

# TALENT

Establishing HRM Master Programmes in Central Asia

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## TALENT Quality Plan Group (QPG)

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*Report on the*

***“Quality survey among participants in the TALENT Project on the impact of the corona pandemic on the Groups’ activities”***

*carried out through internet survey 16 -31 October 2020*

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### Introduction

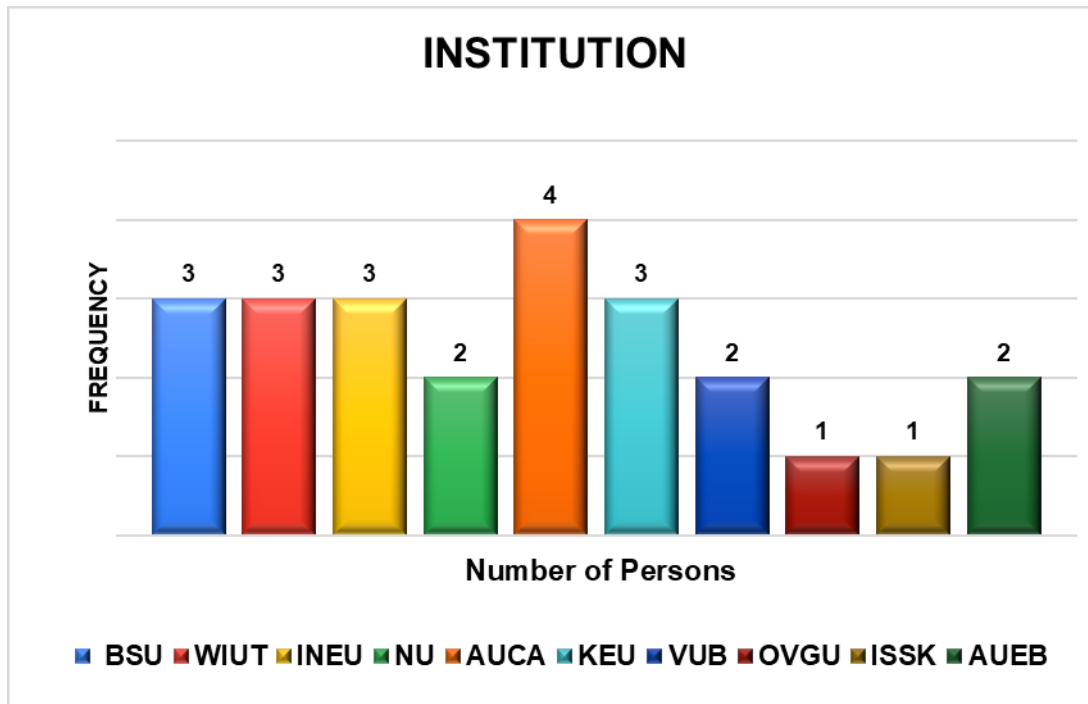
The TALENT Quality Plan Group (QPG) was established at the request of the Agency late 2019. The QPG consists of Irene Nikandrou (Athens University of Economics and Business), Almaz Kadyraliev (Kyrgyz Economic University), Jan De Schampheleire and Jacques Vilrocx (both Vrije Universiteit Brussel and project coordinators).

The aim of the QPG is twofold: first, to provide additional information to the in-process quality assessment as it is performed during the General Project Meetings (see the Minutes of these Meetings) and, second, to provide additional information as compared to the formal external Quality Control as foreseen in WP3. The QPG has set as its mission to look into specific situations or phases in the timeline of the project relevant to the execution of some of the crucial objectives of the project.

The first quality assessment took part during the Athens meeting in March 2020 and the aim was to evaluate the two-weeks internships of the teachers involved in the delivering of the Specific Courses in the new TALENT master programme starting September 2020 in the three Central Asian partner countries. The second occasion arose with the COVID-19 pandemic which affected the mobility of the participants and thus, the aim was to evaluate the work of the Work-Groups during the first wave of the pandemic.

## **Methodology**

**Sample:** Work Group participants from all Central Asian Universities and the EU coaches were invited to fill the online anonymous questionnaire. Twenty four (24) answers from the ten (10) participating Institutions were received. The distribution of the sample is: eighteen (18) members from the six Central Asian Universities and six (6) coaches from the four European Universities (Figure 1).



