is not explicit about how this is understood or how progress towards this target can be measured (only the highest employability rate was mentioned as an indicator during the visit). The KSU Management Team are aware that the mission and vision require some crystallisation as part of the revision of the Strategy scheduled for the beginning of 2016.

17. **Recommendation**: The Team recommends that in line with its intentions and as part of the planned adjustments to its Strategy, KSU revise its mission and vision so that they are both more specific and institution-specific, and are based on (a) clearly identified niche(s) and hallmark(s) of the University.
18. KSU's Strategy defines five strategic goals and related strategic breakthrough directions which cover the key areas of education and research and innovation, and horizontal aspects including university governance in general, human resources development, infrastructure and marketing, and internationalisation. The mission of the University is broad enough to embrace all of them, though, obviously, the link between the two would be clearer if the mission itself was more specific. The Strategy is aligned with the Lithuanian Law on Higher Education and Research and a number of national strategic documents referred to in both the Strategy itself and the SER. This is evident, in particular, where the Strategy puts emphasis on the unity of education and research, lifelong learning, research and innovation, internationalisation, and the development of creativity and entrepreneurship in the context of knowledge- and innovation-based economy. The Strategy is also broadly in line with the principles underlying the European Higher Education Area and the European Research Area, though it would benefit from explicit references to recent EHEA and ERA documents. Thus, the Team is glad to note that the Strategy will be soon updated to reflect not only findings from external evaluations but also Lithuanian and EU documents adopted in recent years.

Validity and interoperability of the strategic plan components

19. As stated in the SER and confirmed during the visit, the process of developing the Strategy involved a wide range of KSU stakeholders, including the Management Team, the Academic Council, with some external stakeholders, the Senate, staff and students. The Team felt that the Council and the Senate perceived their roles mainly as reviewing and, where appropriate, approving proposals submitted to them, while the University would benefit from their more pro-active role in strategic planning. Further, the University did not seek input from the social and business partners that the Team met, and the graduates interviewed were / are consulted about strategic plans only on an individual and ad-hoc basis. More structured canvassing of external stakeholders to get their thoughts on the Strategy would, obviously, enhance the relevance of the University's activities to their needs, an aspect which is now given high priority by the University. This can be usefully addressed as part of the ongoing discussions to revise the Strategy.
20. The Strategy analyses KSU's external environment in terms of global and national trends, including the position of non-state higher education institutions vis-a-vis state institutions in Lithuania. The SWOT analysis, which provides a clear general insight into external and internal factors, can be considered an example of **good practice**. However, while KSU seeks to become 'a nucleus of regional development of knowledge and innovations', the Strategy does not analyse regional needs or explain how these will be assessed. Further, it does not include any evidence illustrating the position of KSU vis-à-vis its competitors in the Lithuanian higher education market (there are only vague references to 'strategic exclusivity' of KSU which aims to become a modern interdisciplinary university). Neither does it analyse the strengths and weaknesses of KSU's education and training portfolio. This is understandable as the University had only one degree programme and a limited range of adult education and training courses in 2012. Now, the Strategy would be expected to include a comparative performance analysis of all degree programmes provided (and an overview of

current adult education and training courses, if possible). These flaws can also be addressed as part of the planned revision of the Strategy.

21. Regardless of this, the Team agrees with KSU that the Strategy is methodologically coherent, and the accompanying Strategic Action Plan clearly shows how the Strategy is made operational. Though very broadly defined, the strategic goals and breakthrough directions are clear. The Action Plan logically links the goals and directions, tasks to be carried out and implementation measures under each strategic direction, and clearly indicates timelines and milestones, responsible bodies / persons, and expected results. Ideally, the document would also need to include an estimation of resources required to implement the Strategy.
22. Since 2012 KSU has moved from a transition phase, evolving from an institution specialising in one area, to a start-up phase of a multidisciplinary institution (see also paras 6 & 10). In line with its strategic goals and directions, it seeks to become a university which is nationally and internationally recognised for its highest-quality interdisciplinary education and research; a learning university serving as ‘a nucleus of regional development of knowledge and innovations’ linking research, business and public authorities; and an entrepreneurial university promoting synergy of education, research and innovation. These ambitious goals are clear (even if there is unnecessary verbosity in the way they are formulated in the Strategy) and still valid. The Strategy to achieve them seems to have been fit for purpose (or fit for the purpose of ‘unrestrained development’) in the transition phase. Now, as mentioned above, the KSU Management Team is aware that the Strategy requires revamping and various good ideas are on the table. The Review Team agrees that various ‘bits and pieces’ would now need to be put together into an overarching framework. There evidently is a need to prioritise and bring more clarity into strategic management. Several interrelated issues would need to be considered in this context of the planned revision of the Strategy.
23. First, education and research need to be more strategically managed now. A large number of degree programmes (18), for an institution of KSU’s size, have been accredited since 2012, with students enrolled in most of them. As explained by the Chancellor representing the General Meeting of Shareholders, this resulted from a ‘policy decision’ taken to attract students and staff to the University. The successful expansion of the programme portfolio, where new programmes were designed in close cooperation with social and business partners, clearly shows KSU’s strategic agility and can serve as an example of **good practice**.

However, as the Team found during the visit, the GMS and the Management Team agree that the University may have too many programmes now, given the resources available, and needs to concentrate on a manageable number, while giving high priority to interdisciplinary elements in each programme, involvement of social and business partners, student customer orientation, graduate employability and international dimension. Various niches to be exploited or created are being considered in this context (e.g. programmes in Aviation Management, Creative and Cultural Industries, Internet Engineering or Cyber Security – see par. 10; a redesigned programme in Law; expanded IT education), but no decision has been taken yet. The KSU Management Team is aware that it needs to make choices before the Strategy is revised in the coming months.

Four broad priorities have been defined for research, and research activities are coordinated by the Research and Development Centre. However, as KSU acknowledged in the meeting devoted to Research, while meetings to discuss what to do are held regularly and strategic issues and priorities are taken into account in putting together research proposals, research is largely based on a bottom-up approach, and on an ‘individual approach’. This is understandable in view of a small number of researchers (5.5 FTE), but the Team believes that a stronger top-down approach and strategic focus would ensure that the University

makes an optimum use of its limited human and financial resources to achieve its ambitious strategic goals.

While the Strategy refers to ‘a nucleus of regional development ...’ (see par. 22), at least some of KSU’s activities in the areas of education and research seem to be (also) targeted at national level. As the issue of regional versus national focus in managing education and research was not fully clarified in the meetings devoted to Academic Studies & LLL, Research, and Impact on National and Regional Development, the Team encourages KSU to reflect on this as part of its ongoing discussions related to the revision of the Strategy. (See also related comments in par. 101).

24. Second, a strategic focus and transparency are needed in managing relationships with social and business partners. As stated in ‘Additional (updated) information about the changes in the Kazimieras Simonavičius University since the SER’, provided to the Team, recent discussions on the Strategy led to the conclusion that the University’s main strategic direction should be to strengthen partnerships with industry in all aspects, including degree programme development and implementation, lifelong learning and research. Thus, KSU has recently appointed the Vice-Rector for International Relations and Partnerships (a new position). Involvement of social and business partners also featured strongly in all discussions during the visit.

At the same time, as the Team learned in the meeting devoted to Impact on Regional and National Development, there is no clear strategy for selecting social and business partners and the choice is driven by ‘practical issues’; relationships are established on the basis of personal links and local knowledge; and each department / unit makes its own choices, though the Chancellor is informed as responsible for strategic issues. There are no clear criteria (e.g. profile, type or size of an organisation; its training, research and innovation or employment capacity; its regional, national or international standing) guiding the choice of partners across the University. This was also confirmed in the Team’s meeting with partners. Such a bottom-up, opportunity-driven approach may indeed be effective in expanding the network of partners and ‘testing’ the capacity and commitment of partners. On the other hand, it does not necessarily help to identify partners who can contribute most effectively to strategic development of the University and, at the same time, increase the impact of its activities at regional and / or national level. Obviously, it will be easier to devise a fully-fledged strategy for establishing partnerships when KSU identifies clearly (a) niche(s) for itself and clarifies the issue of national versus regional focus in education and research.

25. **Recommendation:** The Team recommends that KSU design and implement a clear strategy for selecting social and business partners, and evaluate the strategy at appropriate intervals, to ensure that partnerships are established specifically to pursue the University’s strategic goals for education and research on the one hand, and to maximise the impact of its activities at regional and / or national level on the other hand.
26. Third, a more structured or strategic approach to internationalisation is needed and, ideally, would be reflected in a revised Strategy. Aside from the above-mentioned recent appointment of the new Vice-Rector, KSU has indeed expanded its international activities since 2012 (see paras 79-82, 99), but it does not yet have a framework where they would all fit together. As the Team found in the meetings devoted to Academic Studies & LLL and Research, the Management Team is aware that, with a quite wide international network of Erasmus partners now established, the University should become more selective in building partnerships for education and training. At the same time, it is now in the process of establishing a network of international research partners. Partnerships have so far been established in response to immediate needs. Now, more consideration should be given to how they can meaningfully support the development of University’s education, training and research and increase the impact of its activities on regional and / or national development.

An internationalisation strategy would need to define, for example, the rationale behind internationalisation (e.g. extending the range of education, training and research activities; enhancing the quality of education and research and / or of student learning experience; generating income from inward student mobility or research projects), geographical foci for mobility, ways and means of 'internationalisation at home', and clear criteria for partnerships (as in the case of relationships with social and business partners).

27. **Recommendation:** The Team recommends that KSU devise and implement a strategy for internationalisation, which covers both education and research, to manage its expanding international activities, including international partnerships, in line with its strategic goals.

Indicators for the implementation of the strategic plan

28. The Strategic Action Plan, which is an integral part of the 2012-2018 Strategy, includes 'Results' (e.g. at least 15 students enrolled on each programme each year; at least 5 new adult education / training courses developed during an academic year; at least 80% of participating staff satisfied with the motivation system). Although not referred to as indicators in the Action Plan, these can be and are indeed used as quantitative and qualitative indicators. Such 'indicators' or 'targets' are defined for all relevant tasks, and some targets are, very reasonably, set to be achieved at various points of, and other by the end of, the planning period. Overall, they certainly enable monitoring the implementation of the Strategy. Additionally, as explained in the SER and in the meeting devoted to Quality Assurance, KSU uses for strategy monitoring purposes a set of data such as student enrolments, number of incoming and outgoing students, and degrees awarded, collected as part of the internal quality assurance system. However, it is not entirely clear from KSU's reporting documents how exactly all the indicators available are used to measure progress towards the strategic goals and make adjustments where necessary (see par. 30 and related comments on data collection or possible additional indicators in paras 41, 103 and 105).

