

# Overview of Architecture higher education programmes in Lithuania

## 1. Introduction

The expert review team had the chance to study the self-evaluation reports of six study programmes in Architecture in Lithuania, which were involved in the current round of inspection, three at undergraduate level and three at postgraduate level.

Three of these programmes (one undergraduate, two postgraduate) are based at Vilnius Gediminas Technical University (VGTU), two programmes (one undergraduate, one postgraduate) at Kaunas University of Technology (KTU) and one undergraduate programme at Vilnius Academy of Fine Arts (VDA).

These study programmes in Architecture were inspected and visited by an international experts' review team on November 10-13 2014.

The experts involved were:

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**Prof. dr. Mart Kalm,**

Estonian Academy of Arts, Vice-Rector for Research, Estonia

**Mr. Gintautas Rimeikis,**

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This overview reports for all programmes inspected had been prepared by Prof. Bachmann (Facilities and learning resources), Prof. Kalm (Teaching staff), Ass. Prof. Savic (Programme aims and learning outcomes), Ms. Staševičiūtė (Curriculum design) and Prof. Wenger (Programme management). "Study process and students' performance assessment" has been prepared by Mr. Rimeikis. Based on the self-evaluation reports prepared by the institutions, wide-ranging discussions held with staff and students from the institutions during the visits, and the views of the visiting experts. Responsible

for preliminary and final reports were Ass. Prof. Savic for KTU BA and MA programme, Ms. Staševičiūtė for VDA BA programme, Prof. Bachmann for VGTU BA and MA programme in Architecture and Prof. Kalm for VGTU MA programme in History and Theory of Arts.

The expert review team suggested that of the six programmes inspected, four were accredited for six years, two for three years. All programmes were accredited.

This report will present the findings of the expert teams in summary under the headings suggested by the Lithuanian Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education. Inevitably the summary focuses on some of the areas where improvements could be made and makes recommendations as to what these might be; but it must be remembered that there are many positive points and instances of good practice in the Lithuanian Architecture study programmes visited by the review team.

## **2. Programme analysis in general**

In accordance with national legislative and Directive 2005/36/EC four-year bachelor programmes (240 ECTS) intend to provide graduates in Architecture with professional qualification are in operation in Lithuania. However the expert review team was astonished to find BA programmes in Architecture lasting eight semesters. In many European countries BA programmes in Architecture usually last six semesters. Following the “Directive 2013/55/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 November 2013, amending Directive 2005/36/EC on the recognition of professional qualifications and Regulation (EU) No 1024/2012 on administrative cooperation through the Internal Market Information System (“the IMI Regulation”)", a total of at least five years of full-time study at a University or a comparable teaching institution, leading to successful completion of a university-level examination is claimed.

For most Faculty and/or study course responsible visited in Lithuania the fact was absolutely new and unknown that the European requirements for the recognition of professional qualifications for Architects had been changed recently. The expert review team expect that the BA and MA programmes in Lithuania will have to change the overall duration of Architecture programmes in the years to come.

Due to the change of European recognition requirements the expert review team focussed in the programme analysis on the evidence of a strong general overall idea of the programme aims and learning outcomes in the curriculum designs.

### **2.1. Programme aims and learning outcomes**

The self-evaluation reports relied on a set of formal documents (issued by EU, Ministry of Education and Science, UNESCO, Architects Council of Europe etc.), which, along with statements of social partner representatives, thoroughly justify the needs of the labour market as well as overall social needs for Architects in Lithuania.

The programme aims and learning outcomes formally fulfil the requirements. However, some course outcomes will have to be significantly improved to justify the logic of the overall programme outcome matrixes and to make them understandable to students and teaching staff.

In general the names of the programmes, their learning outcomes, content and the qualifications offered were mutually compatible. The main programme aims were concise and mostly comprehensive, reaching synthesis (creation) level as per Bloom's taxonomy. However, there were some concerns as programme aims and learning outcomes were not clearly enough allocated.

Some of the programme's aims and learning outcomes were not comprehensive to the experts review team and not sufficient evidence found, that the study programme expectations were aligned with the LTQF/ Level 6 for BA and LTQF/Level 7 requirements for MA programmes.

Never the less, some study programmes will need a general and fundamental re-arrangement of the programme outcomes, optimizing the overall number of learning outcomes and to fully aligning them with the LTQF Level descriptors. The existence of the an over all concept for BA and MA programmes in Architecture will be needed to serve as a driver for a re-arrangement of the programme outcomes, when the programmes in Architecture will have to decide how to proceed with EU directives 2005/36/EC that at least five years of full-time studies are required for working as an Architect in Europe.

