



STUDIJŲ KOKYBĖS VERTINIMO CENTRAS

KOLPINGO KOLEGIJOS VEIKLOS VERTINIMO IŠVADOS

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW REPORT OF KOLPING COLLEGE

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I. INTRODUCTION

- 1 The review of Kolping College (referred to below as “the College) was organised by the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (SKVC), Lithuania, in its role as the Authorized Agency prescribed by Lithuanian law. The review was conducted in accordance with the prescribed “Methodology for Conducting an Institutional Review in Higher Education” (thereafter “Methodology”) according to the Procedure for the External Review in Higher Education approved by Government Resolution No 1317 of 22 September, 2010.
- 2 Although a review team of experts had previously produced a report with a positive evaluation (the “2012 report”) following a visit to the College in September 2012, the overall evaluation had been negative as a result of an evaluation by MOSTA (The Research and Studies Monitoring and Analysis Centre) undertaken in 2010. Nevertheless Kolping College had made significant progress since 2012 and had addressed a number of the recommendations contained in the 2012 report.
- 3 Following a positive MOSTA evaluation earlier in 2013, the College was asked to submit a revised a Self Assessment Report (SAR) with Annexes. Further documentation was provided or requested by the review team. The documentation is set out in Appendix 1. The review team visited the College from 26 – 27 November 2013 and conducted eleven meetings with members of the College as well as providing preliminary oral feedback.
- 4 The College’s SAR was made available in translation for the team. The Director and staff described the preparation of the SAR as a valuable exercise in “discovering the positives and negatives” of the student and staff experience at Kolping College and in strengthening the College’s sense of community. The members of the Self Evaluation group described how the document was put together, with draft sections produced by members of the group and then considered by discussion groups organised across the College. The team, however, considered that there could have been a greater amount of self-reflection and self-evaluation, whereas the report was unduly descriptive stressing primarily conformity with legal requirements. In the opinion of the team, the report did not do justice to the College’s achievements and aspirations.
- 5 **The team recommends that it would be beneficial for the College to develop further its capacity for effective self-analysis.**
- 6 The expert review team explored the four principal areas of the College’s activity as set out in the ‘Methodology for Conducting an Institutional Review in Higher Education’ (referred to below as “the Methodology”): strategic planning, academic studies and life-long learning, research and/or art activities, and impact on regional and national development. Within each area of activity the review team made appropriate reference to the criteria set out in the Methodology and took due account of the lists of sub-criteria in reaching their decision.
- 7 The expert team consisted of: team leader: Brian O’Connor, retired Head of School (Dean) of Business and Social Studies at the Institute of Technology, Tralee, Ireland; team members: Tomas Bagdanskis, lawyer at “Bagdanskis iLAW Association, employer representative, Lithuania; Irene Mueller, Head of Division “International Cooperation and

Mobility (ICM) within OeAD Ltd and representative of the Austrian Association of Universities of Applied Sciences in the European Organisation of Universities of Professional Education, Austria; Simonas Valionis, Vilnius Business College, Lithuania, student representative; review secretary: Tony Platt, Assistant Director, Quality Assurance Agency, United Kingdom.

II. BACKGROUND INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSTITUTION

- 8 Kolping College is a non-governmental school of higher education, providing college studies and under Lithuanian law is a “Public Institution” (PI).
- 9 The College, known also as the “Kolping University of Applied Sciences”, was established in 1996 by the Lithuanian Kolping Society, itself established in 1993 - a Catholic charity and support organisation that brings together socially responsible people, acting on the self-help basis. The Society constitutes part of the International Kolping Society, which has its headquarters in Germany and is inspired by Adolf Kolping, a Catholic priest who was a well-known leader of social Christianity and a social educator in the nineteenth century. One of the priorities of the Foundation is educational activity, particularly higher education programmes in business, social studies, creative arts and management and to develop programmes in the context of values based on Christian principles and social responsibility. One of the aims of Kolping College, based on these values, is to develop social leaders and to help young people realize their own dignity and value, to gain confidence in their inner strength, and after obtaining strong professional knowledge to become good specialists, able to adapt in the rapidly changing labour market. Senior staff described their goal as “trying to offer the best quality and the best social atmosphere” and the College’s motto on the website is “if you seek for a better future it is your responsibility to create it”.
- 10 Study programmes include the development of general capacities for students, providing theoretical essentials of the study direction and forming professional skills necessary for self-sufficient work. All study programmes are focused on ensuring students’ readiness for professional activities.
- 11 Currently the College offers seven study programmes for the first stage professional bachelor degree: in Business English, Business Management, Child welfare and social security, Ecotourism, Finance, International Business, Law and Social Work. 434 students are enrolled in the current year, showing a slight increase over the previous year (402) after a decline in numbers since a peak of 558 students in 2009-10. There are 43 teachers, the majority of whom are part-time, employed at the College.
- 12 The College’s vision is “to be a higher education institution with a strong organizational culture, innovative, open and responsive to the surrounding environment, implementing the unity of learning and science in the teaching process and providing opportunities for self-expression for each of its members, fully developing the personality of its highly qualified professionals”.

- 13 The mission of the College is reflected in its 2012-17 Strategic Plan:
- To prepare specialists with tertiary education, with underlying Christian morality in their activities; to ensure a modern study process that is in accordance with the requirements of European Higher Education Area by close collaboration with the social partners; to develop students' general skills and civic values that are necessary for work and continuing studies of graduates of the University of Applied Sciences;
 - To educate and refine society by developing its spirituality, humanitarian, professional and information culture, solidarity and subsidiarity, by fostering Catholic values, understanding of the universal good, by using the spiritual care, competence and contacts of the International Kolping Society.

III. STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

- 14 The review team explored the strategic management of Kolping College with reference to the criteria set out in the Methodology and considered the strategic plan's fitness for purpose, arrangements for the plan's publicity and its availability to stakeholders and the public at large, guarantees for its implementation, and management effectiveness.
- 15 The College's SAR provided an analysis of its strategic management. The review team studied this document in detail, together with materials which explained how the College introduced, implemented and monitored this plan. These included the 2007-2011 Strategic Plan and the Strategic Plan 2012-2017 both of which were made available to the team.
- 16 According to the self-evaluation report, all ten priorities for the European higher education area development strategies are taken into account by developing and implementing study programmes including employability of graduates, mobility of students and teachers and student-centred learning. The team felt that this was an appropriate approach in the development of College's activities but that, taking into account the scarcity of resources and the difficult economic situation of the country, the College should define and implement very clear objectives in order to follow all these well-defined priorities in practice and subsequently to assess its achievement of these objectives.

