

See discussions, stats, and author profiles for this publication at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/352886737>

Development and implementation of internationalization in Bosnia and Herzegovina higher education

Article in *International Journal of Educational Management* · July 2021

DOI: 10.1108/IJEM-01-2021-0002

CITATIONS

2

READS

49

3 authors, including:



Dejan Bokonjić

University of East Sarajevo

18 PUBLICATIONS 190 CITATIONS

SEE PROFILE

Some of the authors of this publication are also working on these related projects:



Competency based Curriculum Reform in Nursing and Caring in Western Balkan Universities - CCNURCA TEMPUS [View project](#)



Strengthening Capacities for Tourism changes in WB - Building Competences for Quality Management of Heritage and Cultural Tourism - CULTURWB [View project](#)

AQ: 15

Development and implementation of internationalization in Bosnia and Herzegovina higher education

Bosnia and Herzegovina higher education

Nenad Markovic and Dejan Bokonjic

AQ: 2 *Medical Faculty, University of East Sarajevo, Foca, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and*

AQ: 1

Geert De Lepeleer

Ghent Technology Campus of the Faculty of Engineering Technology, Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Leuven, Belgium

Received 4 January 2021

Revised 18 April 2021

13 June 2021

Accepted 16 June 2021

Abstract

Purpose – The main reason for writing this paper was the systematic determination of the state of internationalization of public higher education for the first time in Bosnia and Herzegovina (B&H). This paper aims to compare the state of internationalization with the results of comparative European and world research in higher education in order to determine the direction of public universities in B&H following globalization and connection with the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), as well as to determine future steps for mandatory inclusion into global higher education flows. Furthermore, the aim was to determine the treatment of mobility and student exchange programs and the ways of recognizing acquired qualifications abroad.

AQ: 4

Design/methodology/approach – The paper opted for a research study by conducting questionnaires that were divided into questions of elimination, questions of qualification and questions of the main survey. A total of 2,822 final year students were surveyed, as well as 386 representatives of the management of public universities. Within the paper, 25 different SWOT analyses of internationalization were performed by public universities, ministries and state/regional agencies, which was the basis for the SWOT analysis of the internationalization of B&H public higher education. The data were supplemented with a qualitative analysis of the obtained results compared with the International Association of Universities (IAUs) and European Association for International Education (EAIE) research, as well as an overview of the most significant achievements in the field of internationalization of higher education.

AQ: 5

Findings – The paper provides empirical results on the barriers of students to study abroad, the existence of strategies and indicators for internationalization, the benefits of internationalization, internal and external drivers of internationalization and the potential risks of internationalization. These empirical results for B&H were compared with complementary IAUs and EAIE research and provided the basis for SWOT analysis of internationalization, development of institutional internationalization strategies and indicators, B&H recognition model, new criteria for accreditation with emphasis on internationalization and criteria for assessing internationalization. The paper suggests that virtual mobility and internationalization at home are future logical trends of development internationalization in B&H.

Research limitations/implications – Suggestions for future research related to the examination of identified potential risks to the management of the internationalization of individual institutions, as well as to future comparisons of the new state of internationalization of higher education in B&H with current similar research in Europe and the world. Regarding the limitations in the research, it was possible that a larger number of participants participated in the survey with questionnaires, although the target set at the beginning of the survey was achieved.

Practical implications – Most of the research results are the basis for improving the practical situation in the internationalization of public higher education in B&H. The paper presents a special chapter (undertaken improvement activities) dedicated to the practical implications based on the conducted research and comparison of results. Considering that this is a preliminary work related to the internationalization of higher education, based on the researched results, the context of the internationalization of public higher education in B&H was changed by the activities described in the mentioned chapter. The contribution to these activities was given by the approved project of the European Commission (EC) “strengthening of internationalization in B&H higher education” - STINT. Also, the research results of this paper offered a comparison with the research results of research conducted by IAUs and EAIE.

Social implications – Different research groups participated in this research study: students, teachers, administration, representatives of ministries and state/regional agencies. All target groups supported the implementation of the questionnaire, the development of SWOT analyses and various reports, as well as the undertaking of various practical activities. In accordance with the research results, all these target groups were subsequently educated on issues of internationalization and recognition of qualifications. Stronger and better



internationalization certainly increases the social impact on future students, higher education funders, as well as other interested stakeholders.

Originality/value – This is a preliminary study whose main goal was to review the state of internationalization and to identify the most important undertaken activities in B&H. For the higher education area in B&H, the research study is new and has undertaken internationalization activities, but on the other side, in other developed European countries, similar studies and activities are not new. For the field of higher education in B&H, this work and research results are important because they will be the basis for future internationalization activities and will also serve as a basis for future activities to be undertaken in this field. The value of this paper is significant for both internal and external stakeholders of higher education.

Keywords Globalization, Internationalization strategy, Management, Internationalization higher education

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

Prior to 2016, the internationalization of public higher education in Bosnia and Herzegovina (B&H) was not systematically regulated in accordance with European Union (EU) internationalization principles published in EU mobility strategy 2020 (EHEA Ministerial Conference, 2012). There was a very small number of legislation acts concerning internationalization in higher education at the state levels. A similar situation was with the recognition of qualifications under the Lisbon Recognition Convention (Council of Europe and UNESCO, 1997). On the other hand, at the institutional level, public higher education institutions had complete freedom to establish their internal legislation in a way that would allow them to function more efficiently. In accordance with that, some public higher education institutions had certain rules enabling them not only to effectively implement the mobility of teaching, administrative staff and students, international projects and programs of international cooperation, joint programs but also to perform recognition of foreign higher education qualifications. The internationalization in public education in B&H has been initiated in various ways. It was mainly the implementation of various development and research projects of national/entity/cantonal importance using international funds with the help of international experts. With their support, the construction and upgrading of appropriate capacities were carried out, as well as the transfer of necessary knowledge from various fields and mobility of students and teaching staff with foreign higher education institutions through various exchange programs. Internationalization is also significantly encouraged through the organization of summer schools at all public higher education institutions. Much less focus was on the internationalization of curricula, the organization of study programs in English, as well as the implementation of joint study programs with higher education institutions from abroad and ensuring internationalization in the institution for all employees and students.

