



Proposal of the Rulebook for short cycle study in Serbia

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DRAFT

**THE POLICY OF INTRODUCTION OF
PART-TIME AND SHORT CYCLE STUDIES
IN HIGHER EDUCATION
IN THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA**

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Short historical overview

At the beginning of 2015, the proposal of the project entitled *Introduction of part-time and short cycle studies in Serbia* was prepared as a response to the Erasmus + call, KA2 – Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices – Capacity Building in the field of Higher Education.

The main idea of this project was to recognize good practices of the chosen EU partners and propose a way in which new forms of the teaching process could be properly outlined and realized, while adequately fitting into the current situation in Serbian higher education. This project set two main aims:

1. defining a legal framework which would allow for the development and introduction of part-time and short cycle study programs in Serbia;
2. developing five short cycle programs and realizing them in the course of the project duration by combining online and face-to-face teaching, thus proving the suggested solutions applicable and sustainable.

1.2 Degrees of professional qualification in Serbian education system prior to 2005

By 2005 Serbian education system had allowed acquiring 8 degrees of professional qualification. Two-year colleges organized professional career studies and allowed the acquiring of VI degree of professionalism. University education provided VII1, VII2 and VIII degrees which were subsumed under the term higher education (figure1.1).

In the education system existing prior to the introduction of the Bologna Process principles, it was possible to work and study. These studies were similar to today's part-time studies. The process of teaching was divided into cycles (weeks, months or semesters). Due to the bad results (long duration, low quality of the teaching process, low academic achievement), this type of studies was abolished in mid 1990s.

There were also certain forms of further education available upon the completion of secondary vocational schools which provided the qualification corresponding to the V degree of professionalism (a highly-qualified worker).

Generally speaking, in the previous periods, especially 20-30 years ago, in Serbia there were different kinds of courses, continuation schools and other types of teaching, aiming at training people for specific and less complex and demanding jobs, as well as for retraining workers

Degrees of professional qualification

Other than professional qualification ranking that indicated workers' ability to work, there were also degrees of professional qualification. Those who graduated from high schools had the IV degree (reserved for four-year professional schools). The degrees were:

- I degree - Lower grades of primary school (4 years for degree; 4 years in total)
- II degree - Higher grades of primary school (4 years for degree; 8 years in total)
- III degree - Three-year vocational school (3 years for degree; 11 years in total)
- IV degree - Four-year vocational school (4 years for degree; 12 years in total)
- V degree - Four-year vocational school (4 years for degree; 12 years in total)
- VI degree – Two-year college (2 years for degree; 14 years in total)
- VII1 degree – *Higher Education* (4 or 5 years for degree; 16 or 17 years in total)
- VII2 degree - Magistracy (2 years for degree; 18 or 19 years in total)
- VIII degree - Doctorate/PhD (no courses, research-driven, free duration)

because of the impossibility (in certain periods and in certain fields) of finding employment with the qualifications acquired through the regular teaching process (formal education). However, these reduced forms of teaching were much more significantly connected to the retraining of those with the lower level of education (low-qualified workers, craftsmen, secondary vocational school graduates, etc.)

Figure1. Degrees of professional qualification in the Republic of Serbia until 2005

In this overview of various study forms which can now be associated with short cycle programs existing in other countries, we should also mention the possibility of obtaining a diploma (a first diploma) in higher education upon the completion of more than 50% of obligations laid down by the curriculum (The Law on University Studies, 2002). Students were issued first diplomas/certificates which did not allow them to acquire the title of Bachelor, but enabled them to find less complex jobs they were qualified for.

There were certain types of specialized courses available upon the completion of higher education, but they did not allow students to acquire a diploma and a higher degree of professional qualification. In practice, apart from professional and scientific conferences, seminars and symposiums, there were always courses in very different forms organized as the basis for "professional knowledge innovation", and in the last 10-15 years they have been referred to as "continuing professional education".

The need for constant harmonization and improvement of knowledge, skills and competencies obtained through formal education and evidenced by the diploma a person acquired (i.e. the acquired degree of professional qualification) in accordance with the new scientific, professional and technological knowledge, is comprised under the term *lifelong learning*.

The Republic of Serbia joined the Bologna process in 2003. The Law on Higher Education entered into force in September 2005. The new law has made a connection within the higher education system between professional career and academic studies, and it has organized them into three cycles (academic studies) or two cycles (professional career studies). The Law implements all features of the Bologna Process (the accreditation of higher education institutions and study programs, internal assessment, the system of ECTS credits, balanced student workload corresponding to 60 ECTS credits per academic year, the value of 1 ECTS credit being equivalent to 20-30 contact hours, continual process of learning and knowledge evaluation throughout the academic year, mobility, examinations mostly in the form of tests, learning outcomes measured through competencies, lifelong learning...)



Figure 2. General scheme of higher education organization in the Republic of Serbia after 2005

This Law does not recognize other types of studies apart from full-time studies, but the stipulated time limit for completing a study program is defined as the double number of academic years

needed for the completion of a study program with the possibility of its extension in accordance with the higher education institutions' decisions. The Law having entered into force, the studies abiding by the Bologna system started in the academic 2006/2007. Every year since then, amendments to the original Law have been made owing to the various problems occurring in its implementation. The most considerable and significant amendments to the Law were made in 2010. They mostly referred to increasing the number of examination periods and reducing students' obligations the fulfillment of which was necessary in order for them to continue being financed from the state budget, in spite of it being clear that a large number of students could not keep pace with the teaching process as envisaged, that a significant number of teachers was not trained to apply interactive teaching and enable the active learning process, that students neither possessed the necessary level of knowledge or skills for becoming involved in this type of teaching nor did they show any interest in adapting to the new methods. The approach of this kind increasingly impeded the implementation of the core principles of the Bologna study system and reduced the benefits this new teaching approach could bring.

In the 10 years since the enactment of the Law, there had not been made any amendments that would ensure the teaching process to be organized in a way that would make studying accessible to all categories of students, this being their fundamental right, as well as to somehow reduce the number of dropout students.

In 2012, however, the document entitled *The Strategy for Education Development in Serbia 2020* was adopted and it introduced both terms, short cycle and part-time studies, into the higher education. Their implementation dynamics is defined in the Strategy application action plans.