Programmes

- 17 The team noted that whereas the 2007-11 Strategic Plan had envisaged growth in the number of programmes offered, having regard to the changing demographic situation in Lithuania with a rapidly declining birth-rate, increased emigration and the resulting falling student numbers, an overall expansion of programmes was not a feature of the current Strategic Plan. The team noted the College's strong focus on small and medium business activity, particularly very small businesses as well as Social Work and the recent introduction of new two programmes, one of which replaced an existing programme which was not attracting students. These new programmes, which demonstrated close co-operation with social partners, were welcomed. The team noted the overall loss in the number of students enrolled although numbers had increased again in the current year. The team

learned from students that only a relatively small proportion had selected Kolping as their first choice and the College might wish to reflect on how to increase this percentage. Because of demography, the risk of steadily decreasing numbers of possible applicants was likely to result in further reductions in admissions unless steps could be taken to mitigate this. The importance of marketing was stressed and the team noted that the College participated in the annual “Student Market” in Vilnius and had begun to make presentations in schools in which students of the College participated. The College is encouraged to develop this activity.

- 18 The team observed that the institution is relatively small and covers some fields that are also offered by a number of other Lithuanian public or private higher education institutions as well; in such cases it was important that the College emphasized any added value in studying for these subjects at Kolping, for example in the context of “Kolping values” and their application in society. Students who have gone on to enter university had commented on the usefulness of the programmes at the College and their experiences could be highlighted in future publicity. The team learned that the College was considering the future viability of some programmes and was considering a combined law and finance programme; however the team expressed caution whether there was an appropriate market for such a programme although it noted that the programme might address specialized aspects for example in social security law.
- 19 The team welcomed the intention to contain the number of programmes overall but felt that a more strategic approach should be adopted in considering its current and future portfolio of programmes. This should take into account its potential niche in providing programmes unique to the institution, reflecting its “Kolping values” and attractiveness to prospective applicants. (see also paragraph 69). The College might wish to explore in particular the provision of unique programmes which might then attract state funding, as had been in the case of the two most recent programmes. It needed to be sure that it could secure students for the programmes it wished to offer and it was important that an in-depth market analysis was carried out in advance of any changes to the portfolio. It also needed to have regard to the need for, and availability of, student placements with its social partners.
- 20 The review team became aware, during discussions with staff that a number of strategic decisions had in fact been taken but which were not detailed in the strategic plan itself. Whilst acknowledging that certain strategic decisions might need to be taken at short notice, the team would urge the College to develop an inclusive medium-to-long term strategic approach.
- 21 **The team recommends that (a) the College conducts a comprehensive analysis to establish market needs and its own capacity to respond to these needs, (b) based on this analysis, develops a strategic approach to determine its niche in the higher education market and (c) as the opportunity arises works towards a small number of programmes relevant to this niche.**

Applied Research

- 22 Applied scientific research (see paragraphs 102-117) is one of the main activities of the Kolping College, which allows integrating social science theory and practice in small and

medium business, studies and consulting activities. The College tries to organise and coordinate research activities in accordance with the action plans of academic departments. The majority of research activities are focused on applied research in order to support the development of small and medium business activity in Lithuania and its regions, beginning with the Kaunas region, and to create a methodological and scientific framework for development of social work.

Internationalisation

- 23 Although the staff in general claimed a greater emphasis on internationalisation, the team noted the lack of a strong focus on internationalisation at either an educational or a research level in the Strategic Plan itself. The team felt that greater prominence should be given to establishing and developing international contacts and in preparing the College to meet the opportunities and challenges of international activity.
- 24 The team met representatives from the International Kolping Society, who stressed the strategic role they were encouraging the College to play in furthering its aims and values in Lithuania and the Baltic area in general, and of the Society's existing and future links in Europe and other parts of the world. Through its linkages with the International Kolping Foundation the College has excellent opportunities to develop its international profile and it is encouraged to take much more advantage of these. At the same time, existing contacts should be intensified.
- 25 **The team recommends that (a) the College develops and highlights a strong international focus as part of its overall strategy and (b) as part of this strategy, intensifies its contacts with other institutions, including in particular the Kolping institutions existing in many countries, to build an international academic network using various instruments of exchange or project co-operation.**
- 26 Further detailed recommendations to encourage internationalization are detailed in paragraphs 95, 96, 98, 100, 102, 104.

Strategy: Implementation and communication, fitness for purpose

- 27 The team learned that the College's strategy is discussed with, and reviewed by, the Foundation Board which meets four times a year, with the Academic Council which meets twice a year and more often if necessary. It is also available to the annual Shareholders Meeting which is primarily responsible for funding the college's activities. The Strategic Plan is reviewed annually by means of annual review reports and action plans.
- 28 The team felt that the mission and the values of the College were well understood and celebrated by staff and students. The strategic plan is available on the University's website. However the team felt that, whilst a number of staff had had input in discussions on the strategic plan, and details of the strategic plan are made available to the founders, stakeholders, the academic community and the public at large, the strategic plan itself needed to be embedded and embraced by the whole organization. The College is encouraged to develop wider communication and dissemination of the strategic plan and its implementation across the whole institution.

- 29 With respect to its fitness for purpose, the review team found that the Strategic Plans take into account the College's mission, strategic documents on national policy, and in general, the principles of the European Higher Education Area. The team felt that the strategy was well understood by the College's stakeholders and the College demonstrated that the strategic plans were regularly monitored by the Director and the Academic Council.