At the end of 2015, public universities from B&H launched a joint Erasmus + project, “strengthening of internationalization in Bosnia and Herzegovina higher education” (STINT, 2015) with the aim of systematically and methodologically regulating internationalization of higher education and linking it to the recognition of foreign qualifications. This is in line with the recognition of the importance of internationalization in higher education proclaimed by the mobility strategy 2020 for the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), the availability of various international funds for financing higher education in B&H as well as with the efforts of the entity ministries (Republic of Srpska and Federation of B&H) to set the internationalization of higher education as a strategic goal.

The STINT project, as the first of its kind in B&H, included 16 partners: all eight public universities in B&H (the University of Banja Luka, University of Bihac, University Dzemal Bijedic of Mostar, University of East Sarajevo, University of Sarajevo, University of Mostar, University of Tuzla, University of Zenica), Federal Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Education and Culture of the Republic of Srpska, Agency for Development of

AQ: 6

2. Background

Various studies point to the importance of internationalization in the higher education sector (Altbach and Knight, 2007; Beerkens *et al.*, 2010). Internationalization over the last years has moved from a reactive to a proactive strategic issue, from added value to mainstream, its focus, scope and content evolved substantially (de Wit, 2010). Moreover, as internationalization is perceived as a vital process for further development of higher education, differences in the intensity and scope of internationalization and certainly the inability to internationalize might affect the competitiveness and even the survival of higher education institutions (Yemini and Ben Artzi, 2013).

Public universities in B&H have been under pressure from current trends and the systematic introduction of internationalization over the past decade. Increased competition in higher education in B&H in the form of the existence of a large number of private universities and colleges required finding a differentiation strategy in order to further attract potential students. Internationalization was one of the possible and realistic strategies.

Higher education internationalization has been on the agendas of national governments and institutional leaders around the world for decades (de Wit and Leask, 2019). de Wit and Leask (2019) highlight that recent surveys from the International Association of Universities (IAUs) and the European Association for International Education (EAIE) confirm that internationalization remains a key defining factor in national and institutional higher education policies.

In order to evaluate the current state of higher education in B&H in terms of internationalization, a comparative analysis with EU countries was necessary. Conducted research in the EHEA on internationalization, IAU 4th Global Survey (Egron-Polak and Hudson, 2014) and the EAIE Barometer (Engel *et al.*, 2015) did not include responses from B&H institutions and individuals. Precisely, because of this, it was neither possible to compare the management of internationalization with the surrounding countries and the EU countries nor to determine the stage of development of internationalization in B&H. The IAU 4th Global Survey asked a range of questions focusing on institution-level data to monitor trends in perceptions of internationalization and related policy-making, management and activities within universities. The EAIE Barometer was more focused on collecting data from internationalization practitioners about their views on internationalization and its characteristics as it pertains to their work in the field (European Parliament, 2015, p. 59). The regional results in IAU 4th Global Survey for Europe were based on 609 Higher Education Institutions (HEI's) - 45% of the global sample (Beelen, 2016, p. 56). In total, 42% of the respondents identified themselves as international officers (Egron-Polak and Hudson, 2014, p. 39). The respondents in the EAIE Barometer consisted of 2,093 practitioners, mainly international officers, at 1,500 HEI's (Beelen, 2016, p. 56).

The key objective of the research in B&H was to determine in a systematic way the current state of internationalization of public higher education and connection with the EHEA, as well as to determine future steps for mandatory inclusion into global higher education flows. Specific objectives were to determine the treatment of mobility, student exchange programs and the ways of recognizing acquired qualifications abroad and to develop a common model for the recognition of qualifications that would be applicable to 11 different laws on higher education in B&H (entities, cantons and districts) and for all higher education institutions in B&H.

3. Methodology

The survey on internationalization covered all public universities in B&H. The study aimed to evaluate the development and management of internationalization and to examine students and management of public universities and faculties about internationalization.

Two different questionnaires were developed, one for each target group. Experts from all 16 institutions of the STINT project, partners from 4 different countries (B&H, Portugal, Great Britain and Belgium), participated in the development of the questionnaires, and they agreed on the content of the questionnaire. All relevant European legislation and similar studies were consulted, and all main principles (from the mobility strategy 2020 for the EHEA and principles from the Lisbon Recognition Convention (Council of Europe, 1997)) were incorporated in the questionnaires, such as questionnaires from IAU 4th Global Survey (Egrom-Polak and Hudson, 2014) and the EAIE Barometer (Engel *et al.*, 2015).

The above-mentioned target groups were examined by the survey method. For the purpose of more precise generation of results, electronic survey questionnaires were developed using the open-source tool LimeSurvey (LimeSurvey GmbH, n.d.). The developed questionnaires were divided into questions of elimination (exclusion of certain respondents), questions of qualification (difference of answers) and questions of the main survey (open and closed type, and offered options). Nominal, ordinal and interval grading scales were used in the survey questionnaires.