1.3 Part-time and short cycle studies in The Strategy of Education Development in Serbia 2020

The Strategy defines the Mission of the education system as “the long-term roles of education for the needs of economic, social, scientific and technological, cultural and other developments in the society in general, and for the development of the creative and business potentials and quality of life of every citizen of the Republic of Serbia” and the Vision “of the education system development which indicates the desired and yet possible state which should be reached by 2020...”

“The mission of the education system in the 21st century Republic of Serbia is to provide the basic foundation for the life and development of the individual, society and state based on knowledge.”

In order for the mission and vision of the education system to be attainable, as they are defined in the abovementioned manner, the Strategy has taken into consideration the comprehensive system, pre-university and higher education, as well as the strategy for financing education. Furthermore, the long-term goals of education which are binding for the education system in its entirety, as well as for each of its parts individually, are:

- increasing the quality of the teaching process and the learning outcomes;
- increasing the coverage of the Serbian population on all levels of education;
- attaining and maintaining the relevance of education;
- increasing efficiency by using all educational resources, that is, completing education within the stipulated timeframe, with a minimal duration extension and a reduced dropout rate.

When it comes to higher education, the Strategy concludes that it is of special importance for the Republic of Serbia and that it is integrated into the international and European educational, scientific and artistic space.

The mission of higher education in the Republic of Serbia is “to continuously create and transfer scientific knowledge and professional competences through organized studies and research, which will enable, in the first place, the social, cultural, economic and other progress of our country and its citizens in the constantly changing circumstances of life and development.”

According to the projections, 40-50 % of persons who have completed a four-year secondary vocational school (15-18% of a secondary school generation) and 95% of persons who have completed high school (35% of secondary school students) enroll in some of the higher education programs. 70% of a generation graduates within the stipulated timeframe or with one-year extension. This would allow for 35-38,5% of persons aged 30-34 in each generation to have a professional degree.

About 50% of students who complete the first level of higher education continue their studies at the master level. 10% of persons with a master degree should enroll in doctoral studies. According to the Strategy's projections, 60% of PhD students are supposed to defend their doctoral dissertation within the stipulated timeframe (200 persons with a PhD degree per one million inhabitants).

Developmental strategy of higher education in Serbia is reflected in the obligation to constantly harmonize the structure of educational and research activities with the developmental needs of the economy and society in the Republic of Serbia; to continually improve its features in order to increase the participation of the population; provide quality preparation for employment and further professional development, and lifelong learning.

The organization of higher education institutions should be improved in terms of: better utilization of existing capacities and resources; integration in local, regional and European area of education and research; as well as in terms of the ongoing efforts to improve the quality of education.

The quality and success of higher education should be measured based on the relevance of study programs, the efficiency of resource use and the pace of study, the quality of learning outcomes and the speed of employment and self-employment. One of the

segments of the education system's quality and success is also giving equal opportunity to those who want to study regardless of their social, economic or other status.

The Strategy also defines the constant need for the modernization of study programs and the introduction of new teaching approaches. This initiative refers to the constant harmonization of a study program's curriculum with the contemporary flows of scientific, technological, economic, social and cultural development. In addition, it insists on the usage of new methods and information technologies, as well as on utilization of modern software and hardware for more successful teaching. The combination of face-to-face teaching and distance learning is encouraged, but it is required that this type of teaching be harmonized with the European standards and the amount of a teacher's workload is to be taken into consideration. Modernization also means reforming the existing and introducing new study programs, and harmonizing the teaching within the first two cycles, with the direct participation of the interested parties: students, employers and teachers.

Within the segment related to the development of academic studies (bachelor academic studies and master academic studies), the Strategy highlights the need to increase the scope of students by supporting persons from socially vulnerable groups and persons with disabilities. Moreover, it insists on improving the efficiency of studies without lowering the quality (70% of persons graduate within the stipulated timeframe – the duration of a program with a possible one-year extension; up to 15% of a generation do not graduate). The Strategy also discusses the quality of graduates measured by learning outcomes and their alignment with the needs of the market.

In the part of the Strategy that refers to the organization of academic studies and improvements to be carried out in the following time period, the different paces of studying for acquiring the same competences and the same diploma (students who study at a stipulated pace and achieve a total of 60 ECTS credits per academic year and students who study at a slower pace and achieve fewer than 60 ECTS credits per academic year) are discussed. Studying at a slower pace is associated with students who are employed, and those who take part in distance learning. Furthermore, it is stated that a study regime is to be adapted to specific types of studies and that particular attention is to be paid to students who are employed.

In this section, the Strategy also discusses the possibility of students completing short study programs worth 30-120 ECTS credits, apart from the basic academic studies' 180/240 ECTS credit and the master academic studies' 60/120 ECTS credit programs. These short cycle programs provide more specific and functionally related knowledge, in accordance with the application of short cycle programs at universities within the EHEA.

Alongside the suggestions on how to improve the studies within higher education, an analysis of the current situation is provided. The quality of students and studies, the efficiency and relevance of study programs is not satisfactory. The accreditation process has somewhat led to the better

organization of data on higher education institutions and study programs, but failed to implement a standardized curriculum and create unified learning outcomes of different study programs that claim to have the same learning outcomes and that acquire the same title. Moreover, there is a discrepancy between the learning outcomes of some study programs and the labor market conditions, job systematization and description. The average length of studying within the Bologna system is significantly longer than predicted. The teaching process predominately utilizes face-to-face teaching, and the application of the active learning model and practical application learning is insufficiently practiced. Contemporary technology and the possibility of distance learning, primarily online classes, are rarely used. In Serbia, the average number of students per teacher is about 35; at faculties with large student bodies this number ranges over 100.

Keeping in mind primarily the main topic of this project, within which this document has been prepared, an insufficient inclusion of students from underrepresented categories (the point system used in the admission process does not take into consideration the social status of a candidate) is discussed, as well as the organization of studies that does not take into account the needs of employed students.

Owing to all of the abovementioned and in order to move forward from the current situation towards what is defined as the desired condition, it is necessary to establish a comparative system of securing and assessing quality of higher education institutions, study programs, teaching process and students; continuously work on increasing the relevance of study programs and acquired competencies in relation to the demands and needs of the labor market; facilitate the enrollment into studies and studying for the underrepresented population categories; introduce more flexibility into the study regime and adapt it to different student populations; insist on the application of modern information technologies for modernizing the teaching process; facilitate studies for persons who are not able to attend classes regularly; and also to implement personalized teaching and learning. Within these measures, it is also proposed that "employed students should be allowed to partially take part in the study program, and then complete it in its entirety if they wish (part-time study)."