Process Management

- 30 The team learned that the Academic Council is the main academic deliberative body and, as noted above, normally meets twice a year. Membership consists of (i) the director (ii) professors and chief academic researchers (not less than 20%), (iii) associate professors and senior academic researchers (not less than 20%), and (iv) student appointed representatives (not less than 20%); the remaining members (not more than 20%) may include members of other institutions. It is responsible for dealing with policy and implementation issues for academic studies and applied research. The Chair of the Academic Council is elected from amongst its membership. The Director, who is a Law graduate but does not practice or teach, is responsible for day-to-day management. The team felt that at present no-one has the specific responsibility of co-ordinating academic policy and its development deriving from the College's overall strategy and that such a role would be helpful, for example, in taking forward a possible rationalisation of programmes in an international context.
- 31 The team noted that, following the 2012 report the College had created new positions of a Head of Science and Research, and a Co-ordinator of Academic Activities to meet this need. These new appointees would be able to give a stronger lead on the Academic Council in the management of teaching and learning as well as its integration with developments in applied research, and in representations on academic matters to the Foundation Board and the Shareholders meeting. However it was not clear that this would result in providing a strong focussed lead in bringing together overall responsibility for all academic issues (teaching, learning and applied research) and the College might wish to consider how to achieve this within the new arrangements.
- 32 As noted above, the team learned that day-to-day overall management rests with the Director, supported by a Directorate, meeting at least once a month, consisting of the heads of the academic (programme) and administrative departments, and to which students are invite to discuss specific issues. Individual members of full-time academic staff also carry out designated administrative roles; the staff involved were comfortable with these arrangements but as the College develops it may be helpful to further clarify administrative roles and who might be responsible for them. Given the small size of the institution and its overall ethos, communication between the staff involved is considered to be good but nevertheless the team felt that the Director's role could be facilitated by the establishment of a smaller management team, meeting formally on a regular basis.
- 33 **The team recommends that the College creates a senior management team consisting of the Director, one or two academic members of staff with specific overall responsibility for academic issues and staff responsible for the management of financial resources, human resources and accommodation.**

Quality Assurance

- 34 The team considered the effectiveness of internal quality assurance mechanisms. The College's quality assurance processes pay due regard to European Standards and Guidelines. Members of staff explained the development of a quality assurance system which had been part of an external evaluation undertaken eight years ago. The College had worked with partners at the University of Eichstaett in developing a quality management approach. Staff stressed their view that the quality of the human relationships between staff and students was if anything more important than the paperwork involved.
- 35 Existing procedures were systematized and developed to achieve ISO recognition. The team received copies of the Quality Handbook. The team also learned about the system introduced to evaluate teachers' performance. Staff were made aware of their individual evaluations and generalized results were published on the website. The team was told that a generally high satisfaction rate was expressed by students although a small number of negative responses had previously been noted amongst a batch of recent questionnaires suggesting a lack of practical activities on occasion and some lecturers which were too simplistic and lacked interest.
- 36 Whilst welcoming these developments and the considerable progress made since the 2012 report the team felt that it was important to embed and disseminate a quality culture throughout the institution, going beyond conformity to standards and ISO requirements and a formalistic presentation in the Quality Handbook. Quality assurance and enhancement should be embedded within programme development and permeate and guide every aspect of programme delivery, staff development and the student experience. This culture can be supported by monitoring not only of student opinion about teachers, but the resulting feedback and follow-up action, as well as all other aspects of teaching and learning. Regular teachers' and graduates' surveys in addition to the students' surveys can significantly contribute to the development of the quality culture and help monitor the effectiveness of quality assurance mechanisms.
- 37 The team was aware that considerable reliance was placed on the close relationships between staff and between staff and students which was possible and effective in a small institution such as Kolping College, particularly given the values which underpin its activity but at the same time it was important that the college should be aware quickly through its procedural arrangements of any areas requiring improvement, particularly urgent action. In adopting this approach staff might consider it helpful to represent this in terms of the student's journey from the original application through to graduation. Quality assurance mechanisms should be connected with the qualitative and quantitative indicators as well as with the College's strategic planning documents and regular monitoring procedures.
- 38 **The team recommends that the College takes steps to disseminate and embed quality assurance and enhancement culture throughout the institution.**
- 39 In common with many institutions of higher education, individual staff members are solely responsible for the assessment of modules for which they are responsible. The team suggests however that it would be appropriate to have in place mechanisms that guarantee that there are not discrepancies in standards of marking by individual teachers over time. The team was impressed with the arrangements for the examination of project work, including the involvement of social partners.

- 40 Whilst annual evaluations of lecturers and of modules are made, the team considered that there is room for improvement in applying a consistent and rigorous approach to the assessment and marking of students' projects across all modules. This approach may increase the morale and motivation of students to excel in their studies as well as an appreciation of the College, its values and the learning experience which it provides.
- 41 **The team recommends that the College produces on a regular basis, comparative statistics on marking ranges in the assessment of modules.**
- 42 In terms of enhancing the quality of programmes the team noted that the College had instituted a complete updating of its programmes in 2008-9, and saw examples of the attestation process, in which social partners participated, and which it saw as a feature of good practice. It was felt that this process provided an opportunity to make enhancement more explicit.
- 43 **The team commends the College on the attestation process.**
- 44 **The team recommends that the College makes the processes for enhancement more explicit in the developing and monitoring of programmes.**

Human Resource Management

- 45 The College distinguishes two main groups that are subject to different legislation: teaching staff and administrative staff. For selection of the teaching staff, the mandatory structure of teachers' positions for study programmes in accordance with applicable laws of the Republic of Lithuania is taken into account. Full-time teachers are permanent employees of the institution, and part-time teachers work on fixed contracts and all appointments are made according to the College's standard procedures as described in the SAR. Heads of Academic departments provide information about their requirements and the criteria the person appointed has to meet to the human resources manager, who arranges for the post(s) to be advertised. The Director makes the final decision on the employee's eligibility to work in college. The need for administrative staff is structured and selection is made by the Director. Employees are employed and dismissed in accordance with Lithuanian legislation. Recruitment, dismissal and other documents relating to personnel matters are handled by the personnel specialist.
- 46 Both staff and students emphasized the close working relationship between staff and students. As noted above, teaching staff are subject to evaluation of their performance. Examples were given of action taken to remedy poor performance.
- 47 The team noted that there was considerable staff development activity, and that this had increased following the 2012 report with staff development offered on a regular basis. Use had also been made of European project funding to train in competences both for academic and administrative staff. Staff gave examples of staff development projects which had been made available; teachers themselves find courses of interest and the College invariably supports staff financially to attend such courses; visiting lecturers and professors have given seminars on pedagogical development, reading skills and writing skills at the invitation of the Director or Head of Department. Pedagogical skills are required of all practitioners.