**Figure 1:** Participating Institutions

For the purposes of the internal quality requirements an online survey questionnaire was designed with Google Forms to assess the impact of the corona pandemic in each of the four areas:

**Contextual;  
Input;  
Process, and  
Output**

Dichotomous, Likert-type questions and an open-ended question were included to cover all aspects of the work of the groups during this period (March 2020 till October 2020). The Context was assessed with one dichotomous question examining seven factors affecting the work of the participants during the corona pandemic and one open-ended question asking to briefly describe the work of the WG during the period studied. The Input was examined with two questions for the CA participants to rate the contribution of the person to the work of the WG and the contribution of others and one question for the EU coaches rating the overall contribution of each member of the WG.

The Process was examined with five questions for the CA participants to rate different aspects of the processes with the WG and one question for the EU coaches to assess the collaboration with the WG.

The Output was examined with two questions for the CA participants and two for the EU coaches rating the overall progress of the work and its quality.

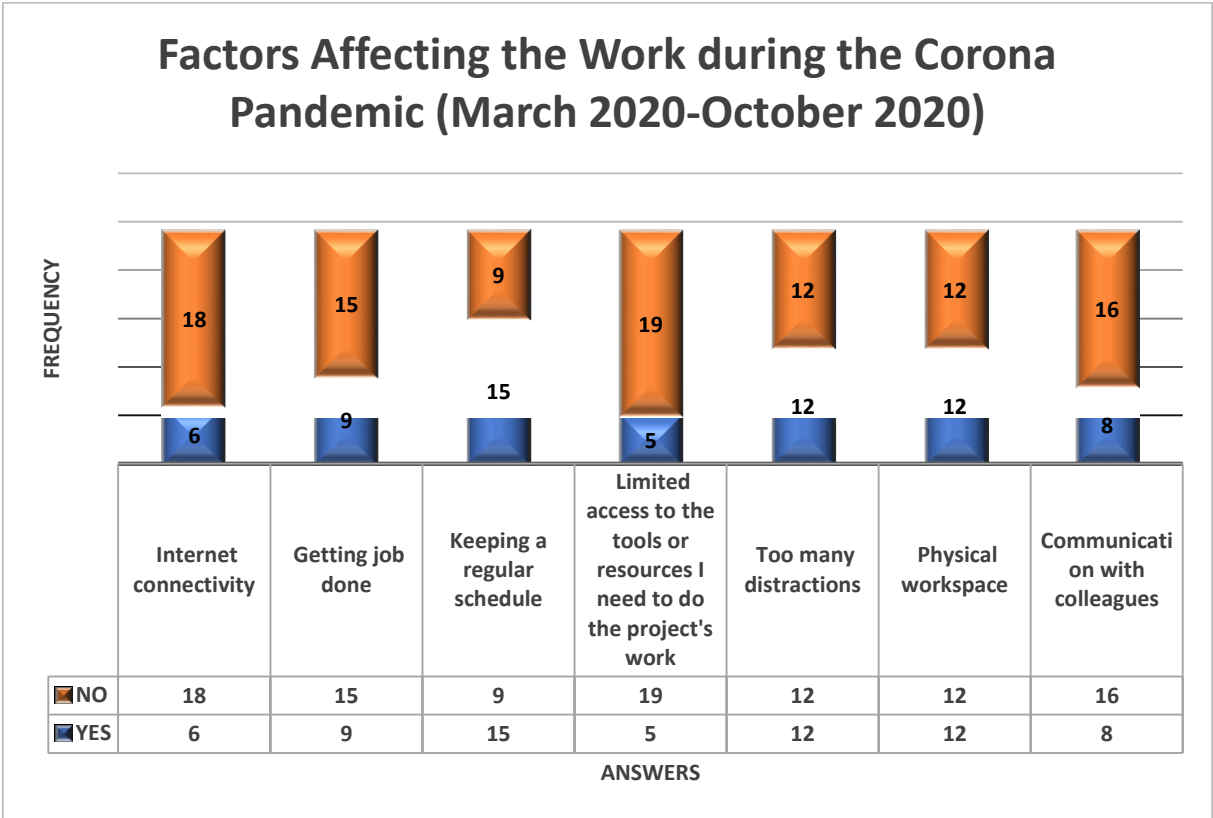
The inclusion of both structured and unstructured questions helps us obtain a set of balanced and rich information concerning the areas we were interested in.