For students who were surveyed about internationalization, a sample was taken including only full-time students (non-repeaters), namely students of the third and fourth years of study, integrated studies, as well as Master's students had the right to fill in questionnaires. This means that a certain sample with defined criteria was taken from the overall population. The survey was available only on a voluntary basis over a period of two working weeks, and it was conducted electronically in an impartial manner. The goal was to collect no less than seven% of the total number of possible responses.

The first part of the questionnaire is related to the assessment of internationalization by students of public universities in B&H. The second part of the questionnaire refers to the comparison of the results of the research on the internationalization of B&H public universities with the IAU 4th Global Survey and the EAIE Barometer and provides a discussion of the obtained results.

4. Results and discussion

4.1 Analysis of the results of internationalization survey done by students

Students from eight public universities were surveyed, a total number of 2,822 full-time students. The distribution of responses per universities is given in Figure 1.

F1

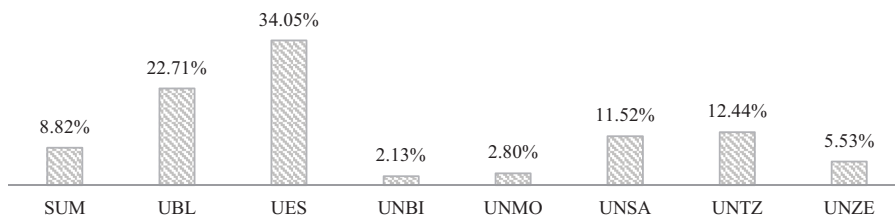


Figure 1.
Number and
distribution of student
respondents
($n = 2,822$)

Note(s): University of Mostar = SUM, University of Banja Luka = UBL, University of East Sarajevo = UES, University of Bihac = UNBI, University Dzemal Bijedic Mostar = UNMO, University of Sarajevo = UNSA, University of Tuzla = UNTZ, University of Zenica = UNZE

The survey included students of public universities in B&H who made up a total of 78.78% of the total number of students in B&H. The total number of students in B&H is about 95,000, according to the Republic of Srpska Institute of Statistics (Republic of Srpska Institute of Statistics, 2019) and data of the Institute for Statistics of Federation of B&H (Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina institute for statistics, 2019).

AQ: 7
F2 Given that students understand internationalization mainly through mobility programs, it was considered very useful to examine the practices of mobility programs among students in public universities. It was found that the student respondents were not fully aware of the existence of mobility programs, especially in some universities where lower percentages of familiarity with these programs were observed (UES, UNTZ and UBL). Namely, on average, 33.69% of surveyed students were not aware of the existence of mobility programs on the basis of which part of the studies could be conducted abroad. The reasons for this could be different, such as the often-used term “student disinterest” (see Figure 2).

F3 The results of the survey clearly indicated that students mostly provided students with information about mobility programs, and much less they are getting information from university websites, social networks and from International Relations Office (IRO) (Figure 3). The results are very surprising considering that students at their faculties should be informed about international cooperation through the International Relations Office (IRO).

F4 A large number of students have knowledge of English 87.45%, as one of the prerequisites for participation in the internationalization of education, significantly less of German 27.73%, Spanish 14.87%, Italian 5.52%, Russian 4.96%, French 4.04%, Turkish 3.68% and Arabic 0.92% (see Figure 4).

F5 The fact that 48.42% of student respondents would not like to go to mobility programs (Figure 5) was very interesting from the aspect that those students probably did not see the benefits that those programs brought due to lack of information as a serious obstacle (Figure 6).

F6 In accordance with Figure 6, students pointed out that additional financial expenses are the biggest obstacle (58.89%). Considering the fact that students have insured living expenses when they are in mobility programs, it is obviously the biggest obstacle to studying abroad caused by the lack of timely information to students. Students also highlighted “recognition of

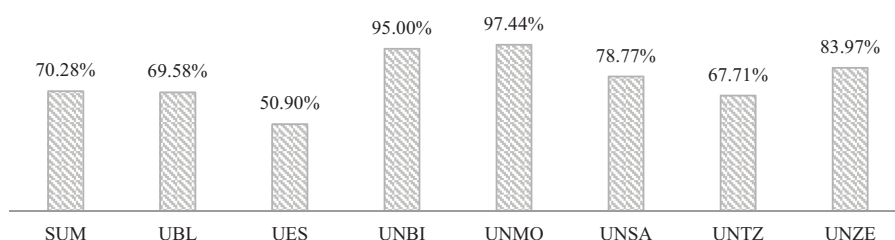


Figure 2.
Awareness of mobility programs

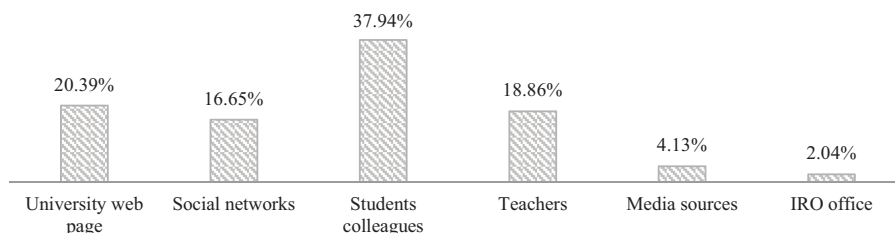


Figure 3.
The way how students learned about mobility programs

periods of mobility abroad” as a serious obstacle (38.36%). This is also a problem of lack of information about studies abroad. Namely, in practice, the management of the home faculty signs an appropriate learning agreement for each student who goes to spend part of their studies abroad in a mobility program. The home faculty is obliged by this contract to recognize all acquired ECTS credits, knowledge and skills upon return to the home faculty.