- 48 The team learned that staff welcomed and appreciated opportunities for staff development but, ironically, staff could then be attracted away from Kolping as a private institution to a public sector institution with higher salary levels and an assured pension. Nevertheless the team felt that further development of regular programmes of staff development arranged by the College would be desirable, particularly in encouraging and helping staff to undertake applied research and to write for applied research journals.
- 49 **The team recommends that the College develops further a regular programme of staff development in pedagogic skills, motivation for and ability to undertake applied research, language acquisition and administrative skills be introduced.**
- 50 The team noted that incentives were provided which encouraged staff to participate in training sessions and in developing pedagogical and applied research skills. Staff who met the team said that they felt recognised and valued for their achievements.

Management of change

- 51 The team compliments all levels of staff in the College on their pro-active approach to a rapidly-changing environment and the steps they have taken to meet the challenges.. The College has not yet developed a formal risk analysis process but the previous and current strategic plans include a comprehensive analysis of strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

Management of Material Resources

- 52 The College has made significant progress in the development of its premises, doubling the floor space and increasing the number of workplaces from 18 to 145. The team judged the number of workplaces in classrooms to be sufficient both for the lectures and practical sessions. For independent tasks, students have access to the workstations in the library reading room and other classrooms, when they are not occupied. All the classrooms have been refurbished and are equipped with appropriate multimedia equipment, with computers and internet access. Students spoke highly of the facilities which were available to them.
- 53 The Library is well-equipped. The reading room has 50 workplaces, 28 of which are computerized, with internet access. The SAR details arrangements for teaching staff to advise on the provision of new books. College teachers prepare methodological materials, lecture presentations, which are presented in the library in printed format and are posted on the College server in the electronic format. The Library system is integrated into the Lithuanian Academic Libraries Network (LABT).
- 54 Students confirmed that they made extensive use of the library and the team learned that they had access to the electronic catalogues of LABT libraries, the National Library, and prominent foreign libraries, as well as the databases of many Lithuanian and foreign scientific publications. The Library is integrated into the Lithuanian Academic Libraries Network, and students are able to access catalogues, databases and scientific publications in Lithuanian and foreign libraries through the virtual library portal of Lithuanian science and studies.

- 55 The team observed that the College had fulfilled the goals which it had set in the 2007-11 Strategic Plan, in terms of the development of material resources and commended the College on the considerable progress made in providing learning resources which are appropriate and fit-for-purpose. This results of this progress had been confirmed in the MOSTA evaluation earlier this year.

Funding

- 56 College funds are provided primarily through tuition fees paid by students, the state budget funds, (which account for 8 percent of the total funds) and provision made by the International Kolping Foundation which allocates funds for student scholarships in addition to providing use of the premises free of charge and major investments in the College's material infrastructure. The College also receives funds for specific projects including the EU projects such as the Leonardo da Vinci partnerships project, the Grundtvig Learning Partnership Programme, the Lifelong Learning Programme and Erasmus funding. One noteworthy project – “Development of Teachers' general and specific competencies” – provided funds to improve teachers' competencies. This project which was completed in March 2012 involved 28 college teachers who successfully raised their qualifications, which are now being conveyed to the students.
- 57 In common with other Lithuanian higher education institutions, the College has suffered loss of income due to the decrease in the number of students enrolling for programmes, although the College reported a noticeable increase in the number of students with good study results and the overall increase already reported in the current year. Although relatively few state scholarships are available to students of Kolping as a private institution, the International Kolping Society generously funds a range of scholarships, both for activities and for academic excellence. The College conducts a budgeting process whereby departmental bids are submitted to the Shareholders Meeting. Whilst support for infrastructure and educational materials is currently forthcoming from the Kolping Society, it is important that the College carefully monitors the demand for its programmes to ensure that all programmes are as possible financially, as well as educationally, viable.
- 58 The decline in student numbers had resulted in an operational deficit in 2011 and the college claimed that the decline in numbers had been further exacerbated by damaging publicity following MOSTA's negative decision on the evaluation of the adequacy of learning resources in 2010 (see paragraph 2). Whilst the number of students has subsequently increased, it has not yet reached the level of 2009. The team urges the College to continue to maintain close scrutiny of programme admissions and trends and to develop forward projections to enable it to predict more closely the likely financial position in future years. Consideration should also be given to attracting more funding through the development of contract research and other projects, as well as the development of “niche” programmes which can attract additional students.
- 59 **The team recommends that the College should focus serious attention to development of realistic forward projections and the implementation of a well-elaborated plan of activities in order to create favourable financial conditions for long-term sustainability.**

Academic ethics provisions and procedures

- 60 The College's Academic Council has approved the "Academic Ethics Code of the Public Institution Kolping College community", which establishes the basic provisions of ethical academic conduct that are not directly regulated by the law of the Republic of Lithuania and international legislation and the College internal rules, and provides tolerance limits for the behaviour that should be avoided from the viewpoint of academic ethics. This is based on the values of the International Kolping Foundation which are themselves based on Christian philosophy and social ethics and an emphasis on professional ethics, Christian social teaching and moral values; to form an honest approach to work and the promotion of community awareness in all activities.
- 61 All members of the College community are expected to undertake to comply with the main guidelines of the College community provided in the Code of Ethics, and not to commit actions violating the ethics set out in this Code. The Code of Ethics is published on the College's website, and supervision of the Code of Ethics is performed by the College Academic Council. Posters against academic dishonesty are displayed around the College and on the website. Students from the Student Union had offered to help staff in deterring cheating amongst their fellow students. Processes are in place to address any failure to comply with the Code but the team learned that these had not needed to be invoked; in part this could be attributed to the sense of close community which on the one hand stressed the Kolping values and where also students would see no logic in cheating in a situation where they would easily be detected.
- 62 It was clear from discussions with staff and students that "Kolping values" permeate the everyday life of the institution and whilst these have a strong Christian basis, students do not feel any sense of indoctrination as these are equated with human values. Values and ethical behaviour are acknowledged as an important element of the educational process and the team saw this as a feature of good practice.
- 63 **The team commends the College on the integration of values in the educational process.**

General

- 64 Overall the team was impressed with the strategic management of the College; the recommendations noted above are offered to encourage the College to further enhance its performance in this area.