**Results**

**1. Contextual indicators**

1.1. The question here allowed us to examine whether the corona pandemic affected the work of the individual members in a number of ways: a) internet connectivity, b) getting job done, c) keeping a regular schedule, d) limited access to resources, e) too many distractions, f) physical workspace, and g) communication with colleagues. The answers to this question are shown in Figure 2.

63% (15 out of 24 answers) of the participants mention that keeping a regular schedule is the factor that had the greater impact on the work during the corona pandemic, while 50% (12 out of 24 answers) report that too many distractions and physical workspace are also important. In descending order, getting the job done (38%), communication with colleagues (33%), internet connectivity (25%), and limited access to resources to get the work done (21%) are the factors affecting the work of the project.



**Figure 2:** Factors Affecting the Work during the Corona Pandemic

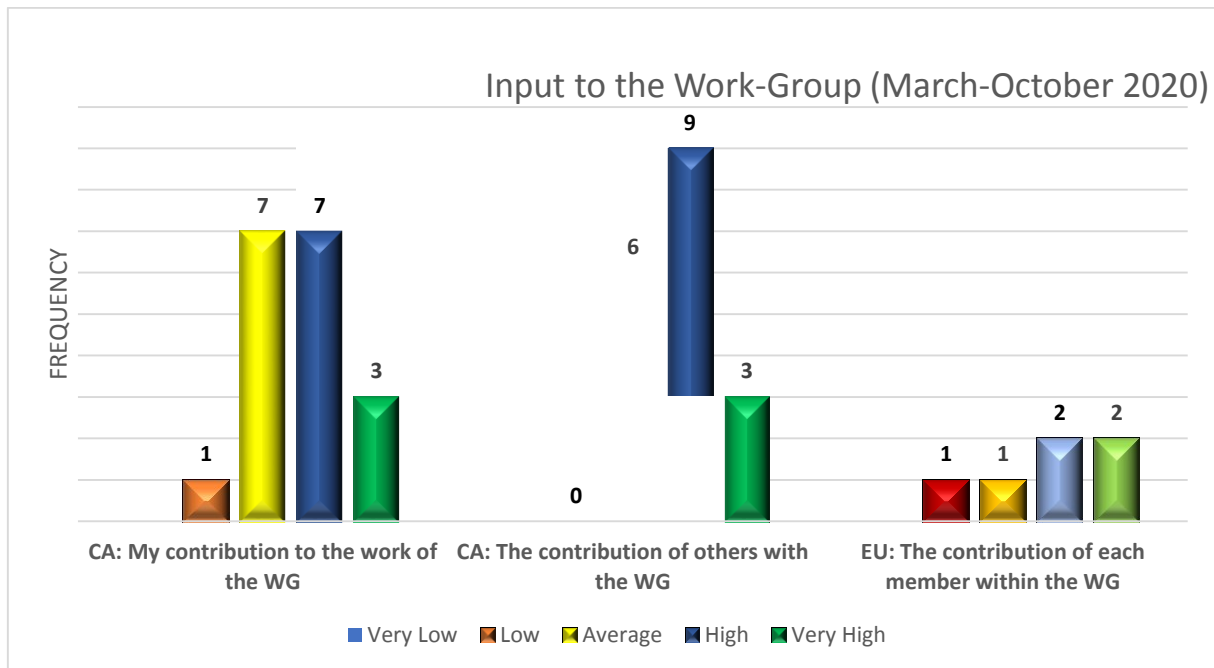
1.2. The second question was an open-ended question asking the TALENT members to briefly describe their work as a Work Group (WG) during the first wave of the corona pandemic (March to October 2020). All respondents mentioned that they continued their work individually and in groups online, using all different available mobile and online tools and applications and social media (virtual meetings through zoom, chats through WhatsApp, Viber, Facebook, emails). The flexibility in the communication allowed for the work to be organized and progress without any major problems, as one person mentioned “We passed to online working mode in all aspects of project flow. In general this didn’t much affected the activities”, another one said “our WG is stable and will be further very operational”. However, they felt that “physical meetings could contribute more”. One person states “it was very difficult to prepare all activities remotely; the impossibility of holding the planned TALENT project meetings...., was definitely an obstacle to the effective work of all WGs and the project as a whole”. Another important factor contributing to the stability of the WG was the WG leader who was acknowledged as a liaison with the EU coaches and as a capable person “arranging all study material... and following the process” and one that had a contact with the other members of the WG “throughout the pandemic” and this was very helpful.