Relevance of procedures for monitoring the implementation of the strategic plan

29. The SER explains that the University has three main procedures in place for monitoring the implementation of the Strategy: Annual Activity Reports, and a system for measuring quality indicators and annual performance audits, which cover process management, results, etc., as part of the internal quality assurance system. The Rector's Annual Reports are based on Annual Reports produced by each department / unit; these are drawn up based on Annual Activity Plans. As of 2015, KSU introduced templates for Annual Plans and Reports produced by the departments / units to ensure a consistent approach across the institution, which is indeed a desirable improvement. As the templates follow the structure of the Strategic Action Plan (Strategic breakthrough directions, Tasks / Activities, Period and Results), Annual Plans clearly show how the Strategic Action Plan is made operational at departmental level, and both Plans and Reports have a clear strategic focus. The planning and reporting methodology may serve as an example of **good practice**. Overall, the three procedures provide a sound basis for effective monitoring of the implementation of the Strategy and, combined with the indicators discussed above, for measuring progress towards the achievement of the strategic goals. The evidence provided in various sections of the SER and collected during the visit shows that the Strategy is indeed implemented as planned.
30. However, while the Rector's 2014 Report available to the Team provides an overview of the University's activities and data illustrating its performance in the main areas (education and research, resources and infrastructure, governance, international relations, etc.), it does not discuss the progress made over the year in the implementation of the Strategy. Further, no single document available to the Team presents the overall progress made towards the achievement of the strategic goals since 2012. Such a document would need to include data based on the indicators defined in the Strategy and data collected as part of the internal

quality assurance system. This flaw may be easily fixed by adding a 'Progress' column to the Strategic Action Plan.

31. **Recommendation:** The Team recommends that KSU produce and update on an annual basis a document which presents progress made in the implementation of the Strategy, as measured by the available indicators, at institutional level.

Information on the implementation of the strategic plan

32. As provided for in the Statutes and explained during the visit, the Rector's Reports are submitted to the General Meeting of Shareholders, the Academic Council and the Senate. They are also published on the University's website and, thus, available not only to the KSU community but also to the general public (though the Team cannot confirm that they are easily accessible on the website). Issues related to the implementation of the Strategy are discussed at regular meetings with the academic community at various levels. Additionally, information about the University, its activities and achievements is disseminated through press releases, social networks and printed or other materials, with some distributed directly among social and business partners. All internal stakeholders that the Team interviewed were satisfied with the information on the implementation of the Strategy provided and, in more general terms, did appreciate very much good information flow within KSU which promotes a sense of community. However, most of the social and business partners that the Team met did not receive any information on progress in the implementation of the Strategy, and there is no mechanism in place for updating them regularly on strategic development of the University. This is a priority area for improvement, in particular because strengthening relationships with partners is a task in the current Strategy and is likely to become the main strategic breakthrough direction in the revised Strategy.
33. In this context, the 2012 review team recommended that KSU develop a structured communication strategy, in particular with a view to establishing the new University's brand in the wider community. Such a strategy has not been designed yet. Since 2012 KSU has expanded considerably its education and training portfolio, but quite a few programmes have so far attracted a rather small number of students (see par. 12); it has developed and intends to develop further its research activities. It is now considering new ways and means to widen its student and adult learner base, possibly including international students from Central Europe and Asia, and to strengthen existing and establishing new partnerships in education, training and research. And, in line with its strategic goals, it seeks national and international recognition. All this definitely requires a structured approach to marketing and communication, with clearly identified target groups and measures for reaching each of them tailored to their specific needs. As the Team learned during the visit, in view of the demographic crisis in Lithuania, the Academic Council and the Senate, as well, would welcome a strategy for attracting a larger number of both local and international students.
34. **Recommendation:** The Team recommends that KSU urgently devise a fully-fledged communication and marketing strategy.

EFFECTIVENESS OF MANAGEMENT

Effectiveness of the internal quality assurance system

35. The University has in place an ISO-based internal quality assurance system, with a clear quality assurance policy and procedures underpinning all key processes; thus, the relevant 2012 review recommendation has been fully implemented in this respect. It is also **commendable** that, as the Team found in the meeting devoted to QA, KSU takes care to avoid overloading the system with processes and procedures and seeks to achieve a reasonable balance between standardisation and flexibility; as a result, the system is manageable for an institution of KSU's size. Overall, the system integrates the European Standards and Guidelines. However, as the Quality Manual has not been updated since 2014, it would be

advisable to map Part 1 of the revised ESG onto the system to ensure that the latter fully reflects a much stronger emphasis placed in the former on student-centred learning.

36. It is clear to the Team from the discussion on QA that KSU has given thought to how 'quality culture' can be understood. Evidently, there is also an element of quality culture that goes with the Management Team placing much emphasis on programme review and improvement and on opportunities for staff to discuss 'what they can do together to work better for students', and with short reporting lines and personalised troubleshooting. However, in this context, KSU may wish to (re)consider some general QA-related concepts. In particular, it may wish to broaden its definition of quality as its current understanding of the concept seems to be oriented too much towards student / customer satisfaction and graduate employability. It could also reflect on how the concepts of 'fitness *for* purpose' and excellence may fit into the quality framework, while broadening its view on 'fitness *of* purpose'; for the latter, it could address a wider array of possible educational objectives beyond 'employability' which are also advocated for in the Bologna Process communiqués, the 2015 European Standards and Guidelines, and the Council of Europe statements, such as enhancing research and innovation competence, fostering personal development, and educating for democratic citizenship.
37. There is a clear division of QA-related responsibilities among various levels and bodies, including the Management Representative for Quality / Vice-Rector for Studies and Research, Heads of Departments, Programme Work Groups, Study Programme Committees, and the Studies Development Department. As the Team learned during the visit, the Vice-Rector is also supported by an informal QA group, chaired by a staff member. Its members change every year, which may help to strengthen a sense of ownership of the QA system and quality culture across the academic community. A formal group is to be established soon.
38. Insofar as the Team can judge from the degree programme documentation provided by KSU, the processes and procedures defined in the Quality Manual and related process descriptions are adequate to ensure compliance of the qualifications awarded with the Lithuanian and European Qualifications Frameworks. The qualifications are linked with the relevant levels in the LQF, and described in terms of level, workload and learning outcomes.
39. KSU has in place adequate procedures for programme development, review and improvement. A consistent approach to programme development and review across the University is ensured by the Studies Development Centre which provides methodological support, including subject / course description templates. As explained in the SER and confirmed during the visit (Academic Council and Senate; Academic Studies & LLL), Programme Work Groups that develop new programmes take into account national regulations / guidelines, external programme evaluations, and labour market data and trends. Study Programme Committees review and adjust programmes every year. Feedback from social and business partners is sought in both programme development and review processes. Strong involvement of partners in ongoing improvement and / or delivery of programmes in Aviation Management, Fashion Industry and Law is an example of **good practice**. On the other hand, while partners are members of all Programme Committees, they were directly involved in the development of only some programmes (e.g. Aviation Management and Psychology). This is likely to be addressed soon as strengthening relationships with partners is expected to be the main direction in the revised Strategy. The partners that the Team met emphasised that KSU was much more responsive to their suggestions on ongoing programmes than other higher education institutions. Ideally, KSU would also put in place a mechanism for regular collection of feedback on new or ongoing programmes from its graduates who, as the Team found during the visit, are currently consulted only on an ad-hoc and individual basis (see also related comments on graduate career tracking in par. 70).

40. In line with the 2012 review recommendation concerning structured feedback from students, the University now conducts regular anonymous student surveys. Additionally, students can provide feedback through a survey 'Get rid of a problem' conducted every semester by the Student Representation and in regular and ad-hoc face-to-face meetings. The students that the Team met confirmed that they had many opportunities to express their views and KSU took into account, and did indeed act upon, the feedback collected from them.
41. The procedures related to programmes which are in place seem effective in that they enable the University to identify weaknesses and make improvements (examples such as the dismissal of a teacher, redesigned course contents and improved teaching / learning materials given by the QA group and students during the visit). However, insofar as the Team may judge from the student evaluation survey documents provided by KSU and discussions with the SER Group and students, the survey and other feedback collection mechanisms (e.g. discussions with students) seem to focus too much on the performance of the teacher and much less on broader aspects of study programmes such as learning outcomes, the overall structure of programmes, i.e. arrangement of their components and progression, and the content of programmes in their fit-for-purpose teaching and learning modalities. It would be advisable to shift focus from individual teacher performance to programme performance. This would enable KSU to make more in-depth comparative analysis of all existing programmes. A comparative performance analysis would require additional data collected as part of the internal quality assurance system. The Rector's 2014 Report and the discussion with the QA group show that the University collects at least some relevant data (e.g. enrolments and dropout rates), though such data in time series does not seem to be fully used yet for the purpose of a comparative analysis and improvement of programmes. Additionally, such an analysis would need to include data for each programme such as input-output ratio, including cohort analysis, degrees per academic teacher, resources used per outcome, and data from graduate career surveys (paras 70-71), etc.
42. The University has in place a set of transparent procedures and criteria for the assessment of student performance. These include uniform institutional procedures for the assessment of learning outcomes achieved, examinations and thesis defence, requirements for final theses approved by the Heads of Departments, and an assessment strategy and criteria for each subject. The procedures provide for re-sitting examinations, and there is also a clear procedure for student appeals to the Examination Appeals Committee. All strategies, procedures and criteria are published. The students interviewed confirmed that they had all the information about assessment arrangements that they needed, and that they received adequate feedback from teachers on their performance.
43. The quality of teaching staff is high on KSU's agenda. While there is still room for improvement in human resources management, the University is to be commended for its efforts to create plenty of opportunities for staff development. (For further comments, see paras 50-52.)
44. 'Study resources and support for students' are included as a component of the internal quality assurance system. However, the understanding of 'support for students' seems to be rather narrow as the Quality Manual focuses exclusively on learning resources and student surveys carried out to assess whether they are adequate. (For further comments, see par. 67.)
45. As stated in the SER and during the visit, information about the programmes offered is published, and regularly updated, on the University's website and in university groups in social networks. Programme / course / subject descriptions are not uploaded onto the website for practical reasons (too detailed and lengthy). The students interviewed were fully satisfied with the information available to them before admission to the University. Once students are enrolled, all necessary information on learning outcomes, programme and course contents, as well as student assessment is provided to them at the beginning of studies and each semester,

and is available in the Moodle system; they can also request any additional information via email. It is, however, good practice in the EHEA to publish more detailed information on programmes and courses / subjects (though not necessarily full detailed descriptions). More detailed descriptions would make the content of programmes more transparent to prospective students. This would be particularly important where the link between the name of the programme, its contents and the degree awarded is not necessarily self-evident (e.g. the programmes in Creative and Cultural Industries and in Fashion Industry leading to a degree in Communication).