In the section relating to the modernization of academic studies organization, the possibility of acquiring certificates worth 30-60 ECTS credits through the completion of short cycle programs worth 30-60 ECTS credits is proposed. The certificates are intended for students to acquire a more specific qualification or for employees' training through short cycle programs.

Within the framework of the measures for the strategic achievement of the adopted vision, which is outlined in the Strategy, it is stated that "Special funding of study programs and higher education institutions which are particularly important for social and cultural development and security of Serbia" is possible.

"The mission of professional career studies is that by improving, transferring and exchanging knowledge they provide an opportunity for the society and an individual to benefit from the knowledge and skills, directed towards the professional world and labor market."

The vision of the development of this type of studies refers to the widening the scope (30% of students enrolled in first-level higher education programs) and the expansion of the network of four-year colleges of professional career studies at the local and regional level, harmonized with the structure and economic resources. The flexibility of study programs should contribute to the relevance of this type of education. The requirements regarding efficiency which have been specified are similar to those at the academic level (70% of the enrolled students complete their studies within the stipulated timeframe; 15% of a generation drop out). The quality of study programs is reflected in the outcomes that provide professional competencies and teaching which provides practical knowledge, skills and aptitude, with a significant share of practical training. The harmonization of the program and outcome with the users, that is, potential employers is important. Current problems are related to the number of students enrolled in professional career studies; funding through the tuition paid from the state budget; not using the possibilities of establishing academies of professional career studies which would increase spatial and staff capabilities and allow for more efficient utilization of other resources for the improvement of teaching quality; and poor recognition of acquired degrees in the labor market.

Taking into consideration the efficiency of studies, this form of higher education can be improved by correctly defining the pace of study, although it is not explicitly stated. The recognition and relevance of study programs within bachelor professional career studies and specialist professional career studies requires the existence of continuous cooperation and harmonization and program flexibility in order to obtain the necessary outcomes.

Based on the guidelines contained in the Strategy, it was clear that the next extensive or significant amendment to the Law on Higher Education, as well as the preparation of the Republic of Serbia for the EU Accession Negotiations, also brings new forms of harmonization. Furthermore, on the one hand, there are still difficulties in application and studying within the requirements of the Bologna process, which is most evident in poor efficiency of studies, and, on the other hand, an insufficient understanding of the education system, the economy, the labor market, and how and who needs to be adjusted leads us to the fact that not even in 2015 did we have a defined National Qualifications Framework, which would provide a scheme of the education system, give job descriptions and definitions, and the necessary qualifications of those working on them through the use of certain descriptors.

One year since work on this project has begun, we still do not know whether or in what way the National Council for Higher Education has created space for short cycle study programs in the education system of Serbia (whether as a separate category included between secondary and higher education or as the first sub-level within higher education), but we do know that the draft of the new Law on Higher Education includes in its content both forms of teaching process (short

cycle and part-time), and that the consortium of the PT & SCHE project partners have prepared this document with certain interpretations and suggestions.

The proposals were made after taking into account different experience of European countries, as well as the experience of the partner institutions in this project, discussions within the consortium, discussions with business entities and secretaries of sector chambers of the Belgrade Chamber of Commerce, analyzed surveys completed at universities among the groups of teachers and students, and, based on the experience of Serbian project participants, knowledge and realistic view of the current situation, needs and opportunities.

1.4 PART-TIME STUDIES IN THE EXCERPT FROM *European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015. The European Higher Education Area in 2015: Bologna Process Implementation Report. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union*

This section offers a short excerpt from European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015. *The European Higher Education Area in 2015: Bologna Process Implementation Report*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, which gives insight into the status of part-time studies in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

“In most countries, part-time students do not make higher contributions to the cost of their education than full-time students, although in eight countries they do. Moreover, the financial support for part-time students is in some countries more limited than for their full-time counterparts. Indeed the two issues are often related, as in some countries where part-time students need to make higher financial contributions; the support they receive is lower or does not exist. Hence, in these countries there are no financial incentives to study part-time, so students wishing to study more flexibly may find it difficult to do so.”

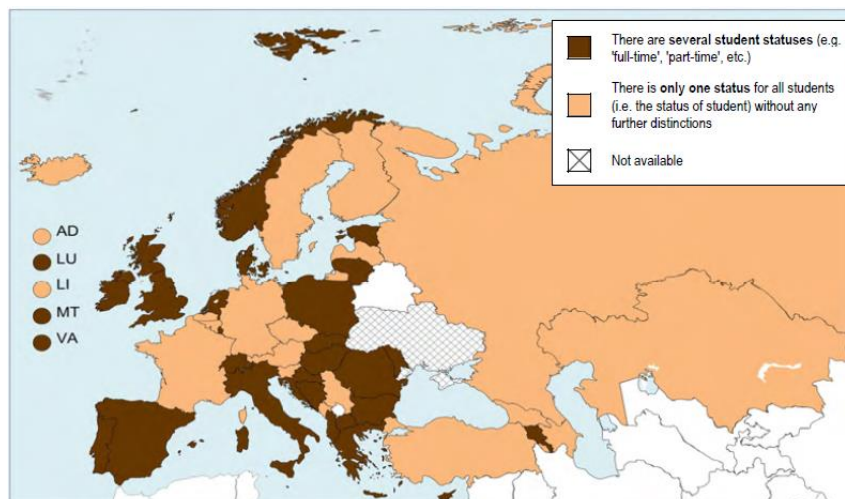
“The concept of a full-time student status is clear and understandable across the European Higher Education Area. However, the reality for other kinds of students is more complicated than it may initially appear. This is because terms such as 'part-time' mean very different things in different countries – sometimes referring strictly to a notion of time related to teaching/learning hours, but possibly related to matters such as funding arrangements.”