4.2 Analysis of the results of internationalization survey done by the management of public universities

The management of eight public universities and management of 90 public faculties within public universities were surveyed. A total number of 386 people consisted of rectors, vice-rectors, deans and vice-deans, and representatives of the offices for international cooperation had the right to participate in the survey. A total of 162 responses were received or 41.96%. Internationalization was examined from the aspect of the participation of management and administrative staff directly involved in the internationalization processes (Figure 7).

F7

Figure 4.
Knowledge of languages for the internationalization

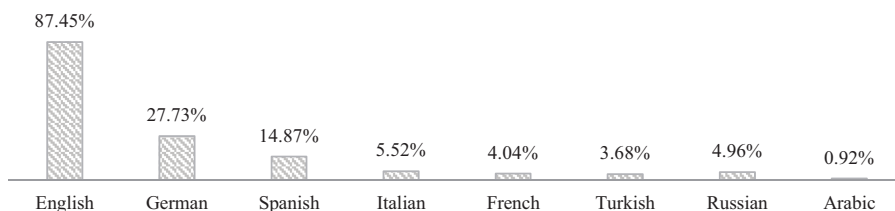


Figure 5.
Did the student respondents spend a period of study abroad?

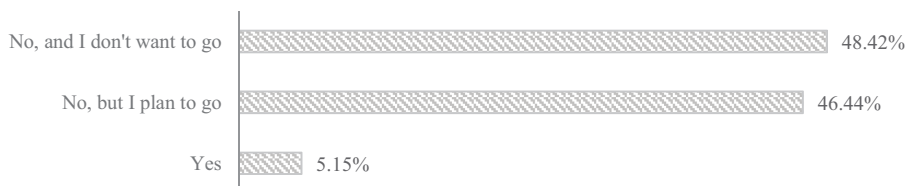
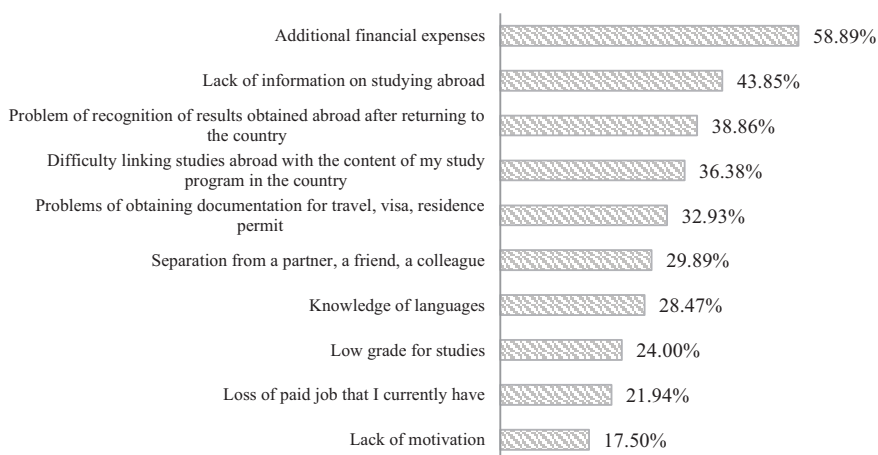


Figure 6.
Obstacles on studying abroad



F8

Taking into account that the presence of an internationalization policy or strategy is crucial in the functioning of the internationalization process at the institution, the results showed that 26% of respondents said that their institutions did not have an internationalization policy and strategy (Figure 8). A total of 2% of respondents indicated that they had a specific internationalization policy and strategy for internationalization, while at the same time, a total of 27% of respondents believed that internationalization policy was an integral part of quality policy. 26% of respondents believed that the internationalization strategy was an integral part of university development strategy. This existence of a policy without an internationalization strategy was pointed out by 17% of respondents, and only 2% pointed out the existence of an internationalization strategy without the existence of an internationalization policy. In this survey, internationalization policies and strategies were viewed as separate documents.

The survey stated that more than a quarter of respondents believed that there was no policy and strategy of internationalization, while other respondents believed that there were certain forms of internationalization in the form of strategy or policy. Detailed research revealed that only one public university out of eight had a formal internationalization strategy, the others did not have. In accordance with the IAU Global Survey, 61% of respondents indicated that they had a specific internationalization policy, with a further 15% indicating that internationalization forms part of the overall strategy of the institution (European Parliament, 2015, p. 62). The same source stated when respondents to the EAIE study were asked the same question that 38% indicated their institution had a specific internationalization strategy, with a further 46% detailing that internationalization was, instead, one of the key priority areas included in the overall institutional strategy. Based on the source, European countries differ in the presence of an internationalization strategy, with respondents from Belgium, Finland and Ireland pointing out that their institutions have separate internationalization strategies, while respondents from countries such as Germany, Croatia, Bulgaria and Poland state that their institutions do not have an internationalization strategy (European Parliament, 2015, p. 63).

Speaking about the most important reasons for focusing on internationalization in B&H answers were: "Improving the quality of education" (15.27%), "Improving R&D" (13.75%)

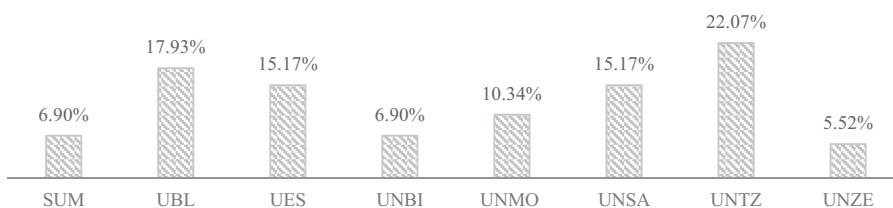


Figure 7.
Distribution of
management
respondents per
universities



Figure 8.
Institutional policy/
strategy: the
existence of an
internationalization
policy and an
internationalization
strategy

and “Greater international cooperation and capacity building” (12.94%), as shown in [Figure 9](#). F9
 Different European and world countries point out different reasons or benefits of internationalization. IAU 4th Global Survey ([European Parliament, 2015](#), p. 64) states “increased international awareness of/deeper engagement with global issues by students,” “improved quality of teaching and learning” and “enhanced international cooperation and capacity-building,” as the top three global most significant reasons/benefits. The same source states that the EAIE study pointed following as the most important reasons for focusing on internationalization: “improve the overall quality of education at our institution” (56%) “to prepare students for a global world” (45%) and “to attract more international students” (37%). Compared to results collected from these surveys, the B&H survey showed several reasons/benefits for internationalization that are similarly ranked as stated by the IAU Global Survey.