## **2.2 Curriculum design**

As per national legislation BA programmes in architecture last eight, and MA programmes in architecture in Lithuania last four semesters. Following the "Directive 2013/55/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 November 2013, a total of at least five years of full-time study at a university or a comparable teaching institution, leading to successful completion of a university-level examination is claimed. For the BA and MA programmes in Lithuania an expected change would have to affect the curriculum structure of one or both programmes (BA and MA) in the near future.

The curriculum designs in general meet the legal requirements for Architecture study programmes according to Lithuanian national regulations in semesters and in the volume of the programmes. The scope and contents of the Architecture programmes are generally sufficient to ensure the achievement of the expected learning outcomes.

The experts review team, after their site visits and after talking with students, had the impression, that students in some programmes are obliged to work more for the courses than indicated in the descriptions of study modules.

## **2.3 Teaching staff**

The qualifications of the teaching staff are mostly adequate to ensure the learning outcomes and the Faculties are well equipped with teaching staff meeting legal requirements. Teaching staff mostly derives from Lithuania. However the teaching staff CV's provided in the self-evaluation reports and its amendments did not reflect a positive activity in the international community of professionals.

International exchange should be strengthened not only by student`s mobility but also for the teaching staff. Incentives to enhance international community activities of the teaching staff should be introduced. However the real contribution of the teaching staff to the professional field in many cases is much more substantial than shown in the CVs` presented by the University.

Lithuanian University have set up strict requirements for research (artistic) and other professional activities for its academic staff. The appointment processes should be transparent for all members of the Faculties.

#### **2.4 Facilities and learning resources**

The study courses in general are well equipped both in technical and in spatial belongings. The facilities provided by the Faculties are adequate for the Architecture study programme needs, both in terms of classrooms and laboratories, as well as computers. Never the less space for student`s independent and group work in general is too small and access 24 hours per day and 365 days per year is missing. Accessibility to the infrastructure of the study courses should be improved.

Modelling workshops usually exist in the Faculties but in very different extent and with different infrastructure. These spaces used by the students for model making are just as well not accessible on weekends and at night. The expert review team underlies the necessity to improve workshop space and its accessibility further on.

#### **2.5. Study process and students` performance assessment**

For all admissions to the study courses in Architecture and History and Theory of Architecture restricted admission entrances are in effect and/or entrance exams have to be passed. I.e. for all study courses a *numerus clausus* is in operation that guarantees that all students accepted to the Architecture study courses dispose of a qualified level of entrance competences.

Students` admission to the Architecture study programmes meets all rules and procedures approved the Government of the Republic of Lithuania. All admission rules can be found on the Internet. Admission competitive points for MA programmes are counted by marks in BA diploma supplements.

In different extent but in all study courses a remarkably decreasing number of applicants for admission –due to economic crisis (2009 – 2013 years period) and for demographical reasons– can be observed over the last five years.

University have provided opportunities to participate in student mobility programmes to study abroad. The Faculties have agreements with different foreign Universities, out of which students can choose their studies abroad.

#### **2.6. Programme management**

In all programme management descriptions quality management efforts are in operation, especially for internal formal and informal issues, never the less qualified international standards seem not to be

established yet. The presently employed questionnaires are neither being supported by the teaching staff nor do students of the programmes produce relevant feedback data.

In all study courses and faculties a formal representative of students in organizational and with respect to questions of content of the study plans seem to be poorly developed. Students representation in the University organization should be increased in the University's enactments and programme management structures.

### **3. Conclusion**

A specific profile of both BA and MA study course in Architecture generally is hard to identify following the self-evaluation reports. A mission statement describing the specific educational concept, the programme aims and the discrete educational profiles to attract talented Lithuanian and foreign students should be developed and published on the University's websites. The existence of a mission statement would help the programmes re-arranging the curriculum designs to fulfil the required overall duration of Architecture studies of at least five years of full-time study at a University or a comparable teaching institution.

The expert review team suggests developing programme schemes in all Lithuanian Architecture programmes to address Directive 13/55/EU requirements. The experts strongly suggest terms of three years of BA and two years of MA programmes if enabled by national legislative.

The experts review team recommends focussing on the opportunities of the Faculties to strengthen the single position of the study courses in Lithuania and abroad. The experts review team also suggests appointing more internationally well known architects as teachers and/or teachers with PhD degrees. The expert review team recommends enhancing international community activities of the teaching staff by incentives.

The experts group recommends to strengthen theoretical components in both BA and MA curriculum designs and to link them to students practical work tasks. The hours of student's independent work per course should be re-calculated in general. The experts group recommends providing regularly group work experiences to students in the curriculum design.

The expert group suggests to continuously applying the quality management systems in operation to improve teachers' performance and the study process outcomes.

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