## **2. Input indicators**

In this area we wanted to examine how satisfied were the members of the WGs and the EU coaches regarding the contribution of each member to the work of the WG (Figure 3).

Regarding their own contribution to the project’s work, 39% (7 out of 18) of the CA participants rate the satisfaction with their own contribution either as average or as high, only 3 out of the 18 CA participants (17%) are very satisfied with their contribution to the work and one person responds that his/her satisfaction is low. The picture is somewhat different when the members are asked to assess the contribution of others to the work of the WG. 50% of the CA participants (9 out of 18) are quite satisfied with the work of their colleagues, 33% (6 out of 18) are neither satisfied or dissatisfied (average) and 17% are very satisfied.

EU coaches also assessed differently the contribution of each member within the WG, with two coaches rating it as very satisfactory, two as somewhat satisfactory, one as average while for one EU coach the evaluation is less positive as he/she is somewhat unsatisfied with the contribution of the WG he/she is coaching.



**Figure 3:** Input to the work of the Work-Group during the Corona Pandemic

### 3. Process indicators

CAs members' satisfaction with five aspects of the work process within the WG, namely collaboration within the WG and with other Universities, the support from the EU coaches when needed, the access to resources and the progress of the accreditation's procedures were examined in this area. The EU coaches were asked to rate their satisfaction with the collaboration within the WG. In Figure 4, we present the results of the respondents in this area.

Three of the EU coaches were very satisfied with the collaboration within the WG, one was somewhat satisfied and two of the coaches had no strong feelings (average) about the collaboration within the WG.

The picture regarding collaboration is somewhat different for the CA members. One person is somewhat unsatisfied with the collaboration within the WG, five persons (28%) were neutral, while six persons (33%) reported high levels of satisfaction and six persons (33%) very high levels.

Collaboration with other Universities shows another interesting aspect of the project. Approximately 56 % of the participants (10 persons out of 18) are neutral in this aspect, 28% are quite satisfied, while a smaller percentage, 11% (2 out of 18), are very satisfied. One person reports low levels of satisfaction with this aspect. One explanation for these results it could be that these participants do not have a clear picture and/or direct communication with the participants of other Universities besides the colleagues within their WG.

The majority of the participants (56%) are very satisfied with the support they receive from the EU coaches, while 39% (7 out of 18) are quite satisfied and one person reports average satisfaction.

Access to resources for the project’s work is not a problem for the CA participants. Nine members (50%) report high levels of satisfaction regarding the access to resources, six persons (33%) are very satisfied, while three of them (17%) are neutral in this area. The results here are compatible with the answers to the question regarding the factors affecting the WGs work during the pandemic, where limited access to resources was not a problem for the majority of the CA participants.

Finally, the satisfaction with the progress of the accreditation’s procedures is somewhat different for the CA participants. 66% (12 out of 18) of the respondents report high (6 persons) or very high (6 persons) levels of satisfaction with the accreditation progress, five persons (28%) are neutral and one person is quite unsatisfied in this area.