Relevance of changes in the organisational structure

46. Since the 2012 review, KSU has grown as an institution, establishing new academic and support service units and extending the range of activities of existing ones. A Business School (based on ABM; see par. 6) was set up to provide a previously existing programme and new ones; an Internet Engineering Department was established to deliver a newly accredited programme; and three existing units (the Law Faculty, the Klaipeda Faculty and the Institute of Creative and Society and Economy) have expanded to offer newly accredited programmes. These changes were a logical consequence of the expansion of KSU's academic portfolio, in line with its strategic aim to become a multidisciplinary institution, and were necessary to ensure effective management of programmes. As the University has an ambitious research agenda and its research activity relies heavily on external funding (paras 84 & 91), the establishment of the Research and Development Centre and, more recently, of the Project Development Department was a good move to push the agenda forward; both units would need to ensure that new research proposals are indeed strategically focused (see par. 23). Further, the recent appointment of a new Vice-Rector for International Relations and Partnerships was definitely a well-justified decision. On the one hand, KSU now gives high priority to internationalisation and relationships with social and business partners; on the other hand, the Vice-Rector for Studies and Research, with a very extensive 'portfolio' of strategic and daily tasks until now, may indeed focus more on strategic issues. As the new Vice-Rector was appointed shortly before the visit, it was too early to discuss how he intended to tackle his strategic tasks; the Team hopes that its reflections (see paras 24-27) will be helpful.

Process management

47. There is a clear division of responsibilities both between the governing bodies (the General Meeting of Shareholders (GMS), the Rector and the Academic Council) and among the key individuals within the Management Team (the Rector, the Vice-Rectors and the Chancellor). It is evident to the Team from its discussions with all stakeholders that decisions are taken swiftly, both on internal matters and on matters involving social and business partners (improvements in degree programmes; a new training course, etc.) – an example of **good practice**. As explained by the Chancellor during the visit, efficient decision-making is further facilitated by the fact that the GMS is composed of the Rector, one of the Vice-Rectors and the Chancellor. There is also an element of externality in decision-making as the Academic Council includes external stakeholders, though, as mentioned above (par. 19), there is still room for more extensive involvement of social and business partners and graduates in strategic planning.

48. It is evident to the Team that KSU is a **good practice** example of an open participatory culture, with ample opportunities created for staff and students to express their views and contribute to decisions on both academic and university management matters. Similarly, funding is allocated in line with the principle of collegiality, based on Annual Plans produced by department / units. The Management Team makes every effort to build a culture of collective engagement. As the Team found during the visit, a strong sense of community is already there, among both staff and students; as the next step, the Management Team would

be happy to see even greater participation of students in university management, including quality assurance, as those involved are more satisfied with their experience of studying at KSU. The students that the Team met were fully satisfied with the ‘power’ they had and their participation in management, including decision making. The Team felt that the Student Representation, which has its member in the Senate, might take greater advantage of the opportunities for participatory management offered.

49. With regard to ‘orientation to strategic goals and outcomes’, as stated in the SER, process management is regulated by the Quality Manual and Process Descriptions (attached to the Manual) based on the Strategy. This ensures overall coherence between the activities undertaken and the goals and expected results of the Strategy, and the Team found no evidence that this is not the case. On the other hand, as mentioned earlier (paras 22-27), following the phase of ‘unrestrained development’, KSU now needs a strategic focus and clearly identified priorities in its revised Strategy which will guide its activities.

Human resources management

50. High quality of staff and staff development feature strongly in the Strategy as one of the strategic breakthrough directions, and the Management Team has good understanding of the vital importance of human resources – a **commendable** approach. A process for human resources management is now being implemented as part of the internal quality assurance system. The related tasks defined in the Strategy have been carried out as planned, and most of the key elements of the human resources management system are in place.
51. As stated in the SER and confirmed during the visit, clear procedures and criteria for the recruitment and selection of academic and administrative staff, and for annual performance appraisal of academic staff, and job descriptions for both staff categories have been introduced. Surveys are conducted and meetings are held to assess staff training needs. Despite its own limited funding for training, KSU offers academic staff ample opportunities for development, both internally (training seminars / roundtables, some involving international staff) and abroad (Erasmus mobility, conferences). The training activities organised recently enable teachers to develop their methodological competence in most relevant areas (e.g. student-centred learning and student assessment). Teachers with limited experience (e.g. practitioners) are paired with experienced staff, which is a good way of both ensuring adequate quality of teaching and providing ‘peer learning’ opportunities. This is all in line with the 2012 review recommendation concerning staff development. However, limited participation of staff in internal activities is still an issue, and the Management Team expects to address it through an incentive scheme planned in the Strategy (see a related recommendation in par. 93). With regard to participation in decision-making, staff are fully involved in university management, for example, as members of the Academic Council and Senate, members or leaders of Study Work Programme Groups and Committees, the QA group and teams conducting audits.
52. The staff working at KSU are highly committed and motivated. As the Team learned in the Strategic Management meeting, the Management Team has a clear plan for step-by-step development of its human resources (from creating a stable core of staff to training their own PhD students). To put it fully into effect, it is now considering various options to raise funding so that it is able to attract, and offer competitive salaries to, a larger number of highly qualified (and, if possible, full-time) staff. It has also signed agreement to establish joint PhD programmes (paras 75 & 88).

Change management

53. It is evident to the Team from all its discussions during the visit that KSU has built a culture of openness to change and flexibility. As explained in the SER and during the visit, it also has some tools to collect evidence which may help it establish where change is necessary or

desirable and, thus, support change management. Change management is part of the Development Action Management Process, regulated by the Quality Manual. To improve its processes, the University collects evidence mainly through regular surveys among students (degree programmes) and teachers (staff development) and annual performance audits, and external institutional and programme evaluations. Internal meetings are also held to analyse KSU's internal and external environments, and feedback is collected from external stakeholders, though – except through the Academic Council – still on an ad-hoc and individual basis (paras 19 & 39). More data would also need to be collected as part of the internal quality assurance system to analyse and improve programme performance (par. 41). Nevertheless, some examples of recent changes, given to the Team during the visit, indicate that the mechanisms underpinning change management are effective (revision of the Strategy; amendments to the Statutes clarifying the responsibilities of the Academic Council and the Senate; the establishment of the Project Development Department as a result of an audit; changes in degree programmes).

54. There is no specific formal mechanism in place for risk assessment. However, as confirmed in the meetings on Strategic Management and with the Academic Council and the Senate, the University is, obviously, well aware of the risks related to a steady decline in the student-age population in Lithuania and to competing with state higher education institutions on an unequal footing in this context (and of the related financial risk). Until now, it has sought to mitigate the risks by expanding its programme portfolio. The Team expects that a revised Strategy will identify new ways of handling the risks. (For comments on finance management, see paras 59-60).
55. In more general terms, KSU has been in the process of permanent change since 2012. As mentioned in the previous sections, the main changes include the development of its degree programme portfolio and research activities, combined with the establishment or expansion of academic and support units, the development of international activities, and the establishment of (key elements of) a human resource management system. KSU is to be **commended** for how efficiently it has managed these quite fundamental changes in key areas to arrive where it is now.

Infrastructure (learning resources) management

56. In recent years KSU has made progress in meeting the MOSTA requirements for learning resources, with the only one that it still needs to fulfil in 2014 concerning the number of study places in the library. The University rents premises in three locations, two in Vilnius and one in Klaipeda, and uses the Audiovisual Arts Industry Incubator in the Vilnius District, owned by a business partner. The shared use made of the Arts Industry Incubator is an example of **good practice**. Negotiations are now ongoing to rent larger premises. As stated in the SER (Annex 18), the two Vilnius campuses have, in total, 13 bigger and smaller classrooms (24 to 87 seats) for lectures and tutorials, including 1 computer classroom with 30 workstations in the main campus; the main campus also has an Internet Engineering laboratory, and a library with a reading room. The Klaipeda campus (which the Team could not inspect due to the distance to the location) has 13 classrooms with 25 workstations each, including 4 computer rooms and 2 classrooms with 80 seats each. Wireless Internet is available in all three campuses. The library offers (text)books and periodicals in both Lithuanian and English, and access to a wide range of international databases. Students and staff may also use resources of, among others, the Lithuanian Technical Library, the Library of the Psychology Academy, the Library of the Klaipeda University on the basis of cooperation agreements.
57. Based on the Team's tour of the facilities available in the main premises in Vilnius, classrooms are certainly adequate to accommodate the current number of students, well-equipped and, overall, provide good conditions for learning. The Library is indeed quite

small, both in terms of the number of places and the resources available but, according to the students interviewed, this is balanced by easy access to the other libraries mentioned above. However, low Internet speed and 'limited space for students' with uncomfortable furniture are, as the Team learned, quite burning issues for students. Students would also like to have a cloakroom and a canteen (as well as some parking space).

58. **Recommendation:** The Team recommends that KSU further improve learning conditions, in particular in terms of working space for students, the quality of Internet connection, and supporting facilities for students (a cloakroom, canteen, etc.).

Use of funds for the attainment of objectives

59. KSU's income comes from tuition fees (81%), and from non-degree adult education / training courses, research consultancy services, and entrepreneurship and innovation support, research and education projects. In line with its policy to diversify income streams, the income from sources other than tuition fees has grown in recent years as a result of arrangements put in place for the commercialisation of research. The University recorded a deficit in the last three years, and 2015 is the first year when it is likely to have a balanced budget. While the tight financial situation may be a reason for concern, the Team learned from the Chancellor, as a representative of the General Meeting of Shareholders, that the GMS is prepared to continue providing adequate funding to KSU and various scenarios for income generation and further development of the University are on the table (examples given to the Team).
60. Funding allocation is based on Annual Plans which are produced by departments / units in line with the Strategy (paras 29 & 48). In the Team's view, this ensures that the budget setting process gives due consideration to the strategic goals of the University. This view is shared by the Academic Council and the Senate interviewed during the visit. The Team also understands from its discussion with the Chancellor (General Meeting of Shareholders) that the University seeks to strike a reasonable balance between the 'strategic imperative' to expand or maintain the current degree programme portfolio and the financial viability of programmes, defining a minimum number of students to be enrolled for each programme to be delivered.