According to the answers, the internal drivers of internationalization are the central management of the university with 53.38% and the management of the faculty with 30.22%, while the worrying fact is that 44.31% of respondents believe that responsibilities are not formally established ([Figure 10](#)). F10
 Fewer responsibilities have international offices at the university and faculty level (10.7%) and specific commissions for internationalization (3.2%). Compared to the IAU Global Survey and the EAIE survey, the results are similar in terms of internal responsibilities related to the management of the institution ([European Parliament, 2015](#), p. 66).

In terms of evaluation external influences on internationalization, the institutional level (43.14%) and the EU level (30.39%) had the greatest influence ([Figure 11](#)), much more than the regional (entity/canton) level 13.73% and national level 4.90%. The B&H survey identified the institutional level as the most important level, but opinions differed on the impact of the national level ([European Parliament, 2015](#), p. 68) in relation to the EU and regional level, which was not the case in B&H. F11

Figure 9.
Benefits of internationalization: the most significant reasons/benefits for focusing on internationalization

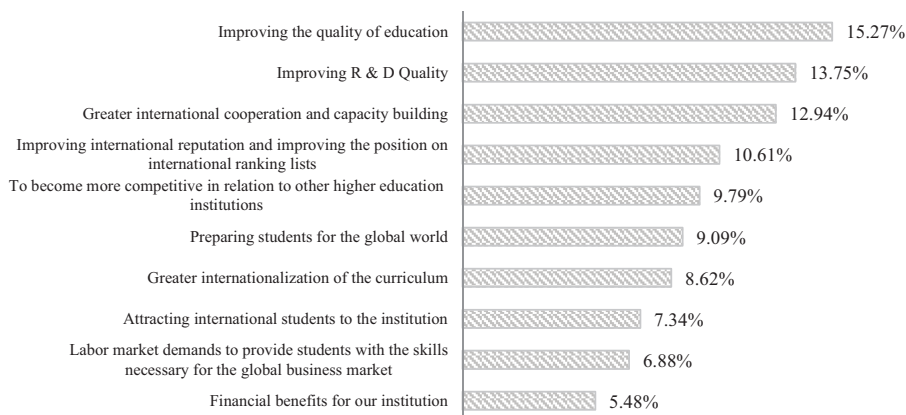
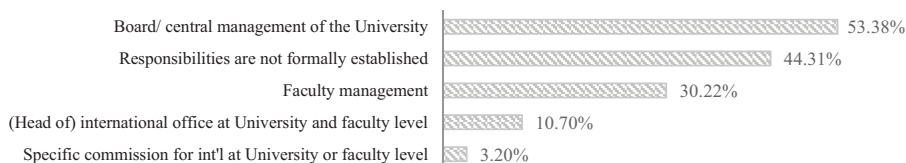


Figure 10.
Internal drivers of internationalization: opinions about responsibilities for the internationalization within the institution



F12 The B&H survey identified three key risks for internationalization (Figure 12), namely “brain drain” (23.10%), “difficulty in regulating locally the quality of foreign programs offered” (17.24%) and “international opportunities accessible only to students with financial resources” (14.83%). There was a difference in the identification of risks associated with internationalization compared to the B&H survey with other surveys. The only difference related to these first three risks with the IAU Global Survey (European Parliament, 2015, p. 69) was “brain drain” positioned in the first place in the B&H survey instead of “excessive competition among HEIs” in IAU Global Survey.

F13 It has been stated in the survey that all public universities in B&H have increased funding in the past three years (Figure 13) for mobility programs of students (21.62%) and staff (21.62%) as well as for international development projects (10.14%) compared to the internationalization of curricula (3.72%), development of study programs in English (1.35) and development of joint study programs with international partners (1.35%). In comments, a

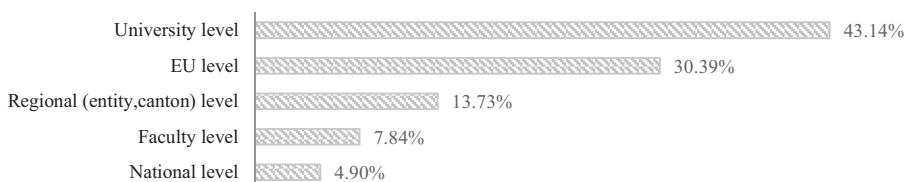


Figure 11.
External drivers of internationalization: influence of following policy levels on the internationalization policy of institution