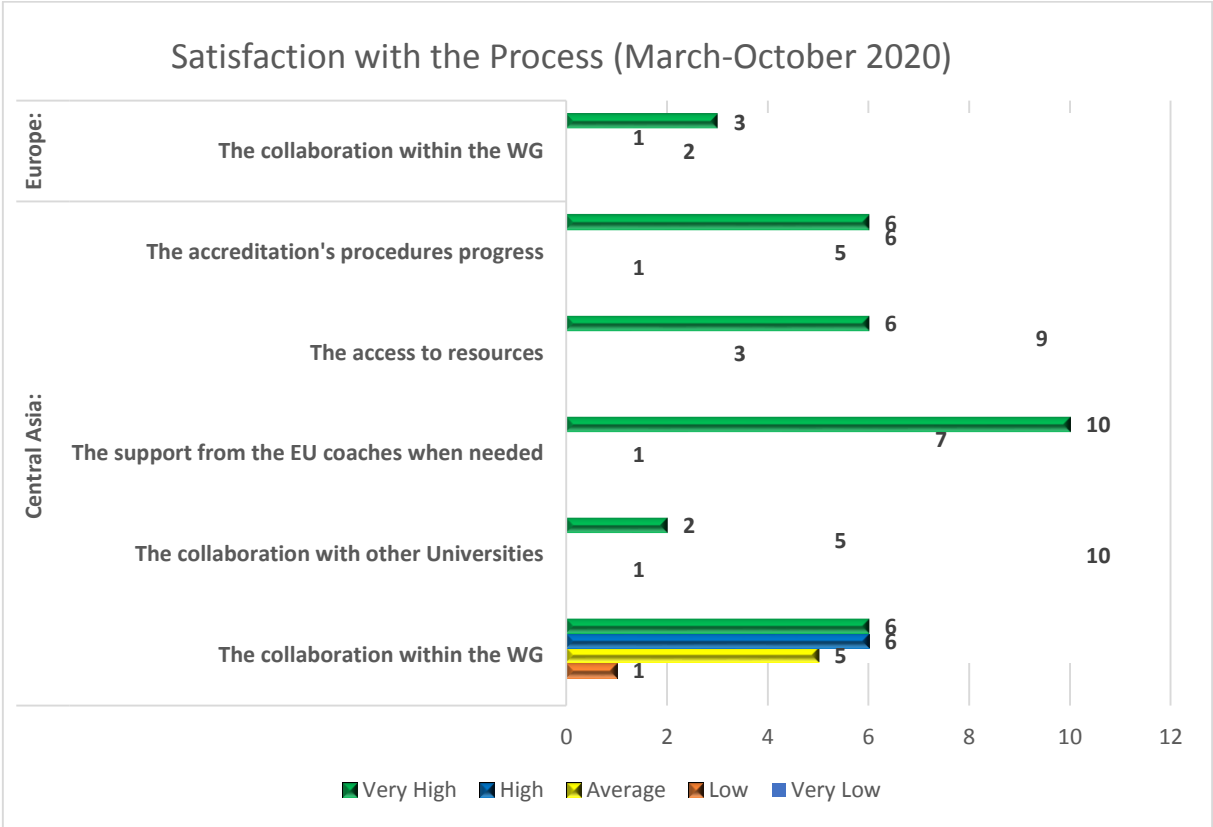


Figure 4: Satisfaction with the Process during the Corona Pandemic

**4. Output indicators**

In terms of the outputs of the project, we were interested in CA participants and EU coaches assessment. Thus, we asked them to evaluate the overall progress of the work and the quality of the work produced (see Figure 5).

The vast majority (78% or 14 out 18) of the CA members reported a favorable picture of the outputs of the group with ten of them assessing the overall progress are quite satisfactory and four of them as very satisfactory. Three of the respondents (17%) were neutral and one of them reports low levels of satisfaction in this area. The respondents are more positive with regard to the overall quality of the work produced. 83% (15 out of 18) evaluate

positively the quality of the work, with eight of them (44%) reporting high satisfaction levels and seven of them (39%) reporting very high satisfaction. Three persons (17%) are neutral, while no one expresses any dissatisfaction with the quality of the work.