Academic ethics

61. KSU has a Code of Academic Ethics which sets standards for staff and students and for communication between them, and the procedure for supervision of the implementation of the Code. Breach of the Code cases are considered by the Ethics Supervisory Commission, involving both staff and students, which may apply sanctions. There is also a Code of Conduct which defines some additional principles (e.g. openness of leaders to cooperation with students, participation of staff and students in decision making at all levels). The University uses plagiarism detection software for all final theses (at draft and final-version stages), and for coursework assignments in some cases. Students are familiar with the Code of Ethics, including possible consequences for plagiarism. As the Team learned from the SER Group, until now there have been no cases of breach of the Code in research or of plagiarism in final theses, but some students were expelled from exams for cheating.

In summary, since the 2012 review, KSU has moved from a transition phase, when it evolved from a specialised to multidisciplinary institution, to a start-up phase of a university. It has expanded its programme portfolio, engaged more extensively in research and international activities, and put in place sound mechanisms underpinning university management, all this being combined with changes in its structure. KSU's mission and vision would now need to be more focused and specific, and reflect its distinctive features, based on clearly identified niches. Its 2012-2018 Strategy fits into the broad mission and is aligned with national and European policies, is clear and methodologically coherent. Overall, indicators are defined and procedures

are essentially in place to monitor the implementation of the Strategy effectively, and the stakeholders seem to be satisfied with the information received on its implementation; however, progress towards the achievement of strategic goals should be properly documented. In more general terms, after the transition phase, the University needs clear priorities and more clarity in strategic management, and this would need to be reflected in the Strategy which is to be revised at the beginning of 2016. Strategies for selecting social and business partners, for internationalisation and for communication and marketing are necessary to help the University keep a strategic focus in its further development.

Overall, KSU is building a quality culture and its internal quality assurance system seems to be quite effective. At the same time, the system seems to be geared too much towards student satisfaction and graduate employability rather than more broadly defined quality and focus too much on individual teacher performance and too little on overall programme performance; more data would also need to be collected to analyse and improve programme performance. Changes in the organisational structure, all in line with the strategic goals, were necessary to ensure effective management of education and research. Process and change management may serve as examples of good practice. Staff development is, commendably, high on the University agenda; key elements of a human resources management system, except an incentive scheme, are in place; and highly committed and motivated staff are a valuable asset of the University. The learning facilities would still need to be improved in line with student feedback. Funding allocation is geared towards the strategic objectives. Academic ethics is given due consideration.

Judgement on the area: Strategic Management is given positive evaluation.

IV. ACADEMIC STUDIES AND LIFE-LONG LEARNING

LEARNING CONDITIONS

Alignment of qualifications with the mission and the strategic plan, and with national development needs

62. KSU offers Bachelor's and Master's degree programmes and adult education and training courses (see also paras 10 & 11). In general terms, the qualifications awarded fit into the broadly defined vision, mission and strategic breakthrough directions in the Strategy but the former can hardly be traced back to the latter. In the context of alignment with the mission and the strategic plan, the 2012 review team recommended that KSU strengthen the written references in its programme learning outcomes (LOs) to the development of students' transversal competences, and the written articulation of the linkages between its vision, mission and strategy and its programme design (par. 15). KSU has made progress insofar as the programme and course / subject descriptions, provided to the Team, are based on a clear methodology for defining and describing learning outcomes, course contents and teaching / learning methods. Programme design and course descriptions would still benefit, though, from a sharper focus on transversal skills. Further, the link between the mission and the Strategy, and programme design (LOs, teaching / learning methods, student assessment) is still hardly identifiable, largely because the mission is rather generic and the Strategy does not clarify how the strategic goal of establishing 'a system of interdisciplinary studies' is translated into the programme design methodology and teaching / learning approaches (to be) adopted.
63. **Recommendation:** The Team recommends that KSU bring into closer alignment its vision, mission, Strategy and programme design (learning outcomes, course contents, teaching / learning methods and student assessment).
64. The qualifications awarded are aligned with national development needs or priorities as identified in the strategic documents referred to in the SER. Overall, adequate mechanisms

are in place to ensure the relevance of the qualifications to labour market needs, though there is scope for further improvement (see paras 41 & 70). While KSU emphasizes the aspect of employability as its major educational objective, which is commendable, this may be done at the expense of addressing other valid educational aspirations as well (par. 36). Regardless of this, as the Team learned from the SER and during the visit (SER Group; Academic Council and Senate; Social and business partners), labour market trends and feedback from social and business partners are taken into account in the development and review of degree programmes (par. 39). Feedback is also sought in various ways in the development of adult education / training courses (e.g. consultations with selected partners; direct input to customised courses such as a retraining course the Anykščiai district municipality; surveys to identify the needs of adults conducted by the Student Research Society at the Faculty of Law). The relevance of programmes and courses to national needs is evidenced by funding awarded on a competitive basis by the Ministry of Education and Science for study places in the Bachelor's degree programme in Internet Engineering and for an adult education course in Smart Tourism. Very high or at least quite high employment rates of KSU graduates (100% for Organisational Innovation and Management; 82% for Business Management; 79% for Law; additional data provided by KSU) are also a good 'indicator' of the relevance of programmes to labour market needs. Students are yet to graduate in most of the new programmes. However, the partners that the Team met value highly KSU students undertaking internships or involved in other activities in their organisations, emphasising that they have much broader knowledge and a 'broader approach' to work than their colleagues from other higher education institutions.

65. A small number of students enrolled on some programmes (par. 12) might indicate that there is some mismatch between what KSU offers and the demand in the higher education market. However, it is too early to judge that as the programmes have only recently been established and KSU is yet to develop a fully-fledged marketing strategy (paras 32-34).

Variety of lifelong learning forms and conditions

66. With 18 programmes accredited since 2012 and 14 currently provided (par. 10), KSU has expanded considerably its academic portfolio in recent years and does indeed offer a wide choice to students. As the Team learned from students, this is one of the main reasons why they chose to study at KSU. It also is evident to the Team from all its discussions that the University has a strong customer orientation. This is reflected in almost half of the programmes being now offered in both full-time and part-time study modes, and in other flexible study arrangements. Full-time programmes are delivered in the form of Monday-to-Friday classes as well as 'in sessions', with classes taught twice a month from Friday afternoon to Sunday, especially for those who combine study and work. 'Individual study plans', available in both full- and part-time programmes, are offered to those who have some study experience (e.g. resume their studies, are transferred from other institutions). Overall, in terms of variety, KSU may serve as an example of **good practice**.
67. KSU is definitely a student-friendly institution and, in line with its customer orientation, seeks to provide comprehensive support to its students. The Team finds much to **commend** in what the University offers now. As explained in the SER and during the visit, the Rector and the Vice-Rector for Studies and Research are available whenever students wish to discuss their problems. Coordinators of Full-time and Part-time Studies offer support in solving various organisational problems. Course teachers are available both in 'scheduled consultancy hours' and via email to discuss learning issues and, as mentioned earlier, students receive adequate feedback on their performance. The Competence Development Centre and the Entrepreneurship and Innovation Centre involve students in various non-formal learning activities which help them prepare for future careers. There are 20 to 100% tuition fee reductions for good results, and 50 to 100% reductions available to disabled students and those in difficult life situations, for participation in the University Ambassador programme,

etc. Family-like atmosphere, easy access to, and good relations with, both the Management Team and teachers, fee reductions and flexibility in payments are very much appreciated by the students that the Team met.

At the same time, while students are also satisfied with the learning support provided, the Team believes that more could be done in this respect. As mentioned by several groups during the visit, the quality of student applicants has declined in recent years; the dropout rates are high (20-25% in recent years) and, as confirmed by both the Management Team and students, the University puts a strong emphasis on quality and expects students to meet high academic requirements. In this context, KSU is encouraged to consider additional support for newly enrolled students 'at risk of failure' to help them make good progress through their programmes, which may be essential in view of an increasingly diversified student intake.

68. For an institution of its size, KSU is quite extensively engaged in lifelong learning activities, targeted at both adults and school children. Aside from full-time 'in sessions' and part-time degree programmes which may be followed by adults, it currently offers 11 adult education and 26 training courses in areas covered by its degree programmes (public administration, informatics, linguistics, management, business and management, marketing, communication, management law, communication, law). Recently launched courses on Cyber Security for companies and individuals, and a recent agreement with an IT company to extend the range of courses and set up a Cyber Security Academy show that KSU is determined to offer even wider non-formal learning opportunities. It also (co)organises open lectures (e.g. Intelligent Mondays, Fashionable Meetings or The Path of a Citizen presenting the legal profession) and various other skills development events (e.g. lectures at the 'Discover More' festival for schoolchildren in the Vilnius City and District given by the KSU Student Research Society at the Law Faculty; Creative Summer in 2015 co-organised with the KSU Institute of Creative Society and Economy). Various non-formal education activities involved a quite large number of participants (1,000-1,200 each year between 2012/13 and 2014/15; additional data provided to the Team).
69. It is also **commendable** that the University has in place recognition methodologies which facilitate access to (higher levels of) formal education: a system for those who have completed a higher education programme at other institutions and wish to take up further studies; a system for college graduates holding a professional Bachelor's degree who may have credits for similar courses recognised and study for a university degree; and a methodology for the recognition of competences acquired in non-formal education. Until now the methodology has been successfully used to recognise competences of 11 people (KSU Business Management programme).

Graduate career monitoring

70. 'Monitoring of graduates and current student careers', including surveys, is part of the Career Planning, Monitoring and Liaising with Graduates Process regulated by the Quality Manual. Until now KSU has had graduates only in Law, Business Management, and Organisational Innovation and Management. It has taken over a database of graduates from Vilnius Business Law Academy, and graduates are regularly invited to update their contact details. The University started conducting surveys among graduates in 2012 (SER) and plans to conduct them after the assessment of every final thesis (documentation for the one conducted in June 2015 provided to the Team). However, as the Team found in the meetings on Strategic Management and with graduates, the career tracking system is not yet fully operational, surveys have not been regularly carried out, and not all graduates have been invited to participate in them. Further, surveying only current graduates / graduating students has some evident disadvantages: it does not enable assessing the relevance of the knowledge and skills acquired by students in real work (employment and self-employment) contexts, and tracking

graduate careers. Thus, there is no basis yet to use effectively graduate feedback for programme improvement (see par. 41).