Judgement

- 65 **The team's judgement on the area of Strategic Management is a positive evaluation.**

IV. ACADEMIC STUDIES AND LIFE-LONG LEARNING

- 66 The review team explored academic studies and life-long learning of Kolping College with reference to the criteria set out in the Methodology and considered their compliance with the requirements for Lithuanian higher education and harmonization with the principles of the European Higher Education Area.
- 67 The team noted that the programmes and life-long learning provision offered were compliant with the College's mission. As referred to above (paragraph 11) the College offers seven study programmes for the first stage professional bachelor degree: in Business English, Business Management, Child welfare and social security, Ecotourism, Finance, International Business, Law and Social Work.
- 68 In the SAR the College describes its priorities in the current Kaunas Regional Development Plan, including the development of business, industry, tourism and transport infrastructure; agriculture and rural development; quality of life. In determining the need for the programme the College referred to the National Tourism Development Plan 2007-13 and the Tourism Development Strategy component of the Lithuanian economic development strategy to 2015. The team was told that Ecotourism is seen as a niche for Lithuania which can transform the opportunities for tourism. The College is also focussing on training of specialists for small and medium business (SME) sector, particularly very small businesses, taking into account the SME component of the strategy. A joint degree programme in business and management is being developed with the University of Stuttgart and the team learned of the development of a joint study programme with Katholische Fachhochschule Nordrheinwestfalen (KTHW). In all these areas the College has responded to opportunities and the team commends the initiatives which it has taken. However, bearing in mind the risks for a small college arising from declining student numbers the team has recommended (paragraph 21) the College conducts a comprehensive analysis to establish market needs and its own capacity to respond to these needs, develops a strategic approach to determine its niche in the higher education market and as the opportunity arises works towards a small number of programmes relevant to this niche.
- 69 **The team commends the College on the development of niche programmes such as Ecotourism and Child welfare and social security.**
- 70 The team learned that, in terms of lifelong learning opportunities, the College offers a range of flexible teaching methods and the recognition of prior education, formal and informal, and work experience contributing to students' projects. The team welcomed the proposals to develop distance-learning packages (baskets of modules) first through the medium of Lithuanian and then through the medium of English, first as written Moodle modules and subsequently as oral modules. The College also offers the possibility of following individual study programmes; this approach can be very resource-intensive.
- 71 The College has also put in place a system of recognition and assessment of achievements acquired informally and through self-education and this has proved to be particularly attractive to students with professional practice experience. In association with the Lithuania Business University of Applied Sciences, it is implementing a project for the development and implementation of a system for the recognition of competencies acquired

in an informal way. The College is working with seven other partners on this project which has attracted European Structural Funding.

- 72 An international project involving Germany and the Baltic countries funded by the Baltisch-Deutsches Hochschulkontor in the field of social workers managerial competencies has been launched. Other projects include the development of civic action competencies in Lithuania and a Lithuanian Kolping Society project – “Young multipliers in Lithuania”, a project involving non-formal education services, strengthening the capacity of youth in a changing labour market and a project to facilitate the integration of unemployed persons into society.
- 73 The College also offers a variety of seminars on a variety of topics, open to people of all ages - children, pupils, students, seniors, as well as educational and social projects for people of different ages and different social groups in Lithuania. These have included the Grundtvig partnership project “What's On the Web”, which develops inter-generational interaction where students teach older people to use computers and the Internet and in the process acquire confidence and skills for communication with the elderly. Staff enthusiastically described their participation in a Leonardo da Vinci partnership project “Creativity in Language Learning” which promotes new methods in language learning. During the training, students learn language through drama, storytelling and film-making techniques.
- 74 The College reported on recent developments including the launch of “The job of my life” project under the auspices of the German Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs in association with the Lithuanian Kolping Society, the Trier Association of the International Kolping Society, a Christian adult centre in Germany and the Saarland Lithuanian community. The College has also established a programme for nursing assistants which leads to a European Social Care Certificate. This programme which includes a crash course in German Language, together with social care and practical knowledge, and is designed to encourage mobility amongst social care workers across Europe.
- 75 **The team commends the range of life long learning initiatives to being undertaken, particularly in the development and recognition of competencies.**
- 76 The team met a number of social partners who spoke highly of these initiatives. The team welcomed and commended this variety of initiatives to promote life-long- learning and appreciated that these were very much in accordance with the College’s social mission. The team however felt that there would be benefits in developing a conceptual framework with which these and future projects could relate leading to well-coordinated activity in this area. The development of a high quality and comprehensive system of lifelong learning could be a possible niche for the College in the Lithuanian educational market, and the College might consider the establishment of a specialised department dedicated to the comprehensive development of the life-long learning initiatives.
- 77 **The team recommends that the College develops a systematic approach for the development of lifelong learning taking into account regional, national and international trends and demands in this field.**

- 78 The team was impressed by the very close contact with the College's social and business partners which was demonstrated both in the SAR and in meetings with a number of partners. Evidence was provided of instances of social partners, as well as from students, contributing towards the modification of programmes and to the introduction of new ones. The role of the municipality in the development of the new programme in Ecotourism was noted as an example of good practice. Evidence was also provided of participation in the assessment process through membership of examination boards and the team felt that the College should build on these features of good practice and encourage systematic and comprehensive participation and feedback across the network of social partners, rather than relying on personal contacts. Many of the part-time teachers are themselves practitioners working with the College's social partners. The review team considers the close and long-standing relationship of the College with its social partners to be a feature of best practice. At the same time the College is encouraged to seek further external participation by academic and social partners in the development of its programmes.
- 79 **The team recommends that the College be encouraged to actively and systematically seek external participation in the development of programmes.**
- 80 Overall the team was impressed with the learning process and environment at the College, which is very practically orientated; both staff and students described the learning experience as one where staff and students work and learn together with teaching methods characterized by close interaction in small groups, and supported by the general "open door" policy. The strong emphasis on project work, working with and for social partners is seen as a feature of good practice.
- 81 **The team commends the College on the close and long-standing relationship with its social partners, including their participation in the assessment process and the strong emphasis on project work working with and for social partners.**
- 82 In meeting the students, the team became aware of a broad level of satisfaction with the learning experience at the College. Students felt that they could communicate easily with lecturers. Whilst consulting formal hours are not particularly high it was noted that students had ready and consistent access to staff. Students emphasized the value of learning in informal sessions and the sense of a learning community. In many cases, teaching in lectures and seminars is supplemented by weekend sessions at the Society's Troskunai Centre, where students and staff have the opportunity to meet socially and take part in activities as part of the "Kolping family".
- 83 Student representatives declared themselves to be satisfied with the training they received and students were confident that their voice was heard both informally and formally through evaluations and the committee structure and cited examples of a lecturer being replaced as a result of negative feedback from students.
- 84 **The team commends the College on its learning process and environment, including opportunities for social interaction provided by its student centre.**
- 85 Staff and students were aware of and informed about learning outcomes. Staff described the global learning outcomes specified by the Lithuanian government and how these are

integrated with the specific learning outcomes for the programmes. The team recognised the work already undertaken in this area but the team felt that these could be further developed to take account of the College's particular focus and learning environment.