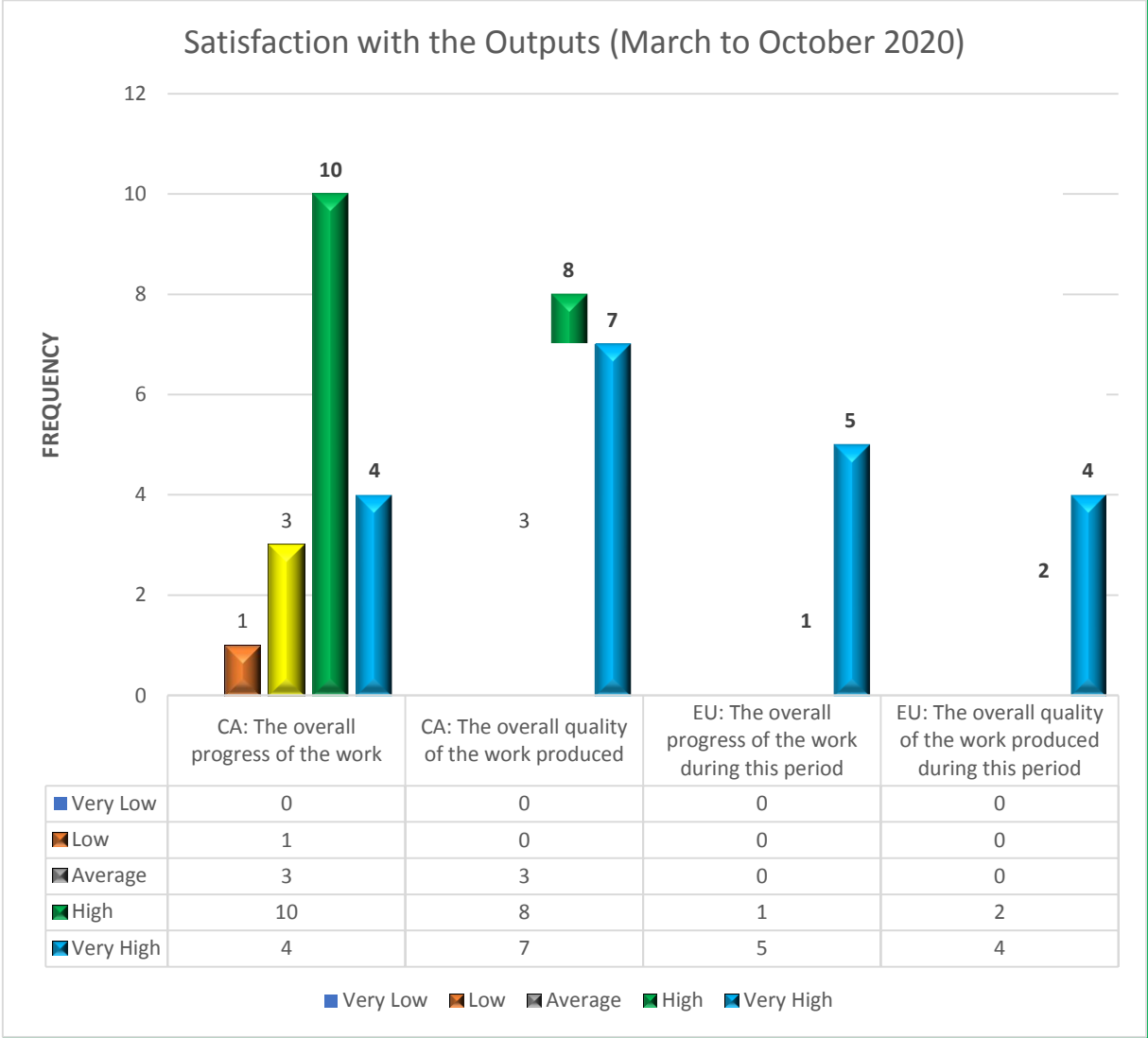


Figure 5: Satisfaction with the Outputs during the Corona Pandemic

The EU coaches unanimously evaluate positively both the overall progress and the quality of the work produced during the first phase of the corona pandemic (March-October 2020).

**Summary and some general observations to conclude**

Overall, the coaches seem to be satisfied with the output of the work produced up till now, while they are less satisfied with the collaboration within the WG and the contribution of each member.

For the CA members the strong points of the Work Groups are also in terms of the quality and the progress of the outputs and the access to resources, while they also seem quite satisfied with the contribution of the members and the collaboration within the WG as well as with the accreditation progress. The support from the EU coaches is also one of the

important facilitating factor in the process. It seems that through this self-evaluation and reflection CA members feel that there is room for improvement in their own contribution, while improvement can also be achieved in the collaboration among the Universities. Certainly, the corona pandemic and the restrictions on mobility and physical presence have contributed in the relatively low scoring in this area.

Reporting by Irene Nikandrou

Athens

17 November 2020