71. **Recommendation**: The Team recommends that KSU put fully in place a fully-fledged graduate career tracking system, including surveys to track graduate careers.
72. An Alumni Club was established in 2012 and, as stated in the SER and confirmed by graduates, it has an Internet platform where alumni can publish information about their careers, communicate with one another and receive university newsletters. All of the graduates interviewed are members of the Club. As they explained, the Club is not yet very active, but this is mainly because, aside from those in Law, it brings together a small number of (very) recent graduates.

Cooperation with partners and their impact on education and training

73. The SER states that since 2012 cooperation with social and business partners has been integrated into all university management processes (listed in the SER), and that it is an integral part of KSU's mission since building a 'lively academic community and solid social capital' requires good relations with partners. The latter is far too implicit, and KSU may consider including a clearer reference to the importance of relationships with partners in its revised mission. Cooperation with partners does indeed feature in the strategic goals and is translated into specific implementation measures in the Strategy; as mentioned earlier, it is likely to become one of the main strategic breakthrough directions in a revised Strategy.
74. In line with the Strategy, the University has created a quite extensive network of partners (a full list in the SER, Annex 12). It includes academic partners from Lithuania (8, based in Vilnius and Klaipeda) and abroad (par. 79), and as many as 77 Lithuanian social and business partners. The latter cover a variety of subject areas reflecting KSU's 'diversified portfolio' of degree programmes. As KSU does not yet have a clear strategy for selecting partners (paras 24-25), the Team is also glad to note that aside from smaller ones, the network involves national-level organisations (e.g. Communication Regulation Authority; Lithuanian Association of Chefs of Municipalities, National Association of Creative and Cultural Industries). They represent a broad spectrum of business and industry needs that KSU programmes may cater to, and may provide larger numbers of prospective part-time degree programme students and trainees for courses.
75. Judging from the examples given in the SER and during the visit (Academic Studies & LLL; Social and business partners), the impact of collaboration with academic partners can now be seen mainly in terms of providing better learning conditions to KSU students (e.g. the use of other institutions' library resources). Aside from mobility, the academic partners are involved mainly in joint research initiatives with KSU, but it is not entirely clear to the Team whether outcomes are fully used to provide a knowledge base for teaching. In the near future the academic partners are likely to be quite instrumental in further expanding the range of KSU's programmes as it has recently signed agreements to develop a joint Business Management programme with Helsinki School of Business, a joint PhD programme in Law with the Turība University, Latvia, and a joint PhD programme in Communication with the Vilnius Gediminas Technical University. The two PhD programmes are particularly important as KSU is not authorised to provide doctoral programmes alone, and it needs to train its own academic staff for further development of its research activity.
76. Social and business partners have an impact on the education provided by KSU. As explained in the SER and confirmed in the meeting with partners, they can take some credit for initiating or encouraging the development of new programmes (e.g. Aviation Management); they influence programme contents through their involvement in all Committees reviewing degree programmes (par. 39); teach some courses at the University; host student practical placements, and advise on topics of students' final theses (paras 110 &

111). All this, obviously, makes programmes more relevant to employers' needs and enhances graduates' employability. Social and business partners have also contributed to improving KSU's learning facilities (an Internet Engineering laboratory established jointly with the Communications Regulation Authority and companies; the Audiovisual Arts Industry Incubator used by the University). Some have provided input to training courses (e.g. Smart Tourism; a retraining for the Anykščiai municipality), and the Team's discussion with the partners showed that there were good prospects for wider cooperation in training (e.g. with representatives of the communications and justice sectors).

COMPLIANCE OF LEARNING CONDITIONS WITH PROVISIONS OF THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA

Alignment of strategic documents with the principles of the EHEA and EU documents

77. The Strategy embraces key issues of the European Higher Education Area: student-centred learning; learning outcomes; credit accumulation and transfer; employability; lifelong learning; recognition of prior learning; quality assurance; internationalisation, including mobility; and the knowledge triangle of education, research and innovation. As mentioned earlier, it would, however, benefit from references to recent EHEA documents.
78. Student-centred learning (SCL) was discussed at greater length in the Academic Studies & LLL meeting as it is a relatively new priority of the EHEA. KSU has evidently given some thought to the concept of SCL and has a realistic plan to implement it. The Team considers, though, that in its thinking on SCL, KSU may give more consideration to implications for curriculum design (e.g. modularisation) and for assessment practices (e.g. self-assessment, peer assessment, more formative assessment); while at least 20% of programmes are to be structured as modules by 2018 according to the Strategy, this did not come up as an important aspect in the discussion. Implementation started, very reasonably, with training in problem-based learning provided by international experts. SCL will be introduced gradually, first in the Business School and the Institute of Creative Society and Economy where it is expected to be fully in place by the end of 2018. When in place, SCL could become a hallmark of the University reflected in its mission (paras 16-17).

International mobility

79. The Team is impressed by how fast KSU has built a network of international partners. The University was awarded an Erasmus University Charter in 2012 and it now has 95 partners (SER, Annex 12) in more than 20 European countries, also beyond the EU, and in Asia (Taiwan and South Korea). The network would seem large enough for the current volume of mobility, but, as explained in the SER, some students, e.g. in Fashion Industry, still have a limited choice of destinations as few higher education institutions in Europe provide similar programmes. This could be addressed in a strategy for internationalisation which needs to be devised (paras 26-27).
80. KSU has focused so far on credit mobility but it has also recently attracted first degree-seeking students. Student exchange takes place not only within the framework of the Erasmus Programme, but also as part of the ASEM-DOU Scholarship Programme (Asia) and the Swiss-European Mobility Programme. **Commendably**, the University has set a clear target for student mobility and seeks to achieve full reciprocity (outgoing and incoming students representing 10% of the student population). Overall, it has progressed quite well towards the target, though more may need to be done to increase outward mobility (outgoing students: 0 in 2012/13; 6 in 2013/14; 16 in 2014/15; 10 in 2015/16 (until May 2015); incoming students: 9 in 2012/13; 11 in 2013/14; 24 in 2014/15; SER). This may be another 'piece' to fit into KSU's internationalisation strategy. With regard to inward mobility, KSU is well prepared to host more students; currently, all courses of the Aviation Management programme are being taught in English, and the programmes in Entrepreneurship and Management and

International Business Law could be delivered in English as well. An agreement on a joint programme in Business Management in English, recently signed with Helsinki School of Business, Finland, will further promote both outward and inward mobility.

81. The SER states that the University provides comprehensive support to students, including information and advice on mobility opportunities and destinations, and detailed discussions with host institutions to agree the programme to be followed abroad by each outgoing student; and integration events, and mentors and tutors for incoming students. The students that the Team met fully agree that this is the case, and appreciate very much the support they received from the KSU administrative units. Great care is taken to ensure that the programmes followed at KSU and abroad are compatible, so there are no recognition problems – another example of **good practice**.
82. As the Team learned during the visit (Academic Studies & LLL and Research meetings), staff are also provided with all necessary information and encouraged to develop their competence abroad, and participation in international activities is taken into account in staff appraisal. The number of outgoing staff has been growing fast and steadily (1 in 2012/13; 8 in 2013/14; 30 in 2014/15). This is indeed an achievement as KSU is, in general, struggling with the issue of part-time staff who are normally less willing or unable to go abroad. KSU has also managed to attract a good number of international staff (18 in 2012/13; 24 in 2013/14; 19 in 2014/15, though this includes researchers). Some of the graduates the Team met considered that international staff teaching courses was one of the University's main strengths, and it seems from the discussions with the Management Team that KSU is determined to have more international staff, either as part of exchange or as (more) permanent staff. This could be another aspect for consideration in the context of an internationalisation strategy and possible hallmarks of the University to be reflected in its vision and / or mission.
83. As explained in the SER, KSU sees the impact of mobility in terms creating a more dynamic, diverse and international study environment, new knowledge gained through lecture series and new initiatives undertaken (e.g. an Erasmus Mentors programme). In the discussion on 'internationalisation at home' (Academic Studies & LLL meeting), KSU seemed to understand this concept mainly in terms of hosting international students and staff and using international / English-language literature, teaching / learning materials, case studies, etc. The joint study programmes to be developed (par. 75) would fit into the concept as well. Additionally, KSU may also consider how it can use Erasmus+ funding to review its existing programmes and make them (even) more attractive in cooperation with international partners.

In summary, KSU's programmes and courses and related qualifications fall within the wide scope of its vision, mission and Strategy, but the link between them and programme design would need to be much clearer. The qualifications are, however, aligned with national development needs and mechanisms are in place to ensure, in particular, their relevance to labour market needs. In terms of the variety of provision and flexible study arrangements for degree students, the University may serve as a good practice example. There is also much to commend as regards support for students, but some room for improvement in academic support as well. A fully-fledged graduate career monitoring system is yet to be put in place. Given its size, the University does offer quite wide lifelong learning opportunities, and has mechanisms in place to facilitate access to further learning, including a methodology for recognition of prior learning. It has created a network of academic and social and business partners; while the former are yet to have a more substantial impact on the education and training provided by KSU, the latter do help to improve programmes in terms of their relevance to labour market needs. The Strategy embraces the key principles of the EHEA, and student-centred learning and problem-based learning, though both still being at an early stage of development, are given much consideration. The University has set a measurable target for student mobility, is developing both student and staff mobility, and some impact is already visible. As the target for student mobility is quite

ambitious, more still needs to be done to reach it, in particular as regards outward mobility, and this could be one of the aspects addressed in an internationalisation strategy to be designed.