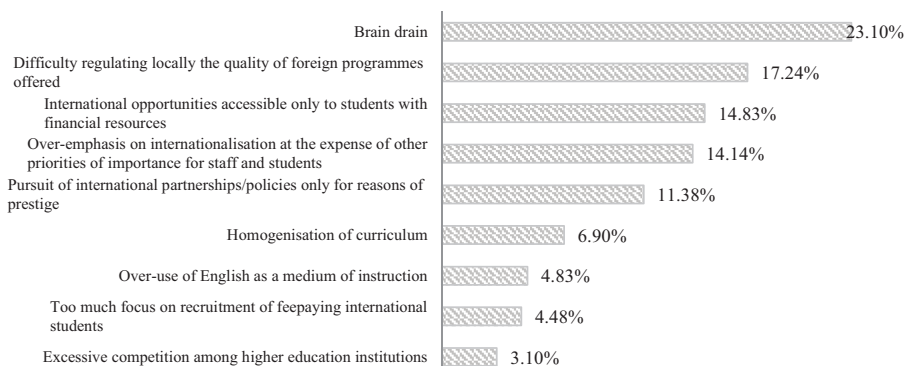


Figure 12.
Potential risks associated with internationalization

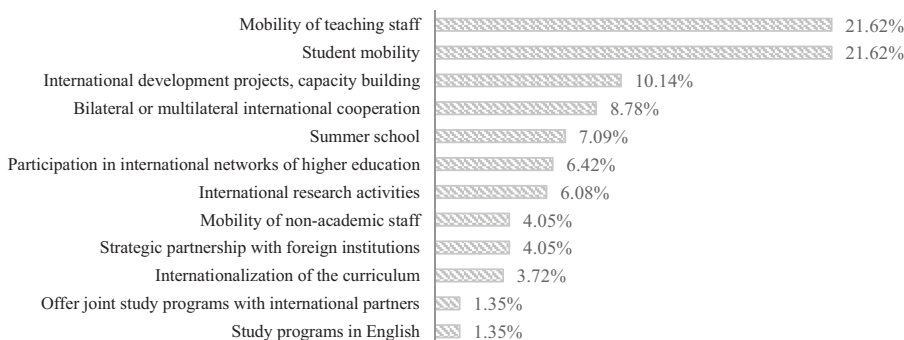


Figure 13.
Internationalization activities for which funding has increased in the past three years

large number of respondents believe that there are no funds for internationalization in their institutions and that European internationalization programs are generally available twice as much as national and regional programs. This may indicate that the state/entities/cantons stimulate less the internationalization of higher education institutions in relation to European programs.

Internationalization should be adequately funded to be a priority at some institutions or higher levels. Respondents from B&H stated that EU programs were a key source of funding for internationalization (36.80%) compared to national (15.15%) and regional (12.12%) funding programs. Interestingly, 29% of respondents believed that the funds for internationalization did not exist (Figure 14). In terms of funding, the results of the study differ significantly from the IAU study. Respondents in the IAU study pointed out that the biggest source of funding was the institutional budget, followed by external public funds and finally by the international organization and foundation.

F14

5. Improvement activities

Taking into account the context of the entire higher education in B&H, as well as the current situation determined by the conducted questionnaires and gained results, a large number of different activities were undertaken by eight public universities at institutional, regional and state level in order to improve the overall process in B&H.

The improvement included a group of activities related to the evaluation of the current situation of internationalization in B&H. Surveys were conducted among students, managers, administrators of internationalization, and secretaries of universities and faculties of public universities. Reporting was also conducted by the ministries responsible for higher education in the Republic of Srpska and the Federation of B&H, as well as the Center for Information and Recognition of Qualifications, Agency for Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions of Republic of Srpska and the Agency for Development of Higher Education and Quality Assurance of B&H. As a result of the conducted study, a total of 25 different SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analyses were made by the above-mentioned institutions. Eleven analyses were related to the recognition of qualifications and fourteen to internationalization (STINT, 2020a), which was the input for development of a model for the recognition of qualifications and strategies for internationalization.

AQ: 8

Based on the SWOT analyses related to the recognition of qualifications, a model for the recognition of qualifications for the higher education area of Bosnia and Herzegovina was developed. It has been developed and proposed in four language versions: in English, Serbian, Croatian and Bosnian. Furthermore, all public universities developed new strategies for internationalization. Six public universities have developed separate strategies, and two public universities integrated internationalization into the university development strategy. Also, comparative analyses of SWOT models were developed by all public universities, especially comparisons for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. The SWOT analysis of the internationalization of public higher education in B&H is presented in Table 1.

T1

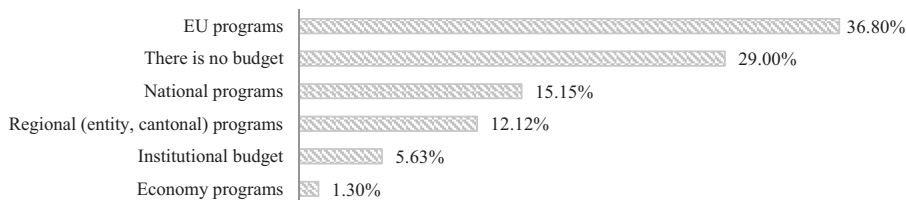


Figure 14.
Sources of financing
for internationalization

	Positive	Negative
Internal environment	<p><i>Strengths</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Existence of IRO for support (2) Improved interest in internationalization and awareness of importance (3) Communication between HEI, students, staff and IRO (4) Experience in international projects (5) Dissemination of information related to international activities (6) (Inter) national cooperation with other (foreign) HEIs (7) Visibility and participation in international networks (8) Progress and simplification of HEI internationalization process (9) Improved skills for staff and students 	<p><i>Weaknesses</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Low interest/motivation of students (2) Limited or lack of financial resources (3) Limited foreign language skills (staff and students) (4) Internationalization not top priority of HEI (5) Missing strategic policy and guidelines for internationalization (6) Understaffed and weak infrastructural services of IRO (7) Insufficient points of attraction for foreign students and staff (8) Non or low existence of English courses
External environment	<p><i>Opportunities</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Availability of funds and other (EU based) financial opportunities (2) Attractive low-cost and country specific elements of B&H for foreign students (3) Increasing regional and national cooperation with stakeholders (4) Availability of good practice from foreign EU institutions (5) Possibility of improving HEI's capacities, quality and network (6) Large group of potential stakeholders (unspoiled area) 	<p><i>Threats</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Low access to funding/misuse of funding (2) Unpreparedness/unwillingness/lack of knowledge of public authorities to cooperate in EU exchange programs and international project funds (3) Importance of internationalization not always recognized by main stakeholders (4) Lack of experience, training and awareness of staff and stakeholders (5) Administrative barriers (6) Brain drain (7) Multi-approachable character of internationalization