“Part-time studies are most commonly defined according to the number of credits, the time allowed for completing studies, or the theoretical number of hours devoted to studying, with some countries combining these factors. In Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Ireland, a part-time

student is defined mainly in terms of a fewer number of credits to be awarded within the same study timeframe as full-time students. Cyprus, Estonia, Malta and Poland, on the other hand, are among countries that set the same credit framework for all students, but give part-time students more time to earn their credits. Both of these definitions are thus similar, emphasising the number of credits a part-time student needs to achieve within a given timeframe.

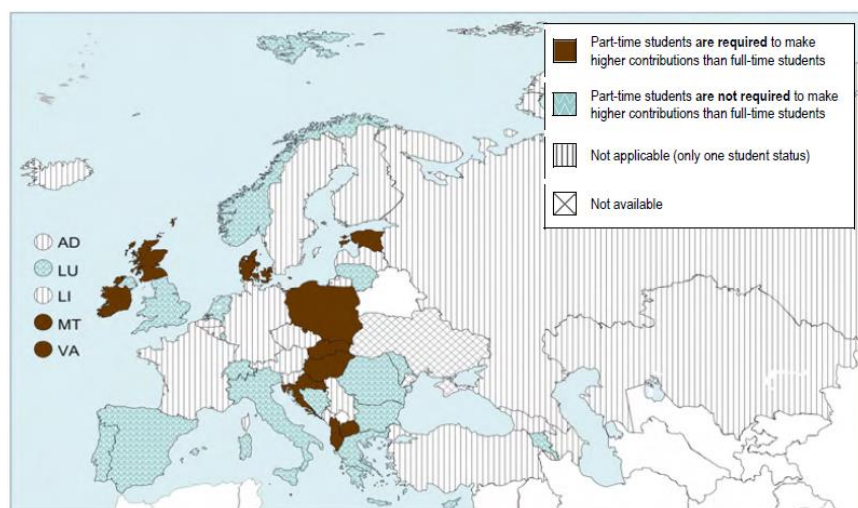
In Greece and Slovakia, part-time studies are defined in terms of expected hours of study per week. In Greece, the law expects part-time students to study at least 20 hours per week. In Slovakia, the required hours are defined as study hours per academic year, with a range of 750-1 440 hours set for part-time students, as opposed to 1 500-1 800 for full-time students. In Hungary and Moldova, parttime students are defined in terms of contact hours, requiring between 30 % to 50 % of the contact hours of a full-time student. “

Figure 5.4: Existence of a formal student status other than the status of a full-time student, 2013/14



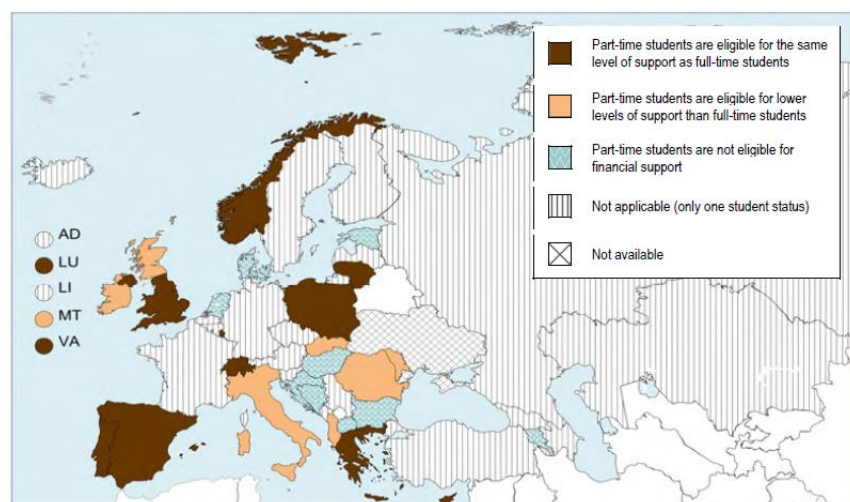
Source: BFUG questionnaire

Figure 5.5: Impact of formal student status on financial arrangements related to higher education studies, 2013/14



Source: BFUG questionnaire.

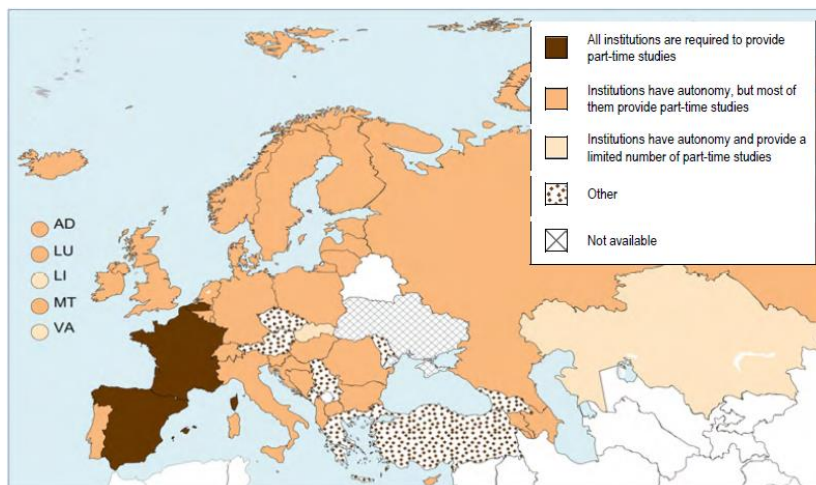
Figure 5.6: Impact of student status on eligibility of financial support for students, 2013/14



Source: BFUG questionnaire

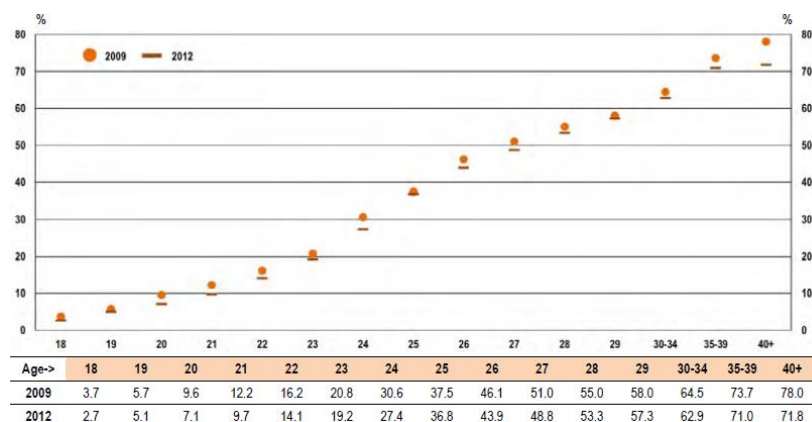
“For example, part-time students may pay the same level of fees as full-time students, but be entitled to lower levels of support. Some clusters of countries with different relationships between students' financial contributions and the support they receive can be identified. A first group can be characterised as offering 'equal treatment', as part-time students do not have to pay higher fees, and are eligible for the same level of support as full-time students. This group consists of Cyprus, Greece, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Norway, Portugal, Spain and the United Kingdom (England, Wales and Northern Ireland). An opposing group where students have to pay higher contributions than full-time students and receive no student support consists of Croatia, Denmark, Hungary and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. While the comparison has to be treated with caution, as it does not take account of the actual levels of support in relation to financial contributions, it is reasonable to conclude that systems where part-time and full-time students receive equal treatment are those where flexible study is more likely to be attractive.”