- 86 **The team recommends that learning outcomes should be clearly defined taking into account a clearly focused niche for the College's study programmes in Lithuanian as well international educational and labour markets.**

Graduate Employability

- 87 According to the SAR, the majority of students after graduation from Kolping College continued studies in Lithuanian or foreign universities or worked not only in domestic but also in foreign companies, and in general gained employment in areas relevant to their studies. Students who met with the team confirmed that they appreciated the practical knowledge received during their studies at the College and also, for those who participated, in other countries under the Erasmus programme. It is claimed that many students are accepted into employment while continuing studies at graduate level or with social partners where they had undertaken their projects. The SAR quoted data from the Lithuanian Department of Statistics showing the College is one of the three Lithuanian colleges that produce the least number of unemployed.
- 88 The team was impressed by the involvement of social partners in the learning and assessment processes, and the positive effect of practice places often leading to employment with those partners. A number of former graduates who met the team had started up their own businesses and the team was made aware that in the past the College had set aside part of its accommodation to provide supported incubators for those wishing to set up their own business. Other graduates had set up businesses in premises rented from the College and indicates an additional level of support available to students and former students.
- 89 Former students provided examples of feedback on their subsequent experiences in the workplace and the relevance of their studies, which they had provided to the College after graduation but it was not clear that this was so far being collected on a systematic basis and the team felt that it would be helpful to do so. Regular graduates' surveys and establishment of Alumni club could help involve graduates in the development and implementation of the College's activities.
- 90 **The team recommends that the College actively encourages feedback from graduates to facilitate the improvement of studies.**
- 91 The team noted that progress in developing an alumni system was slow. The Alumni Association did not have a formal status but was a club with voluntary membership. A Facebook group, again informal, had recently developed. The team felt that the development of a formal alumni network would be highly beneficial to the College.
- 92 **The team recommends that the College establishes a formal alumni network and record system to facilitate increased co-operation between the College and its graduates.**

Internationalisation

- 93 As indicated above, the College has engaged in a range of international partnerships in the field of life-long learning, such as with the University of Stuttgart, the Katholische Fachhochschule Nordrheinwestfalen (KTHW) and the Baltic Management Development Association (BMDA - Baltisch-Deutsches Hochschulkontor). Commendable though these examples are, the team felt that the College would benefit from the development of a strategy and framework for internationalisation, building on but not relying exclusively on the links which it already has either through the International Kolping Foundation or as a result of individual personal contacts.
- 94 The College is encouraged to develop a stronger international orientation through offering some of its modules and programmes in English and the development of joint degree programmes with other institutions, together with regular practice periods abroad. At the same time the language capacity of the academic staff should be further developed and staff should be encouraged to travel abroad.
- 95 **The team recommends that the College continues work with international partners (a) to establish joint programmes and projects which can be undertaken at a range of institutions across the network and (b) to agree assessment equivalences with international partners.**
- 96 **The team recommends that existing programmes be reviewed to confirm a range of modules which can be taken in international institutions and recognised as contributing to the overall assessment in these programmes.**
- 97 Several examples of international mobility of staff and students were given in the SAR but this activity appeared to be on a fairly small scale, with relatively few incoming students and little evidence of staff mobility, under the Erasmus or other programmes. Nearly 30 staff had however participated in an international staff competencies project (see paragraph 56). Only some eight or nine students on average participate each year although the team recognised the difficulties for many students who had part-time jobs whilst studying and who might therefore find it difficult to spend a year in another country. Nevertheless the team felt that more steps should be taken to encourage and publicise the opportunities available.
- 98 **The team recommends that the College takes appropriate steps to (i) improve the international mobility of teachers, in order to enlarge participation in international networks and attract to additional resources for the improvement of research activities through involvement in international projects, (ii) increase the inward mobility of students by making available a range of modules with lectures in English. And (iii) take steps to encourage wider participation by students in Erasmus exchange programmes.**
- 99 The team noted a number of steps already taken by the College since 2012 to improve language proficiency but noticed some reluctance amongst some of staff to use English during discussions during the review visit. This suggested that further work was needed in this area. It was noted that the development of distance learning material in English, first written and then oral, would in itself provide helpful training for the staff in the use of professional English.

- 100 **The team recommends that the internationalisation focus of the College is facilitated by taking steps to improve the language proficiency of the academic staff.**
- 101 The team noted the developments which had taken place in providing English language material on the website. Given the College's aspirations for internationalization, it is encouraged to develop the English language presence further, with detailed information on the College's mission, values and strategy and full details of the College programmes and the facilities available to students.
- 102 **The team recommends that the College's website presence in English is further developed.**
- 103 During discussions with staff the team became aware of existing contacts by Russian-speaking staff with staff in other Russian-speaking countries; these provide the possibility to offer existing programmes at Russian-speaking institutions, including members of the Kolping network, with at least some modules through the medium of Russian.
- 104 **The team recommends that the College takes advantage of existing expertise in Russian language and culture to explore of the possibility of offering programmes and developing projects in Russian-speaking countries in Eastern Europe.**

General

- 105 The team commends the College on the nature of its student learning experience and sees the potential for further enhancement notably in the development of focussed strategies for life-long-learning and for internationalisation.