Table 1.
SWOT analysis of
internationalization of
B&H public higher
education

AQ: 9

Eight different institutional regulations on internationalization and eight different guides for internationalization were also developed. Teaching and administrative staff of public universities were additionally trained at EU universities.

All public universities implemented various operative pilot activities, a total of 32, which took place under the mentorship of EU universities. The aim was to improve existing and to develop new internationalization activities at public universities in B&H.

Within the activities of the STINT project, a guide for assessing the quality of internationalization was developed. As one of the most important outcomes of the project, the criteria for accreditation of higher education institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina were revised (HEA, 2016a), as well as criteria for the accreditation of the study programs of the first and second cycle (HEA, 2016b) with increased emphasis on the evaluation of internationalization in different segments. A comparative analysis of the mentioned Bosnian and Herzegovinian criteria with the criteria for the accreditation of internationalization of higher education institutions and study programs developed by the European Consortium for Accreditation in higher education (ECA) was done (Aerden, 2017).

The network of public universities with EU partner universities was developed. Also, the first official meeting of the vice-rectors for international cooperation and associates from the offices for international cooperation of public universities from B&H was held. All public universities signed an integrated policy of internationalization (Rectors' Conference of Bosnia

and Herzegovina, 2018) as an expression of commitment to the global process of internationalization of higher education and the recognition of qualifications in higher education. B&H experts from public universities educated more than 1,100 teachers and students on issues of internationalization and recognition of qualifications.

6. Conclusion

This study was designed to cover different aspects of internationalization and to describe the current situation in B&H higher education related to the issue of internationalization. First, the study provided a comparison of the internationalization of higher education in B&H in relation to European and world results. Second, the project results showed that the initial system of internationalization was established in a way that the activities of the EHEA were successfully implemented and further trends in internationalization advancement were determined. Third, progress has been made through the implementation of project activities at the institutional and state levels.

The real situation in the B&H, i.e. in the entities and cantons, has shown that all public universities and entities have a similar opinion regarding internationalization activities among students, teachers and management, and that it is necessary to change the environment in terms of taking improvement measures. All described activities from the previous chapter should be continued through establishing a stable and long-lasting system of internationalization and introducing “internationalization at home” as one of the priorities for B&H higher education. This system can make internationalization much closer to students and staff from the public universities at home institutions.

For the future development of internationalization in B&H, it is necessary to motivate students and teachers to participate in shorter and longer mobility programs to other higher education institutions abroad with the obligation to return to their home institutions and bring new knowledge and skills. Valorization of the period of stay abroad is important. Rewarding students who have been on exchanges could be an additional motivation to increase mobility, and above all, the fight against the “brain drain” situation. Educational institutions must put international cooperation at the top of their priorities because only in that way the quality of education will grow. In addition to all facts above, attracting foreign students to study at B&H institutions is also very important for the internationalization of university campuses and that is how they will open up to the international academic community. Opening programs in foreign languages must be in focus in the coming period.

All mentioned above is something that most universities in Europe strive for when it comes to internationalization. In the future, internationalization will no longer go only in the direction of strengthening the mobility of teachers and students, attracting foreign students and increasing international visibility but will focus more on the internationalization of curricula and learning goals (de Wit and Hunter, 2015). In that way, internationalization will be brought more to faculties and universities, and it will not be the privilege of a minority of teachers and students. The internationalization of curricula and learning goals is a prerequisite for increasing the quality of the teaching process and research. In addition, there is a growing trend in the world economy in terms of the need for international competencies in various fields.

Digital learning that knows no boundaries will play an important role in the future of internationalization. By introducing massive online open courses using e-learning and distance learning, it will gain momentum and enable massive virtual mobility or internationalization (De Corte *et al.*, 2016).

This leads to the conclusion that the logical trend in the development of internationalization in B&H will be “internationalization at home,” which, according to the European Commission, is the third pillar of internationalization.