Figure 5.7: Provision of part-time or other alternative study forms by higher education institutions, 2013/14



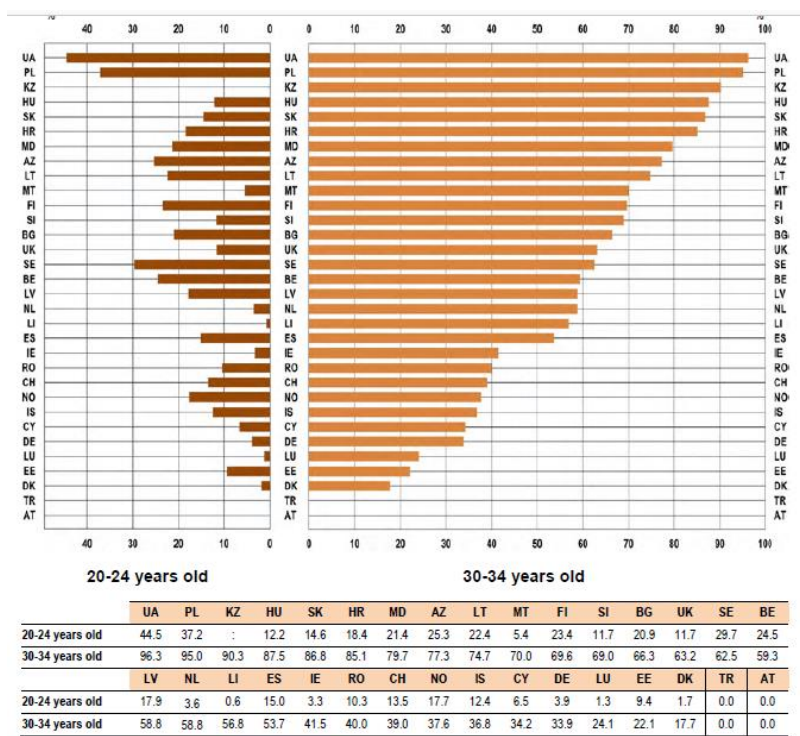
Source: BFUG questionnaire

Figure 5.8: Median of country percentages for students studying part-time in tertiary education, by age, 2011/12



Source: Eurostat, UOE and additional collection for the other EHEA countries

Figure 5.9: % of students studying part-time in tertiary education, by country and by age, 2011/12



Source: Eurostat, UOE and additional collection for the other EHEA countries

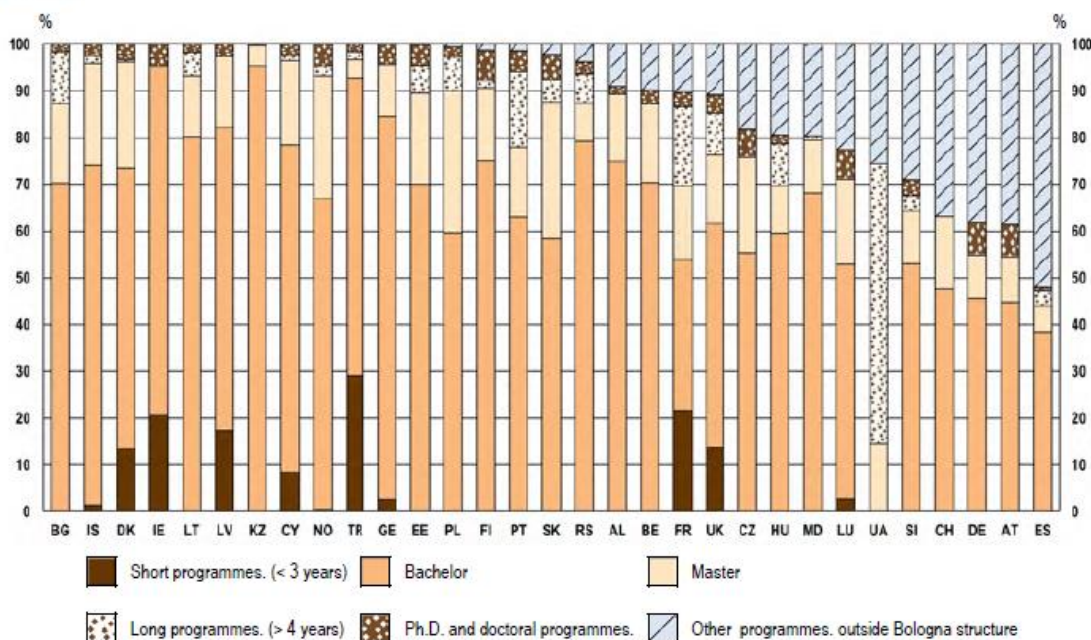
Figure 5.11: Students by formal status of enrolment (self-reported) in %, 2013/14

Source: Eurostudent.