Judgement on the area: *Academic Studies and Lifelong Learning is given positive evaluation.*

V. RESEARCH AND ART

RESEARCH RELEVANCE

Alignment of research with the mission and strategic documents

84. The University's mission (par. 8) captures its research activity insofar as it refers to 'creating new knowledge ...'; here again, being so generic, the statement may embrace a wide variety of research goals, priorities and activities. The Strategy explicitly addresses research through its goals. KSU seeks to establish 'a modern system of interdisciplinary research and studies'; become 'a nucleus of regional development of knowledge and innovations' linking research, business and public authorities; promote synergy between research, education and innovation, with strong involvement of social and business partners; provide a creative and innovative research and study environment; and establish itself as an internationally recognised research institution. These are further translated into a number of specific tasks. Since 2012 the University has made progress towards its goals, and the SER and the evidence collected during the visit show that most of the tasks and related activities have been or are likely to be completed as planned.
85. Research priorities have been refined to highlight an interdisciplinary dimension; as the Team learned from staff in the meeting on Research, the four broad areas defined do indeed encourage them to create interdisciplinary teams. The Team agrees with the MOSTA report on research that this may help KSU to create a niche for itself. It was also evident to the Team that the new research priorities were 'widely known and understood' internally, but less evident that social and business partners were equally familiar with them. Thus, the relevant 2012 review recommendation (par. 15) has been partly implemented and, as emphasised earlier, KSU needs an effective communication strategy (see paras 33-34).
86. Some elements supporting research management have been put in place; for example, a policy and an action plan for transfer and commercialisation of R & D results; intellectual property management rules; a Scientific Activity Management Process approved as part of the internal quality assurance system; selection and performance appraisal criteria for research staff. As KSU's staff assured the Team in the Research meeting, the criteria are quite strict and staff need to demonstrate 'research excellence'. This is further confirmed by the MOSTA report referring to promising junior researchers recently employed by KSU. The University has also created structures (the Research and Development Centre, and the Project Development Department; paras 9 & 46) to support research activities and search for funding. As the Team learned in the meeting on Research, their support is much appreciated by staff. Research infrastructure has improved with the establishment of the Internet Engineering Laboratory mentioned earlier.
87. KSU is also establishing a network of research partners and expanding its research activity. It is launching or has carried out a number of research and research consultancy projects, including: a project on Cyber Security funded by the Ministry of National Defence, a large-scale project funded by the Research Council of Lithuania (*Virpesinės socialinių sistemų elgesio imitavimo paradigmos kūrimas*, 2011-2015), two international projects (par. 99), and five contract research projects for businesses (listed in Annex 14). Three spin-offs for commercialisation of research results have been established, and two of them have been awarded MITA (Agency of Research, Innovation and Technology) funding. There is, as well, some improvement in the dissemination of research results (7 articles in ISI journals). (SER)

88. Finally, in line with the 2012 review recommendation concerning doctoral students (par. 15), KSU has signed agreements on the development of joint PhD programmes (par. 75). Even if, obviously, it takes quite some time to develop the programmes, the University is to be **commended** for taking a major step towards training its own research staff and increasing research output.
89. All this shows that the foundations for further development are there, as noted by MOSTA as well. There is potential which may be exploited successfully if KSU is strategically focused and able to tackle a number of challenges. The challenges are typical of a non-state institution which cannot compete for public funding on an equal footing with state institutions, of a small institution, and of an institution which has only recently evolved from a specialised / one-discipline institution and is in a start-up phase of a university.
90. As mentioned earlier (par. 23), the University needs now a more strategic focus in research management. A bottom-up, ad-hoc and opportunity-driven approach still prevails, though broad research priorities are defined and there is some coordination at institutional level (regular meetings and discussions on how proposals may fit into the priorities). Strategic management may be a tough challenge as, unavoidably, research is largely driven by funding opportunities (see below). In the context of research management, KSU may also benefit from a crisper vision of how to balance and blend research consultancy and applied research with more fundamental research. While the various groups that the Team met (Rector & Administration; GMS; Strategic Management; Research) agree that the applicability and commercialisation of research are of vital importance for a non-state institution, it is also clear from the discussions that KSU's ambitions extend beyond 'applied research only' or 'applied knowledge only'. This is also reflected in its ambitious strategic goals. Until now, the emphasis seems to have been placed on applied research and consultation, and KSU still seems to lack a theoretical base in some areas such as management studies.
91. As KSU acknowledged in the SER and in various meetings with the Team, funding is currently a big issue, highlighted in the MOSTA report as well. Aside from supporting the development of research proposals, each year the University provides co-funding for research projects. A reasonable costing mechanism for research projects is in place (see the related 2012 review recommendation in par. 15). The budget is, nonetheless, very limited and KSU relies heavily on external funding, awarded on a competitive basis. However, it has a clear idea of how it can gradually resolve the funding issue and is putting it into action. The strategy involves diversifying income streams (less income from tuition fees and more from training and research consultancy services and projects); attracting private business to joint research commercialisation and other joint projects; and, establishing by 2018 an Inviolable Capital Foundation to support research and education, and a Venture Capital Fund to invest in spin-offs and start-ups created and run by KSU staff and students (SER).
- As KSU has managed to attract project funding and put in place arrangements for commercialisation of research results, the income from sources other than tuition fees has indeed grown in recent years (SER, Annex 6). Three spin-offs have been established. In the last few months KSU has submitted 12 projects for funding, including 10 to the Lithuanian Council for Culture (additional information provided to the Team before the visit). Overall, the University is to be **commended** for its approach to tackling the funding issue.
92. Financial constraints, obviously, have impact on staffing and related issues as now KSU can hardly offer competitive salaries to researchers (but an attractive 'package' is envisaged in the Strategy). As it acknowledges (SER; Research meeting), it may still take some time to create a core of research staff (5.5 FTE now, mainly part-time staff). Research results are 'not yet satisfactory' and, although their number is growing, still more articles and presentations would need to be published under KSU's name (see the related 2012 recommendation in par. 15). This is a challenge as a large proportion of KSU staff engaged in research are also

employed by other higher education institutions which expect their staff to publish under their label. The research staff that the Team met are highly committed and feel supported and encouraged by the Management Team to develop their research activity. While their opinions on whether financial incentives are needed vary, the Team believes that high expectations and requirements (par. 86) would need to be coupled with a scheme to reward staff for high-quality research work (see also the relevant 2012 recommendation in par. 15). In more general terms, in line with KSU's strategic goals, this would also be a way of building a research culture which is still quite weak at the University. In more practical terms, the scheme may also encourage research activity in the fields which are lagging behind (Economic Linguistics and Economics, and Internet Engineering mentioned in the SER as currently 'the strongest research fields').

93. **Recommendation:** The Team recommends that KSU set aside funding and put in place an incentive scheme for research staff as a way of encouraging balanced development of research across the institution and of building an institutional research culture.
94. In line with the strategic goals, an incentive scheme could also be used to ensure a closer link between education and research. As mentioned earlier, it was not entirely clear to the Team that research findings were used to provide a theoretical base for programmes in all fields of study. The SER also acknowledges that while the Student Research Society at the Law Faculty is very active (various examples given), student research is not yet developed in other units. All this is, to a large extent, understandable as the programmes in most of the other fields have only recently been established.
95. Finally, for KSU as a small institution, domestic and international partnerships are of vital importance. While, in general, KSU has established links with a quite large number of academic and social and business partners (paras 74 & 79), it is only now creating a network of research partners. So far its research and research consultancy projects have involved a rather small circle of European academic institutions (par. 99) and a few social and business partners. The academic network may, however, expand further if the recently submitted project proposals, mentioned above, are successful (Baltic States and Scandinavian countries). As the Team emphasised earlier (paras 24-27), the choice of partners would now need to be guided by clear strategic priorities and criteria defined in an internationalisation strategy and a strategy for selecting social and business partners. In this context, the Team also notes that none of the social and business partners interviewed has been approached by KSU to discuss possible research projects. In more general terms, the role of social and business partners in research could be more clearly defined as part of ongoing discussions to revise the Strategy where relationships with partners are likely to be the main strategic breakthrough direction (see also a related recommendation in par. 108).

Alignment of research with national and / regional development priorities

96. KSU's research is closely aligned with national development priorities identified in a number of recent strategic documents which are referred to in the SER. The MITA grant and the project funded by the Ministry of National Defence mentioned above are good examples of the relevance of KSU's activities to national needs. When all its departments are equally active and contribute to the interdisciplinary dimension of research, the University's research may cater for a quite wide spectrum of national needs identified in the national documents (e.g. business development, entrepreneurship, smart economy, smart society, creative innovations). Several research consultancy projects involving social and business partners show that KSU seeks to respond to regional / local development needs as well. However, since it aims to become 'a nucleus of regional development of knowledge and innovations' (Strategy), it would need to give more consideration to how its current and prospective research activities are embedded in regional / local development policies (no reference in the SER or during the visit).

Impact of partners on research

97. As mentioned above, KSU is only now establishing a network of research partners. The SER identifies a number of areas where partners have impact on the University's research activities. These include strategic governance (external stakeholders in the governing bodies); joint research, research consultancy and infrastructure projects, and new proposals involving academic and / or social and business partners; participation in research consortia of academic partners and bilateral cooperation (e.g. joint conferences, articles, commercialisation projects or agreements on the development of PhD programmes); commercialisation of research (e.g. spin-offs); and students' research activities (e.g. the Student Research Society at the Faculty of Law involved in various activities with social and business partners).

The SER focuses, however, on the types of research or research-related activities carried out jointly with partners rather than on their impact on the University (i.e. changes that have taken place as a result of partner involvement and joint activities). As KSU explained in the meeting devoted to Research, the impact achieved was mainly in terms of establishing new links and generating new project proposals. This is understandable as KSU is still in a start-up phase, but in the coming years more consideration would need to be given to impact in broader terms, e.g. partners' input to the definition of research priorities (not only through the governing bodies), impact of joint projects on KSU's research capacity, on research competence of staff and the quality of research, impact of joint research on education and training, etc.

INTERNATIONAL LINKS AND COMPLIANCE WITH THE PRINCIPLES OF THE EUROPEAN RESEARCH AREA

Alignment of strategic documents with ERA priorities

98. The Strategy of the University is aligned with the priorities of the European Research Area in its strong focus on the knowledge triangle of education, research and innovation, involvement of social and business partners, and internationalisation, including mobility. However, while the SER refers to a number of specific ERA-related documents (even if these do not include the most recent ones), there is no explicit reference to the ERA itself or related documents in the Strategy. This can be addressed when the Strategy is revised at the beginning of 2016.

Participation in international research projects, and international mobility

99. KSU engaged in international research activities only in 2012 (no activities undertaken by its predecessor, Vilnius Business Law Academy). Internationalisation is one of the University's strategic breakthrough directions. Since 2012 it has joined two consortia: The International Consortium of Higher Education Institutions and Rectors and Presidents of Universities, including, aside from KSU, three international institutions (Poland, Kyrgyzstan and Romania); and The University Consortium Africa and Mediterranean (C.U.A.M), *Consorzio Universitario Africa E Mediterraneo*, which involves, among others, institutions from Belarus, Greece and Israel. The consortia intend to apply jointly for research project funding; though these are not necessarily most powerful networks, in this way KSU has 'set foot' in various regions, and pooling resources to seek funding was a good move in the initial phase of internationalisation. KSU has also carried out two large-scale projects: Social Innovation: Driving Force of Social Change SI-DRIVE (EU 7th Framework Programme), involving, among others, Dutch, German and UK institutions; and EUWIN, the European Workplace Innovation Network (funded by the European Commission), which involves institutions and social and business partners from various European countries, and where KSU collaborates, in particular, with UK partners. (SER) For a junior partner in the game, this is a real achievement, especially considering that Central and Eastern European institutions have rather low success rates in the Framework Programme and EC-funded research initiatives.