Judgement

- 106 **The team's judgement on the area of Academic Studies and Life-Long Learning is a positive evaluation.**

V. RESEARCH AND ART

- 107 The review team explored research activities in the College with reference to the criteria set out in the Methodology and considered the relevance of international links and the harmonization of research/art activities in the College with the provisions of the European Research Area. It also explored the relevance of the College's research activities to its mission and strategy.
- 108 In describing its research activities the College makes reference to student project work and training projects such as the Leonardo da Vinci project, as well as applied research. As a College within the Lithuanian higher education system, the institution is not formally required to undertake research in the sense of the creation of new and original knowledge but it is committed to applied research as part of its social mission and to inform its teaching.
- 109 Applied scientific research is one of the main activities of the Kolping College, which supports integrating social science theory and practice in small and medium business studies and consulting activities, thus many of the students' final projects relate to the activities of the College's social partners. The College tries to organise and co-ordinate research activities in accordance with the action plans of academic departments.
- 110 The majority of the applied research activities are focused in order to support the development of small and medium business in Lithuania and its regions, beginning with the Kaunas region itself, and to create a methodological and scientific framework for development of social work. According to the Kolping College Strategy, the priority areas for regional collaboration are defined as (a) to develop applied scientific research required for the region, advise local government, non-governmental organizations and other entities and (b) to train specialists receptive to education and culture, able to work independently under conditions of rapid technological change.
- 111 Annual conferences such as "Prospects of small and medium business development in the context of integration into the European Union" have been organised in the College since the year 2002. Additionally, the series of conferences in the field of "Challenges and social responsibility in business" started in 2011. These conferences mainly focus on analysing small and medium business situation in Lithuania and EU. Students are involved in organising and leading conferences and preparing papers for presentations. Students who met the team were enthusiastic about their role in the conferences. Good use was made of the simultaneous translation facilities available in the College as practice for language students as well to facilitate the conferences.
- 112 **The team commends the College on its initiative in developing and sponsoring student-led international conferences in applied research.**
- 113 The team noted, that following the 2012 report, a Head of Scientific Activity had been appointed to co-ordinate applied research activity. Three main applied research directions had been identified: (i) the place of international communication in the development of small and medium business (ii) social work and legal regulation in the context of child and family welfare policy and (iii) the development of management skills while fostering

entrepreneurship in small and medium businesses. The team welcomed these developments but noted the continuing potential for tension between research activity undertaken by staff who also held university appointments and applied research carried out within, and attributed to, the College.

- 114 The College is encouraged to specify the nature and role of applied research within the overall applied research strategy as outlined in the SAR and to link this closely to its academic strategy for the development of programmes (see comments and recommendations about focusing on a niche – paragraphs 58, 68-69). This should take into account the applied research interests of the staff working both at Kolping and other institutions who contribute to the College’s applied research activities. The team noted projects were listed on the website but were not listed in the SAR and felt that applied research activities should be more effectively communicated both within and outside the college.
- 115 **The team recommends that the promotion of individual research projects is co-ordinated within a focussed overall applied research strategy linked to the strategic aims of the College and the specializations of its academic staff.**
- 116 The team noted some staff development in the area of applied research had taken place including a comprehensive seminar for researchers on how to write research papers; this had taken the form of a workshop and discussions about research paper structure and a needs analysis to determine what further staff development was needed.

Judgement

- 117 **The team’s judgement on the area Research and Art is a positive evaluation.**

VI. IMPACT ON REGIONAL AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- 118 The review team explored the College’s impact on regional and national development with reference to the criteria set out in the Methodology and considered the effectiveness and relevance of its contribution and impact on the economic, cultural, social and environmental development.
- 119 The College mission and goals state the need to actively seek cooperation with social partners, develop applied research, advise local government, non-governmental organizations and other entities, and get involved in to the education of general public, social actions and other activities, beneficial for the region. Examples are provided in the SAR about the involvement of the College community in public activities including charitable projects as well as academic educational projects.
- 120 As indicated above (paragraph 19) many students of the College carry out practical placements with social partners including small and medium enterprises of the Kaunas region, and the list of final thesis applied research topics includes projects undertaken for small and medium enterprises; the team met a number of social partners and became aware

of the strong relationships which have been built up and of the many instances of the way in which region is brought into the educational landscape, in line with the College's mission.

- 121 The team was impressed by the range of projects which not only enhanced the educational experience but were of added value to the social partners, whereby students prepare final papers, internship reports and research articles under supervision of faculty members and take into account also the needs and interests of the social partners; social partners provide feedback to the College and provide opportunities for students to experience the workplace directly.
- 122 Examples were provided of students whose projects with a social partner related directly to their own experience within their own families. Staff who have research experience at the other institutions where they work are able to bring their knowledge and expertise and also produce research papers. As a result of social partners' experience with students, providing in effect a degree of consultancy, the College can expect partners to offer employment to more students in the future, thus adding to the future employability of the students to mutual advantage. A Law clinic, bringing together teachers, students and local law firms had recently been established which provided a useful service to the community particularly in the area of the law and its impact on social welfare.
- 123 **The team commends the establishment of a Law Clinic as an example of working with social partners for the benefit of the community.**
- 124 The team noted the role played by Kaunas municipality in the development of the Ecotourism programme and suggested that the College might take develop this kind of approach and co-operation.
- 125 The team observed that whilst the College had engaged with a considerable number of individual social partners, many of whom were already known to staff at the College through personal relationships. Overall the College was to be commended on the many initiatives which it College had developed with social partners, including instances where new programmes had been developed following market research with the relevant social partners. The team felt however that these and future initiatives could be brought together more effectively through the development of an overall strategy for interaction with social partners.
- 126 **The team recommends that interaction between college and social partners is developed and managed on a more systematised basis and that input from social partners is analysed and systematised to facilitate the development of new co-operative projects.**
- 127 Following the 2012 report, an approach had been made to the Baltic Management Development Association which brings together businesses, educational institutions, consulting companies, individual management researchers and coaches, not only within the Baltic countries but with links throughout Europe. The team felt that other local and international business associations might also be approached and felt that the College would benefit from a more structured approach through contacts with business associations.