1.5 SHORT CYCLE STUDIES IN THE EXCERPT FROM *European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015. The European Higher Education Area in 2015: Bologna Process Implementation Report. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union*

This section offers a short excerpt from European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015. *The European Higher Education Area in 2015: Bologna Process Implementation Report*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, which gives insight into the status of short cycle studies in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

Figure 2.3: Distribution of students enrolled in programmes following the Bologna three-cycle structure, by cycle, 2011/12



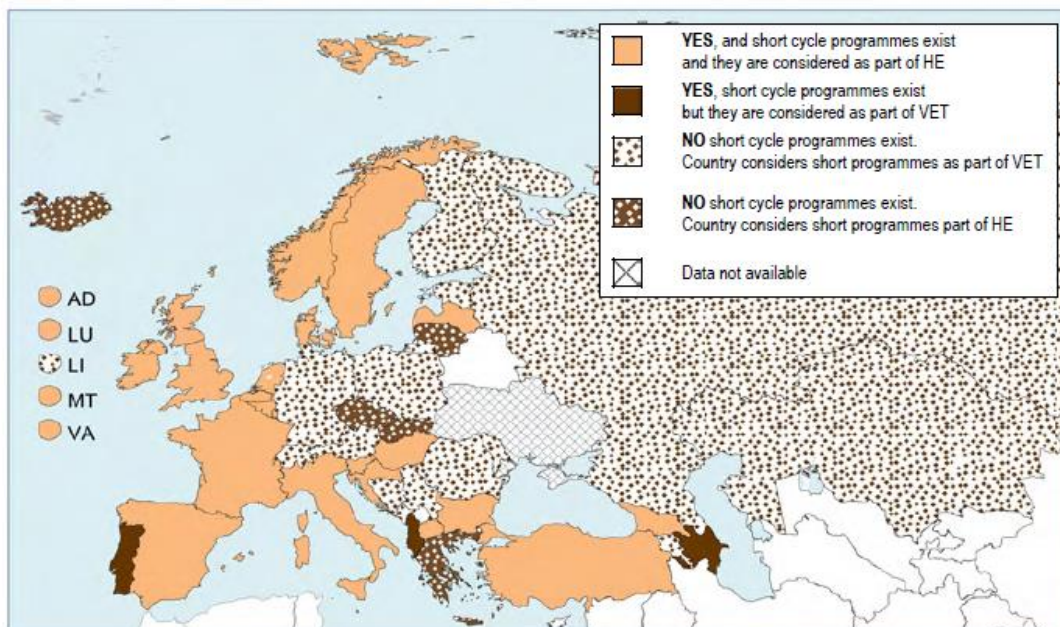
Source: Eurostat, UOE and additional collection for the other EHEA countries.

„Short or short-cycle (less than three years) programmes do not exist in more than half of the EHEA countries. Fewer than 5 % of tertiary students are enrolled in them in Iceland (1.4 %), Georgia (2.5 %), Luxembourg (2.6 %) and under 10 % of students in Cyprus (8.4 %). Short programmes are most common in Turkey (29.2 %), France (21.6 %) and Ireland (20.6 %).

Short cycle higher education programmes

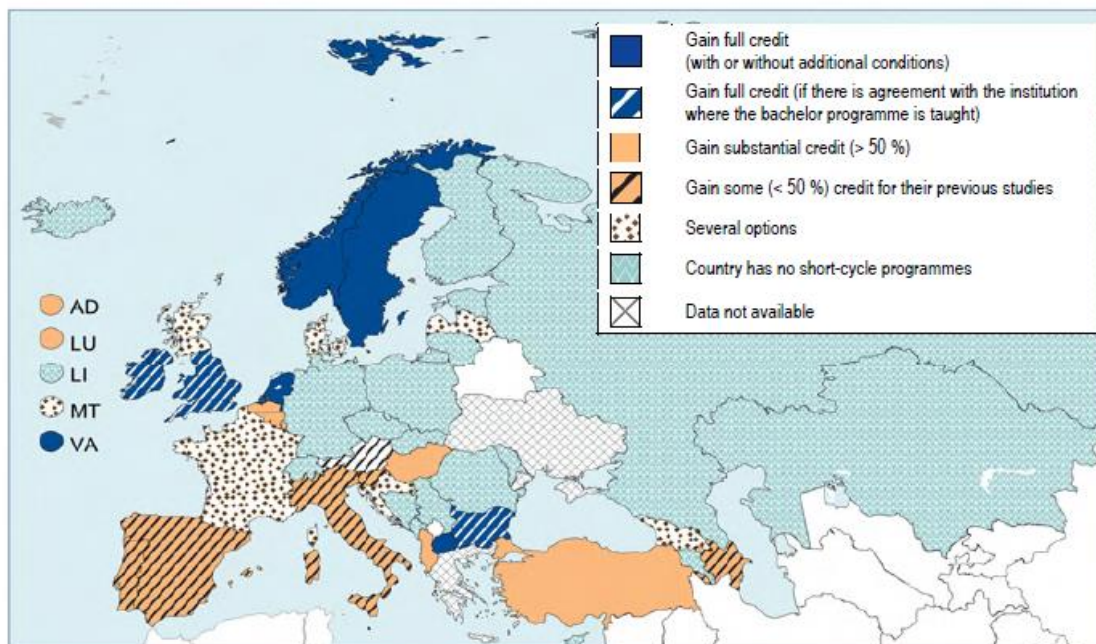
Short cycle programmes have been the subject of discussion since the beginning of the Bologna Process. While a group of countries had neither short cycle programmes nor any plans to introduce them, other countries with such programmes were looking to integrate them in the Bologna three-cycle system. The compromise wording accepted in the Bologna Process Ministerial Conference in 2005 in Bergen formulated the concept of 'short cycle within the first cycle'. However, this has not solved all the issues. Hence several ministerial communiqués have since addressed short cycle study programmes with a view to improving their transparency and comparability.

Figure 2.9: Do short cycle programmes belong to higher education? 2013/14



Source: BFUG questionnaire.

Figure 2.10: Gaining credits towards Bachelor programme in the same field for previous short-cycle studies, 2014



Source: BFUG questionnaire.

The 2014 BFUG survey attempted to clarify several issues related to short cycle studies. The number of educational systems having short cycle programmes has grown from 14 in 2005 to 26 in 2014. As illustrated in Figure 2.9, short cycle programmes are most commonly considered to belong to higher education but in some countries they are attributed to post-secondary Vocational Education and Training (VET). The countries that do not have short cycle provision can also be divided in terms of their attitude to such programmes.“

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Analyses and documents prepared as a response to Introduction of part-time and short cycle studies in Serbia - PT&SCHE (561868-EPP-1-2015-EE-EPPKA2-CBHE-SP) - Erasmus+KA2

2 PROPOSAL OF THE POLICY OF INTRODUCTION OF PART-TIME STUDIES IN THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

2.1 BASIC GUIDELINES

2.1.1 Objective

Part-time studies should enable all persons who cannot study full-time (employed persons, mothers of young children, persons with health problems or disabilities, active athletes, etc.) to be involved in the higher education system and acquire appropriate competencies and qualifications with the aid of the teaching process which is aligned with their capabilities and needs.