Since some of the partners have high standing in research, this may also help KSU on its way towards international recognition, in line with its strategic goals.

Recently, the University and its partners in the Baltic States and Scandinavian countries have submitted two proposals for funding to the NordPlus Adult Education Programme and the Nordic Cultural Point Network (Additional information provided before the visit). It seems that the two projects, if funded, would be important in terms of using research results to improve KSU's adult education / training courses and in terms of impact on areas where it still needs to develop research activities.

100. As the Team found in the meeting on Research, the University promotes outward research mobility insofar as staff are provided with information about mobility opportunities, participation in international activities is taken into account in staff performance appraisal, and staff may take a sabbatical leave. However, aside from participation in conferences, outward mobility started only in 2014/15 and only five staff members went abroad then within the framework of mobility programmes (SER, Table 1). Similarly, only four international staff have come to the University within the framework of European and Research Council of Lithuania programmes. It is worth noting, however, that the Law Faculty has hosted Maria-Curie Sklodowska grant holders, which may encourage KSU staff to apply for fellowships to conduct research or undertake research training under the MCS Action. In the context of research mobility, the SER also refers to more than 40 staff from Europe who visited the University since 2012; strictly speaking, this is teaching / training mobility (e.g. lectures), though it has helped to establish research links and provided the basis for research activities in the future. As KSU acknowledges, the volume of mobility is not yet satisfactory. Evidently, much would need to be done in this area, but the Team is aware that the very small number of research staff at KSU (5.5 FTE) is a major constraint in this respect as well.

In summary, KSU's research activities fit adequately into its generic mission and are aligned with its Strategy. The University has set for itself ambitious strategic goals in the area of research, has progressed towards them as planned, laying some 'concrete foundations' to build on, but it still has a quite long way to go to achieve its goals. It has defined research priorities in line with the strategic goals and put in place some elements to underpin research management. It has employed a few promising researchers and signed agreements on PhD programmes with a view to training its own research staff. A network of research partners is being established, and a few research and research consultancy projects have been carried out or launched. At the same time, the University is still struggling to manage its research more strategically. Heavy reliance on external funding is a big issue in this context, with research being largely driven by opportunities; however, KSU has, and is putting into motion, a good plan to tackle the funding challenge. Related to this are staffing problems, with a small number of mostly part-time staff putting obvious constraints on KSU's research output and its visibility. While staff are highly committed, an incentive scheme would go some way to solve the problems, promote quality and, in more general terms, build a research culture. KSU needs a targeted approach to partnerships, as part of an internationalisation and a strategy for selecting social and business partners. Its research activities are aligned with national needs and it seeks to respond to regional / local development needs. As it has only recently started joint research activities with academic, social and business partners, their impact is still quite limited. Although it does not include explicit references to the European Research Area, KSU's Strategy is aligned with ERA priorities. Internationalisation of research is at an early stage; while the projects carried out and proposals submitted are a good start, much needs to be done to increase research mobility once KSU has resolved its most urgent staffing problems.

Judgement on the area: *Research and Art is given positive evaluation.*

VI. IMPACT ON REGIONAL AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Measures to achieve impact as defined in the mission and strategic documents

101. KSU's vision and mission (par. 8), regardless of how generic they are, seem to indicate that it seeks to achieve impact at national level (e.g. Vision: '...would allow the University to become the centre of shaping the future of the state and the society ...'; Mission: 'Activities ... aimed at increasing the learning leadership and competitiveness of the Lithuanian society ...'). However, as mentioned earlier, the goals in the Strategy refer to the University as 'a nucleus of regional development of knowledge and innovations'. KSU would benefit from more clarity about national versus regional focus of its activities (see also par. 23). This can be addressed when the Strategy is revisited in the coming months.
102. The 2012 review team recommended that KSU formulate a crisper tactical action plan for increasing its impact on the region (par. 15). As KSU explained in the meeting on Impact, a tactical plan is yet to be developed, and there is 'more focus on a strategic rather than tactical plan'. The goals, breakthrough directions and related implementation measures in the Strategy are indeed clearly geared towards impact at national and / or regional level. The measures, as grouped in the SER include: '1) *entrepreneurship and innovation support and promotion on a regional and national scale*; 2) *implementation of the Triple Helix in the area of studies and scientific research [...]*; 3) *promotion of gifted students and reduction of social exclusion*; 4) *commercialisation of knowledge and R&D results [...]*; 5) *lifelong learning measures [...]*; 6) *communication and publicising of results of research activities*; 7) *active participation in the sectorial organisations, business and other associations, organisations [...]*'.

This is a wide range of measures, and if all are implemented with a strategic focus, KSU may achieve tangible impact at national and / or regional level. The Team suggests adding the education (degree programmes) provided to the list of measures; this is its core activity and it provides graduates who, when employed or self-employed, can, obviously, contribute to national and / or regional development in several sectors. In this context, KSU would also benefit from a clear vision for the development of the Klaipeda Faculty. On the one hand, as emphasised in the SER, the Law programme in Klaipeda is the only full-time programme in this field of study in the region. On the other hand, as explained during the visit, KSU did not succeed in establishing a programme in Creative Industries there. Various ideas are on the table now.

103. Some 'Results' defined in the Strategy, which serve as indicators (par. 28), may be used to measure impact (e.g. 'at least 3 spin-offs' ... and 'at least 1 enterprise established in the KSU business acceleration programme' ...). Other, however, refer to the volume of activities intended to achieve impact (e.g. 'at least 3 adult education / training courses provided per year'; 'at least 2 research projects implemented per year') rather than to their impact (i.e. change resulting from an activity, e.g. innovations introduced in a company based on KSU's research results or jobs created). The University is encouraged to reflect on indicators to measure the impact of its activities (see also a related comment about data collection below).

Effectiveness of measures, and alignment of impact with national and / or regional priorities

104. There is evidence (SER, Annex 15; Impact on National and Regional Development, Academic Studies & LLL, and Research meetings) that, overall, the measures planned have been or are being implemented within each of the seven strands as planned in the Strategy. As part of entrepreneurship and innovation support promotion, KSU participated in several projects and / or studies (e.g. 'VersloLAB'as' and 'Innovative Business Promotion'; 'AMWAY Global Entrepreneurship Report 2014') and events (e.g. 'Private Business: how to start', 'Baltic-Swiss Innovation Matchmaking'). To implement the Triple Helix model, the

University collaborates with social and business partners in various ways, including: joint development of degree programmes (e.g. Aviation Management, and Psychology); the KSU student internship scheme and the definition of topics for final theses (paras 110 & 111); implementation of research projects (listed in Annex 14); and joint infrastructure development (e.g. the Internet Engineering Laboratory established jointly with partners), etc. It has also signed agreements on joint projects with municipalities (Anykščiai and Visaginas). Further, it supports both gifted and disadvantaged students through its tuition fee policy (par. 67), and participates in public campaigns (e.g. 'Let's Do It'; student actions for the homeless). It is also one of the founders of the National Anti-Corruption Organisation which is now involved in the development of a national anti-corruption strategy 2015-2025. To publicise research findings, it participates in events such as 'Let It Be Night' and 'Researchers' Night'. For examples of lifelong learning activities and participation in organisations, see paras 68 & 112 respectively.

105. It is clear to the Team that all those measures address, in one way or another, the priorities identified in several national strategic documents which are referred to in the SER. These include, for example, knowledge society; lifelong learning; business development; knowledge triangle; social and territorial coherence; development of creativity and culture. However, it is difficult to assess the impact of the measures mentioned above or, in more general terms, of KSU's activities (including education / degree programmes) on national and / or regional development. This is partly because KSU is a young institution of small size and the 'sample' available for analysis is rather small (few projects and other initiatives; students in most of the new programmes yet to graduate and enter the labour market), and partly because of gaps in data collection.

As the Team learned in the meeting on Impact, to measure impact, KSU collects data such as the number of participants in a course or other activity, feedback after an activity, and the number of projects developed as a spin-off effect of an activity (e.g. an initiative to develop a local strategy after a training event). However, the quantitative and qualitative data collected was not readily available and it was not clear to the Team whether and how available data was analysed to assess (and demonstrate) impact of the University's activities and to plan further activities. Graduate employment rates, together with data from the graduate career tracking system (e.g. sectors where graduates are (self-)employed, their positions and salaries as a measure of success) could be used to illustrate impact of KSU's degree programmes, but the career tracking system is not yet in place. In this context, the Team notes, though, that KSU monitors provision by competitor institutions, even if not specifically with a view to assessing potential impact of its degrees on the local economy but more with regard to potential niches for itself (see the related 2012 review recommendation in par. 15).

The available 2012-2014 data on students in a breakdown by hometown indicates that KSU's impact extends beyond the regional level (185 of 411 students, i.e. 45% coming from Vilnius; the rest from almost 50 towns across Lithuania, with a bigger 'representation' from five towns, including Kaunas and Klaipeda) (additional data provided to the Team). Similarly, for example, some projects and training courses (see examples in the Academic Studies & LLL and Research sections) have or are likely to have impact at national level, but the current 'mix' does not yet give a clear picture.

106. **Recommendation:** The Team recommends that KSU define clearly a set of data necessary to assess its impact on national and / or regional development and put in place a mechanism for collection and analysis of such data.
107. The evidence collected gives a mixed picture with regard to involvement of social and business partners as a key factor determining the University's impact on national and / or regional development. On the one hand, as frequently mentioned above, it has included

their representatives in its governing bodies and Study Programme Committees, established links with a large number of partners, and involves them in various activities, even if this does not yet apply to the same extent to all KSU academic departments / units. Also, the partners interviewed emphasised KSU's responsiveness to their feedback as its big advantage over other higher education institutions and were very satisfied with their joint activities (e.g. the KSU internship scheme; the Art incubator; the training in the Anykščiai district municipality). On the other hand, as highlighted several times before as well, KSU does not yet have a transparent strategy for choosing partners. As the discussion with partners showed, partners (aside from those in the KSU governing bodies) are not consulted about strategic issues and are approached by KSU to discuss various matters on an ad-hoc basis. They are not yet systematically canvassed (e.g. through a survey or a meeting bringing all of them together) for their views on what training, consultancy and research services the University could offer to them, and which could increase its impact on national and / or regional development.