References

- Aerden, A. (2017), "The guide to quality in internationalisation", 2nd ed., *European Consortium for Accreditation in Higher Education*, ISBN/EAN: 978-94-90815-06-6, available at: <http://ecahe.eu/assets/uploads/2013/11/CeQuint-The-Guide-to-Quality-in-Internationalisation-edition-2017-1.pdf> (accessed 27 July 2020).
- Altbach, P.J. and Knight, J. (2007), *The Internationalization of Higher Education: Motivation and Realities*, Boston College - Center for International Higher Education, Boston, MA.
- Beelen, J. (2016), "Global at home: internationalisation at home in the 4th Global Survey", in Jones, E., Coelen, R., Beelen, J. and de Wit, H. (Eds), *Local and Global Internationalization*, Sense, Rotterdam, pp. 55-65.
- Beerkens, E., Branderburg, U., Evers, N., Leichsenring, H. and Zimmermann, V. (2010), "Indicator projects on internationalization - approaches, methods and findings", A report in the context of the European project 'Indicators for Mapping and Profiling Internationalization' (IMPI), European Commission.
- Council of Europe and UNESCO (1997), "Convention on the recognition of qualifications concerning higher education in the European Region", Lisbon, available at: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/165> (accessed 2020).
- Council of Europe (1997), "Convention on the recognition of qualifications concerning higher education in the European Region", UNESCO, Lisbon, available at: www.coe.int (accessed 28 May 2019).
- De Corte, E., Engwall, L. and Teichler, U. (2016), *Emerging Models of Learning and Teaching in Higher Education*, Portland: From Books to MOOCs, London.
- de Wit, H. (2010), "Internationalisation of Higher Education in Europe and its assessment, trends and issues", Den Haag: Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO), available at: https://www.eurashe.eu/library/modernising-phe/mobility/internationalisation/WG4%20R%20Hans%20de%20Wit%20Internationalisation_of_Higher_Education_in_Europe_DEF_december_2010.pdf (accessed 2 August 2020).
- de Wit, H. and Hunter, F. (2015), "The future of internationalization of higher education in Europe", *International Higher Education*, Vol. 83.
- de Wit, H. and Leask, B. (2019), "Towards new ways of becoming and being international", *University World News, Higher Education Web Publishing*, available at: <https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20190722112900397> (accessed 29 July 2020).
- Egron-Polak, E. and Hudson, R. (2014), *Internationalization of Higher Education: Growing Expectations, Fundamental Values: IAU 4th Global Survey*, International Association of Universities, Paris.
- EHEA Ministerial Conference (2012), *Mobility Strategy 2020 for the European Higher Education Area (EHEA): Mobility for Better Learning*, Bucharest.
- Engel, L., Sandstrom, A.-M., Van der Aa, R. and Glass, A. (2015), *The EAIE Barometer: Internationalisation in Europe*, European Association for International Education (EAIE).
- European Parliament (2015), "Internationalisation of higher education", *European Union: European Parliament - Directorate-General for Internal Policies*, Vols. ISBN 978-92-823-7847-2, doi: [10.2861/6854](https://doi.org/10.2861/6854).
- Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina institute for statistics (2019), "Education - higher education - Table 1", Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina institute for statistics, available at: www.px-web.fzs.gov.ba (accessed 21 July 2020).
- HEA (2016a), "Decision on the criteria for accreditation of higher education institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina", *Agency for Development of Higher Education and Quality Assurance*, available at: http://hea.gov.ba/Dokumenti/dokumenti_agencije/?id=7689.
- HEA (2016b), "Decision on criteria for accreditation of study programs of I and II cycle in Bosnia and Herzegovina", *Agency for Development of Higher Education and Quality Assurance*, available at: http://hea.gov.ba/Dokumenti/dokumenti_agencije/?id=7767.

Limesurvey GmbH (n.d), "Limesurvey: an open source survey tool", Hamburg, available at: www.limesurvey.org (accessed January 2017).

AQ: 12

Rectors' Conference of Bosnia and Herzegovina (2018), "Strengthening of internationalisation in B&H higher education", available at: <http://stint-project.net/files/pub/integrated-policy.pdf>.

Republika Srpska Institute of Statistics (2019), *Higher Education - Statistical Bulletin, Second Corrected Release*, Republika Srpska Institute of Statistics, Banja Luka, IssN 2490-3035.

STINT (2015), "Strengthening of internationalization in B&H higher education. Project presentation", available at: http://stint-project.net/files/stint_presentation.pdf (accessed 30 July 2020).

STINT (2020a), "Strengthening of internationalization in B&H higher education", available at: <http://stint-project.net/pages/project-objectives>.

Yemini, M. and Ben Artzi, Y. (2013), "Mind the gap: bologna process implementation in Israeli higher education system", *Dapim*, pp. 177-197.

AQ: 13

Further reading

AQ: 14

Agency for statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina (2013), *Announcement*, Agency for statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo.

Agency for statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina (2017), *Bosnia and Herzegovina in Numbers*, Agency for statistics of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Sarajevo.

EACEA (2017), *Overview of the Higher Education System*, Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency, 978-92-9492-382-0, doi: [10.2797/689342](https://doi.org/10.2797/689342).

STINT (2016), available at: <http://stint-project.net/files/newsletter/newsletter1.pdf> (accessed 2020).

STINT (2020b), "Strengthening of internationalization in B&H higher education", available at: <http://stint-project.net/pages/publications-project>.

About the authors

Nenad Markovic is an assistant professor in the Department for marketing and management and international relations coordinator at the University of East Sarajevo Faculty of Medicine. He participated in over 25 international projects. His work focuses on project and strategic management, quality management, educational management and internationalization. Nenad Markovic is the corresponding author and can be contacted at: qaofficeuis@gmail.com

AQ: 3

Dejan Bokonjic is the Dean at the University of East Sarajevo Faculty of Medicine. He was a vice-rector for international cooperation and quality assurance for eight years. He was the head of the University's team for accreditation twice. He is the author and/or leader in around 20 European projects dealing regarding reform of curricula in Western Balkan countries based on competences and learning outcomes, introducing innovations in the teaching process, quality assurance, development of B&H qualification framework, reform of the curricula on the medical faculties and internationalization.

Geert De Lepeleer is the head of the Internationalization Department at the Ghent Technology Campus of the Faculty of Engineering Technology of KU Leuven. He was the coordinator of the Erasmus + project STINT project in B&H. At the Ghent Technology campus, he is president of the steering group for international cooperation. He is currently involving student representatives in all planned international activities in order to promote internationalization at home.

For instructions on how to order reprints of this article, please visit our website:

www.emeraldgroupublishing.com/licensing/reprints.htm

Or contact us for further details: permissions@emeraldinsight.com