Part-time studies involve students studying the same study program for longer than usual, but acquiring the same learning outcomes and competencies, and obtaining the same diploma and title as full-time students. A student who opts for part-time studies every academic year can achieve less than 60 ECTS credits, more often 30 ECTS credits, and study for a period twice as long as the stipulated study timeframe, and this would be considered as regular studies within the chosen regime.

The organization of part-time studies should be tailored to the specific time limitations of students who have opted for this study regime.

Part-time studies can be applied to study programs of both types and the first two levels of study (bachelor academic studies, master academic studies, specialist academic studies, professional career academic studies, professional career master studies, professional career specialist studies).

The project team's viewpoint is that it is not necessary for every accredited higher education institution to organize part-time studies for each study program every academic year. Organization of part-time studies depends on an institution's strategy, validity assessment, and capacities and resources availability.

Comment: The project team members have been aware of the fact that the simplest way to "study and work" or to study part-time is to introduce it into the existing Law on Higher Education by extending the number of years in which the students from certain social groups have the right to complete one study program (within the article of the Law pertaining to student status, it will be stipulated that certain groups of students shall have the possibility to study for a time period three times longer than the full-time studies regime, depending on the duration of a study program). The project team members believe that this approach is not beneficial in its essence, because a study program is not just a simple set of subjects as separate entities without an interconnection. Thus, the disturbance of, first of all, the dynamics of realization, but also the horizontal and vertical

connection of the subjects, certainly leads to less successful study outcomes and poorer quality of the achieved competences. Furthermore, it has seemed beneficial that the Law should also set more rigorous rules of study which would motivate higher education institutions' students and teaching staff to improve teaching and learning processes in order to achieve better results and better quality of higher education.

2.1.2 Flexibility of studies – three study regimes

As it is expected that about 50% of graduates (secondary school graduates) continue their education immediately after graduation, or later in life, higher education should provide flexibility of studies. In that sense, it is proposed to make possible three study regimes:

1. **Full-time studies.** A student has an opportunity to study 40 hours per week (at least 50% of which need to be contact hours) and to achieve 60 ECTS credits per year.
2. **Part-time studies.** A student is not able to meet the requirements of full-time studies because he/she is employed, or for other personal reasons, and can dedicate a maximum of 15-20 hours per week to his/her studies and achieve less than 60 ECTS credits, more often 30 ECTS credits.
3. **Accelerated studies.** A student who wishes to can complete his/her studies in a shorter timeframe compared to the stipulated duration of the study program. After the first year of studies, he/she can choose subjects totaling 90 ECTS credits per year, provided that during the first year of study he/she achieved the planned and binding 60 ECTS credits.

As previously mentioned, a higher education institution may, but is not required to, offer more than one of the three study regimes for one study program in one academic year.

Regardless of the pace of studies, if they study the same study program, students must achieve the same learning outcomes and earn the same competencies, the same knowledge and skills and the same professional and academic title. One study program can be realized in one, two or three study regimes, and regardless of the study regime, a diploma must guarantee the same level of competence of all students who complete the same study program.

As a student's circumstances may change during his/her studies, a higher education system should allow him/her to switch from one study regime to another. A higher education institution, in accordance with its general act, should anticipate transition conditions for each of the three study regimes, if they are stipulated in its statute.

2.1.3 Basis guidelines

Part-time studies should meet the following specific requirements:

1. **Study timeframe.** The usual duration of part-time studies is *twice as long as full-time studies*, since during one academic year a student should study the subjects totaling at least 30 ECTS credits, which does not mean he/she will fulfill all the

specified obligations and pass all the exams as part of all the courses he/she has attended. On student's personal request, a higher education institution may approve an additional timeframe extension of a maximum of 2 academic years for studies completion. The pace of studies, even the duration of part-time studies, depends on students' circumstances, so every academic year they can acquire more or fewer than the stipulated 30 ECTS credits which is considered a norm. However, the following facts should be taken into consideration:

1. a study program is not just a simple set of subjects as separate entities without an interconnection;
 2. the disturbance of, first of all, the dynamics of realization, but also the horizontal and vertical connection of subjects, certainly leads to less successful study outcomes and poorer quality of the achieved competences.
 2. **Study programs' sustainability.** Owing to the long duration of part-time studies for one group of students, a higher education institution should not be obliged to guarantee to its students exactly the same content of a study program for the entire duration of their part-time studies, primarily because of the need for study programs to be innovated and modernized (which is absolutely necessary for certain disciplines). A higher education institution is obliged to provide students with the same teaching program as for full-time students.
 3. **Quality of studies.** Part-time studies must provide the same quality as full-time studies, that is, the achieved competencies of a graduate student of part-time studies should be the same as the competencies of a graduate student of full-time studies.
 4. **Method of teaching organization.** Part-time studies are realized by applying one of the following three methods of organizing the teaching process:
 - a. **Face-to-face teaching.** A student takes part in the planned curriculum in its entirety on the premises of a higher education institution based on the teaching curriculum which has been prepared in accordance with students' abilities. This teaching plan should be available to students at the beginning of an academic year. The schedule should be organized so that every student can choose a combination of subjects that allow him to achieve 30 ECTS credits. Lectures are organized in the evenings, on weekends or as instruction blocks, and they are of the same content and scope as the teaching of the subjects within the full-time studies regime.
 - b. **Online teaching.** A student uses a higher education institution's e-learning system, he/she has the access and ability to choose teaching materials with the obligation to use interactive communication with the teacher or associate teacher of each subject, as well as other students.
- Blended learning.** A student completes one part of his/her study program through online teaching, and the other part through face-to-face teaching on the premises of a higher education institution. Teaching on the premises of a higher education institution is usually organized for the purposes of the

teaching units for which a high degree of interaction between a student and a teaching associate and other students is expected, and when the use of special equipment that students cannot own at home is necessary.