108. **Recommendation:** The Team recommends that KSU put in place a mechanism for regular collection and analysis of feedback from its social and business partners (outside of its governing bodies) on possible training, consultancy and research services which it may deliver to them.
109. In the context of impact, the 2012 review team recommended that KSU ensure that its research activities are identifiably associated with it and not merely seen as activities of its staff as individuals or employees of other institutions (par. 15). In various meetings, KSU acknowledged that it needed more visibility, in particular in the media. This would be addressed through a communication and marketing strategy (see paras 33-34).

Relevance of student internship and final thesis topics to national and / or regional development

110. Students are required to undertake one or two internships as part of their degree programmes. Both the students and the social and business partners that the Team met confirmed that topics of internships were chosen in consultation with partners and so as to reflect national or regional development priorities, and that internships focused on practical rather than theoretical problems. KSU is also to be **commended** for its structured approach to internships which ensures benefits for both hosting organisations and students. Internships are undertaken and **evaluated** in accordance with regulations approved by each academic unit and an 'internship assignment' approved by an internship supervisor. They can be undertaken at a site proposed by a host organisation and included in a list available on the University's website or chosen by the student and approved by the supervisor. Topics are related to students' final theses to link the research conducted and practical training (SER; Meeting on Impact on National & Regional Development). As social and business partners confirmed during the visit, they define 'the profile' of a student to be hosted, internship activities are agreed with them and monitored, and host organisations provide feedback on student performance upon completion of an internship. Some changes recently made in the internship scheme at the Institute of Creative Society and Economy (SER) show that KSU responds to feedback from students to maximise benefits for them.
111. As confirmed during the visit as well, students can choose topics of their final theses from a list or propose a topic in line with their specific interests, and KSU takes care to ensure that topics finally chosen are relevant to national, regional or local development needs. This is also evidenced by examples of areas or topics given in the SER (e.g. business law analysis, financial crime prevention; marketing development in a company; brand creation and development). In some cases, social and business partners were directly involved in defining topics and best students were awarded a scholarship (e.g. in Law; no other examples as there were yet no graduates in other fields represented in the meeting). Masters students who combine study and work analyse specific problems in their

workplace (e.g. AB Lietuvos Geležinkeliai and AB Paroc in the case of students in the Organisational Innovation and Management programme) and propose improvements in their final theses (SER).

Recognition for participation of staff in voluntary activities

112. It is evident from the SER and its Annex 15 that KSU staff are involved in a quite wide variety of voluntary activities (though the SER also mistakenly refers in this context to research, training and other activities undertaken as part of the University's core business). These range from entrepreneurship and innovation projects and events, and events publicising research findings (examples in par. 104) to public campaigns (examples above as well) and pro-bono consultancy (e.g. 'Law Clinics' for bigger audiences at KSU). Staff are also active members of international and national, sectoral and other organisations (e.g. International Federation for Theatre Research, National Creative and Cultural Industries Association or Lithuanian Business Confederation). Moreover, they provide input into national policies and legislation as experts supporting public bodies (e.g. MOSTA, Knowledge Economy Forum, Ministry of Finance or the Lithuanian Parliament). As the Team learned in the meeting on Impact, participation in voluntary activities is taken into account in staff performance appraisal, and the University supports such activities by providing premises and equipment for various initiatives. Ideally, it would also offer some financial incentives and it is encouraged to address this when it puts in place an incentive scheme for staff (as planned in its Strategy).

In summary, the vision and mission on the one hand and the Strategy on the other hand would need to clarify more consistently whether the University seeks to achieve impact at national and / or regional level. Despite that, the goals and related measures in the Strategy are geared towards impact and aligned with national and regional needs; there is a wide range of adequate measures and they are implemented as planned. It is, however, difficult to assess impact as KSU has only recently started its activities, the indicators available do not yet cover all relevant measures, and some relevant data is not yet collected (and available data not yet analysed to assess impact). Insofar as it may be judged from the evidence available, the impact of some activities extends beyond the regional level. KSU has good relationships with social and business partners but needs a more strategic approach to partnerships, and a more structured approach to collection of feedback from partners (outside its governing bodies) on its own strategic plans on the one hand, and on training, consultancy and research services that it can offer to them on the other hand. Topics of student internships and final theses are chosen with regard to national, regional and / or local development needs. Finally, KSU encourages its staff to participate in voluntary activities and offers some support, though, ideally, it would also find a way of rewarding them for participation as part of an incentive scheme to be developed.

Judgement on the area: Impact on Regional and National Development is given positive evaluation.

VII. GOOD PRACTICE AND ENHANCEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE

- The SWOT analysis included in the Strategy which provides a good general insight into external and internal factors (par. 20);
- Strategic agility as evidenced by successful expansion of the University's degree programme portfolio (par. 23);
- Operationalisation of the Strategy: a planning and reporting methodology which ensures a close link between the Strategy and its Strategic Action Plan on the one hand and departmental Annual Plans and Reports on the other hand (par. 29);

- A reasonable balance between standardisation and flexibility in the University's ISO-based internal quality assurance system, making the system manageable for a small institution (par. 35);
- Strong involvement of partners in ongoing improvement and / or delivery of some programmes (e.g. Aviation Management, Fashion Industry and Law) (par. 39);
- Efficient decision-making, and responsiveness to feedback from social and business partners (par. 47);
- Open participatory culture, with ample opportunities for staff and students to express their views and contribute to decisions on both academic and university management matters (par. 48);
- Good understanding of the vital importance of human resources and fast progress in putting in place a human resources management system (par. 50);
- Effective management of change, with substantial changes implemented within a short time (par. 55);
- The shared use made of the Arts Industry Incubator (owned by a business partner and used for teaching by KSU) (par. 56);
- A wide variety of programmes offered and flexible study arrangements (par. 66);
- A culture of student-friendliness, with easy access to, and good relations with teachers and the Management Team, and support, all being very much appreciated by students (par. 67);
- Recognition methodologies facilitating access to (higher levels of) formal education, including a methodology for the recognition of prior learning (par. 69);
- A clear target set for outward and inward student mobility (par. 80), and good arrangements in place to ensure the recognition of study periods (par. 81);
- A clear plan, now being put in motion, to generate the University's own income for research and, thus, reduce its reliance on external funding opportunities where grants are awarded on a competitive basis (par. 91);
- Relevance of student internship and final thesis topics to national and regional development needs and the specific needs of social and business partners; and a structured approach to student internships (planning, organisation and evaluation) (paras 110 & 111).

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Team recommends that KSU:

Strategic Management

- in line with its intentions and as part of the planned adjustments to its strategy, revise its mission and vision so that they are both more specific and institution-specific, and are based on (a) clearly identified niche(s) and hallmark(s) of the University (par. 17);
- design and implement a clear strategy for selecting social and business partners, and evaluate the strategy at appropriate intervals, to ensure that partnerships are established specifically to pursue the University's strategic goals for education and research on the one hand, and to maximise the impact of its activities at regional and / or national level on the other hand. (par. 25);
- devise and implement a strategy for internationalisation, which covers both education and research, to manage its expanding international activities, including international partnerships, in line with its strategic goals (par. 27);
- produce and update on an annual basis a document which presents progress made in the implementation of the Strategy, as measured by the available indicators, at institutional level (par. 31);
- urgently devise a fully-fledged communication and marketing strategy (par. 34);

- further improve learning conditions, in particular in terms of working space for students, the quality of Internet connection, and supporting facilities for students (a cloakroom, canteen, etc.) (par. 58);

Academic Studies and Lifelong Learning

- bring into closer alignment its vision, mission, Strategy and programme design (learning outcomes, course contents, teaching / learning methods and student assessment) (par. 63);
- put fully in place a fully-fledged graduate career tracking system, including surveys to track graduate careers (par. 71);

Other recommendations relevant to Academic Studies & LLL under Strategic Management (paras 17, 25, 27 & 34) and Impact on National and Regional Development (paras 106 & 108).

Research

- set aside funding and put in place an incentive scheme for research staff as a way of encouraging balanced development of research across the institution and of building an institutional research culture (par. 93);

Other recommendations relevant to research included under Strategic Management (paras 17, 25, 27 & 34) and Impact on National and Regional Development (paras 106 & 108).

Impact on National and Regional Development

- define clearly a set of data necessary to assess its impact on national and / or regional development and put in place a mechanism for collection and analysis of such data (par. 106);
- put in place a mechanism for regular collection and analysis of feedback from its social and business partners (outside of its governing bodies) on possible training, consultancy and research services which it may deliver to them (par. 108).

Other recommendations relevant to Impact on National and Regional Development under Strategic Management (paras 17, 25, 27 & 34).

VIII. JUDGEMENT

Kazimieras Simonavičius University is given positive evaluation.

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ANNEX. KAZIMIERAS SIMONAVIČIUS UNIVERSITY RESPONSE TO REVIEW REPORT



Kazimiero Simonavičiaus
UNIVERSITETAS

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2016-01-04 Nr. 100
to 2015-12-07 No. SV4-335

COMMENTS ABOUT FACTUAL MISTAKES IN THE TEXT OF INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW REPORT OF KAZIMIERAS SIMONAVIČIUS UNIVERSITY

We would like to draw the attention to Kazimieras Simonavičius University institutional review report text containing following inaccurate information:

1. Vilnius Business Law Academy had just one integrated Law study programme so the sentence in 6 paragraph „It was established in 2003 as Vilnius Business Law Academy (VBLA) providing only long-cycle / integrated (Master’s degree) **programmes in Law.**” should be changed into “<...> providing **only one** long-cycle / integrated (Master’s degree) **programme in Law.**”
2. Information about study implementation forms in 10 paragraph: “Until the academic year 2014/15, all of the programmes except in Law had been offered as both full- and part-time.” should be formulated: “For the period until the end of 2013/2014 academic year all KSU study programmes were offered in full-time and part-time form. During the enrolment for the 2014/2015 academic year all study programmes were offered in full-time and part-time form with the exception of the Law study programme, which was offered only in full-time form.”
3. **All courses** in KSU Aviation Management study programme **are provided only in English** so information in paragraph 10 „**Some courses of the Bachelor’s degree programme in Aviation Management are now being provided in English; <...>**” and in 80 paragraph “With regard to inward mobility, KSU is well prepared to host more students; currently, **only some courses of the Aviation Management programme are being taught in English, <...>** is not accurate.

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4. Full names of KSU study programmes „**Aviation Management**“ and „**Creative and Cultural Industries**“ should be used when mentioning them in the text of 23 paragraph “Various niches to be exploited or created are being considered in this context (e.g. programmes in **Aviation, Creative Industries**, Internet Engineering or Cyber Security – see par. 10; <...>”

Rector

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