- 128 **The team recommends that the College further increases its scope for involvement with social partners through establishing links with relevant business associations.**
- 129 The team also felt that there should be closer links between teachers' interests and specializations and the topics of student projects carried out for social partners, linking the work produced for social partners more closely to these staff specializations and the content of the programmes.
- 130 **The team recommends that closer ties be developed between dissertation themes within the study programmes and the specializations of staff to optimise the relevance and quality of supervision that can be offered.**

Judgement

- 131 **The team's judgement on the area Impact on Regional and National Development is a positive evaluation.**

VII. GOOD PRACTICE AND ENHANCEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

GOOD PRACTICE

- 1 the attestation process (paragraph 43);
- 2 the integration of values in the educational process (paragraph 63);
- 3 the development of niche programmes such as Ecotourism and Child welfare and social security (paragraph 69);
- 4 the range of life long learning initiatives to being undertaken, particularly in the development and recognition of competencies (paragraph 75);
- 5 the close and long-standing relationship with its social partners, including their participation in the assessment process and the strong emphasis on project work working with and for social partners (paragraph 81);
- 6 the learning process and environment, including opportunities for social interaction provided by its student centre (paragraph 84);
- 7 the initiative in developing and sponsoring student-led international conferences in applied research (paragraph 112);
- 8 the establishment of a Law Clinic as an example of working with social partners for the benefit of the community (paragraph 123).

RECOMMENDATIONS

SAR

- 1 The team recommends that it would be beneficial for the College to develop further its capacity for effective self-analysis (paragraph 5)

STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

- 2 The team recommends that (a) the College conducts a comprehensive analysis to establish market needs and its own capacity to respond to these needs, (b) based on this analysis, develops a strategic approach to determine its niche in the higher education market and (c) as the opportunity arises works towards a small number of programmes relevant to this niche (paragraph 21)
- 3 The team recommends that (a) the College develops and highlights a strong international focus as part of its overall strategy and (b) as part of this strategy, intensifies its contacts with other institutions, including in particular the Kolping institutions existing in many countries, to build an international academic network using various instruments of exchange or project co-operation (paragraph 25)

- 4 The team recommends that the College creates a senior management team consisting of the Director, one or two academic members of staff with specific overall responsibility for academic issues and staff responsible for the management of financial resources, human resources and accommodation (paragraph 33)
- 5 The team recommends that the College takes steps to disseminate and embed quality assurance and enhancement culture throughout the institution (paragraph 38)
- 6 The team recommends that the College produces on a regular basis, comparative statistics on marking ranges in the assessment of module (paragraph 41)
- 7 The team recommends that the College makes the processes for enhancement more explicit in the developing and monitoring of programmes (paragraph 44)
- 8 The team recommends that the College develops further a regular programme of staff development in pedagogic skills, motivation for and ability to undertake applied research, language acquisition and administrative skills be introduced (paragraph 49)
- 9 The team recommends that the College should focus serious attention to development of realistic forward projections and the implementation of a well-elaborated plan of activities in order to create favourable financial conditions for long-term sustainability (paragraph 59)

ACADEMIC STUDIES AND LIFE-LONG LEARNING

- 10 The team recommends that the College develops a systematic approach for the development of lifelong learning taking into account regional, national and international trends and demands in this field (paragraph 77)
- 11 The team recommends that the College be encouraged to actively and systematically seek external participation in the development of programmes (paragraph 79)
- 12 The team recommends that learning outcomes should be clearly defined taking into account a clearly focused niche for the College's study programmes in Lithuanian as well international educational and labour markets (paragraph 86)
- 13 The team recommends that the College actively encourages feedback from graduates to facilitate the improvement of studies (paragraph 90)
- 14 The team recommends that the College establishes a formal alumni network and record system to facilitate increased co-operation between the College and its graduates (paragraph 92)
- 15 The team recommends that the College continues work with international partners (a) to establish joint programmes and projects which can be undertaken at a range of institutions across the network and (b) to agree assessment equivalences with international partners (paragraph 95)

- 16 The team recommends that existing programmes be reviewed to confirm a range of modules which can be taken in international institutions and recognised as contributing to the overall assessment in these programmes (paragraph 96)
- 17 The team recommends that the College takes appropriate steps to (i) improve the international mobility of teachers, in order to enlarge participation in international networks and attract to additional resources for the improvement of research activities through involvement in international projects, (ii) increase the inward mobility of students by making available a range of modules with lectures in English and (iii) take steps to encourage wider participation by students in Erasmus exchange programmes (paragraph 98)
- 18 The team recommends that the internationalisation focus of the College is facilitated by taking steps to improve the language proficiency of the academic staff (paragraph 100)
- 19 The team recommends that the College's website presence in English is further developed (paragraph 102)
- 20 The team recommends that the College takes advantage of existing expertise in Russian language and culture to explore of the possibility of offering programmes and developing projects in Russian-speaking countries in Eastern Europe (paragraph 104)

APPLIED RESEARCH

- 21 The team recommends that the promotion of individual research projects is co-ordinated within a focused overall applied research strategy linked to the strategic aims of the College and the specializations of its academic staff (paragraph 115)

IMPACT ON REGIONAL AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- 22 The team recommends that interaction between college and social partners is developed and managed on a more systematized basis and that input from social partners is analyzed and systematized to facilitate the development of new co-operative projects (paragraph 126)
- 23 The team recommends that the College further increases its scope for involvement with social partners through establishing links with relevant business associations (paragraph 128)
- 24 The team recommends that closer ties be developed between dissertation themes within the study programmes and the specializations of staff to optimize the relevance and quality of supervision that can be offered (paragraph 130)

VIII. JUDGEMENT

Kolping College is given positive evaluation

Grupės vadovas: Team leader:	Brian O'Connor
Grupės nariai: Team members:	Tomas Bagdanskis Professor Irene Mueller Simonas Valionis
Vertinimo sekretorius: Review secretary:	Tony Platt

ANNEX 1. ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

1. Report on progress arising from the recommendations of the „2012“ report
2. Study programmes – an analysis of statistics of subsequent employment

ANNEX 2. KOLPING COLLEGE RESPONSE TO REVIEW REPORT

Dear Team members,

On behalf of Kolping University of Applied Sciences community let me thank for your additional visit, questions, remarks and recommendations. We are glad to receive your assessment of our activities achieved during the year of 2012/2013. The recommendations are very important as they will help us in planning further activities of KUAS. The final institutional review report will be presented to the students, social partners, academic/administrative staff and the founder of Kolping University of Applied Sciences. We are working on further developments according to your recommendations.

No factual mistakes were found in the institutional review report.

We are very grateful for the work of Team members and the Coordinator of the Center for Quality Assessment in Higher Education.

Sincerely yours,
Lina Kalibataite
Director of Kolping University of Applied Sciences