During the course of study, a student may change the selected teaching method in relation to the teaching process organization if more teaching methods are available at the higher education institution, and in the manner and under the conditions stipulated by the general act of the higher education institution.

All three teaching methods can be used by students of full-time or part-time studies.

5. **Who can be a part-time student?** Persons who are employed, as well as anybody who is not able to meet the requirements of full-time studies for personal reasons (mothers of young children, persons with health problems or disabilities, active athletes, etc.).
6. **Enrollment and study regime change.** Study program enrollment requirements are uniform and enrollment quotas (the number of students) are determined by a study program accreditation. When it comes to the study regime and enrollment, different approaches are possible. A higher education institution shall decide on these different approaches and define in its legal acts the procedure to be implemented. Two possibilities are presented here, since the consortium members have different opinions on the issue.

A higher education institution may have an equal competition for enrollment in the first year of a study program and may form a uniform rating list of the registered candidates (in accordance with the defined requirements of students' enrollment). After publishing the final rating list, candidates who have obtained the right to enroll in a study program, choose a study regime; part-time students shall be obligated to always pay tuition fees.

The second model entails that a higher education institution announces the number of candidates who are to enroll in a study program as full-time students and the number of candidates for part-time studies (total number of which is equal to the number of students approved in the accreditation process). Separate rating lists are formed, but the conditions for obtaining points are the same (rating based on academic success, secondary school leaving examination, entrance examination, aptitude assessment, etc.).

During the study period, a student should be allowed to change his/her status depending on the study regime, because of a variety of life situations that students may find themselves in. This process of study regime change should be defined in more detail by the higher education institution's legal acts.

7. **Accreditation.** A study program is equal regardless of the study regime (full-time, part-time, accelerated studies) and the method of teaching organization (face-to-face teaching, online teaching, blended learning). Accreditation standards should stipulate the conditions that ensure the necessary quality of the

teaching process for each of the teaching methods. In accordance with the standards, the number of students who can enroll in the first year of a study program every academic year is determined. In accordance with its stipulations and in the enrollment competition, a higher education institution states the number of students for full-time and part-time studies (a higher education institution can in its legal acts determine another way for the allocation of students for each study regime within the accredited quotas for a study program), as well as for study programs which are organized only via online teaching.

8. **Financing of studies.** Education cost for part-time studies is reflected in the tuition fee which is determined based on the cost of ECTS credits. A tuition fee is determined by a higher education institution. A student who opted for part-time studies pays his/her own tuition fee. Annual tuition fee for part-time studies is calculated by multiplying the cost of ECTS credits with the number of ECTS credits that a student has chosen.

Some consortium members have pointed out that the tuition fee for part-time studies should be higher than for full-time studies. They have explained that this attitude stems from the additional conditions and obligations that a higher education institution and its teachers will have in adjusting the teaching process realization.

2.1.4 Analysis of the effects of part-time studies introduction

What problems are being solved by introducing part-time studies?

The need for continuous improvement and acquisition of new knowledge is a prerequisite for success in every area of work. We are increasingly being faced with the demand of employed persons to attend full-time studies regardless of their age. Furthermore, there is a significant number of young people who are employed because they need to financially support themselves. Based on the current offer of study programs, these students do not have an opportunity to simultaneously study and work. Regardless of their great desire to harmonize work and study obligations, that is almost impossible because full-time studies require a 40-hour week. By introducing a new study regime, employed students would be able to simultaneously fulfill both their work and study obligations.

Serbia faces a very unfavorable demographic situation. It has experienced negative population growth for many years. However, there are still no proper measures to at least slow down this negative trend. Young parents who are students do not have the opportunity to devote themselves to their studies to the necessary extent for the successful mastering of a program. Instead of receiving support, they are very often forced to plead for help and understanding. The introduction

of part-time studies would provide young parents with the opportunity to successfully study and be parents.

The same conclusions can be reached for the situation students with disabilities face. Part-time studies would allow this category of students to choose the study regime appropriate for their abilities.

Finally, there are cases in which students, for various reasons, find themselves in situations where they cannot meet full-time study requirements. At present, in those cases students are forced to drop out, which is very unfavourable for them personally and for the whole society.

What are the objectives achieved by introducing part-time studies?

There are two equally important objectives. The first objective is increased availability and fairness of higher education, which entails that young people who are employed, or are parents, or for any other reason are unable to dedicate 40 hours per week to a study program, can access higher education and earn the same qualification as full-time students, but in a study regime that involves longer study timeframe (part-time study). The second objective is enhancing lifelong learning, that is, employed persons with work experience who want to earn a new or additional qualification because of their future work will be able to do so within the accredited study programs.

Have the options of resolving the problem without the introduction of part-time study programs been considered?

The Republic of Serbia is part of the European education area, and the harmonization of, above all, higher education with examples of good practice in the European countries is one of the instruments for achieving better results in the field of education. Part-time studies are available in almost all EHEA countries, but, unlike full-time studies, the method of introducing and implementing part-time studies is very diverse. This has enabled different modalities to be considered, based on different experience, and the model that best suits Serbian education system to be chosen.

Why is the introduction of part-time studies the best solution to the problem?

Part-time studies will provide, as already mentioned, greater availability and fairness of higher education. Higher education institutions have the opportunity to systematically solve the problems

of the students who are not able to study full-time for various reasons. Introducing part-time studies will ensure that this category of students also has the same scope and quality of studies as full-time students, but through a customized way of a study program realization.

Who will the proposed solutions most likely affect and in what way?

Affected parties	Expected effect	Possible risk
citizens	Quality study program is made available to citizens who cannot dedicate 40 hours a week to their study obligations;	Insufficient understanding of part-time studies and misuse of these study programs in cases when there are no justified reasons, only the conviction that it is an easier way of studying;
society	Increase in the number of citizens with higher education; Reduced number of dropout students;	No significant risks
higher education institution	Introduction of part-time studies will make quality realization of a study program available to all categories of students;	Introduction of part-time studies, along with the existing full-time studies, will double study program obligations which can be a problem if there is a shortage of quality teaching staff; Different understanding of part-time studies;

What costs will the introduction of part-time studies incur to all citizens and the economy (especially to small and medium-sized enterprises)?

Do positive effects of the introduction of part-time studies justify the costs they will incur?

It is expected that mostly students bear the expenses of part-time studies, which increases their investment in their own education, but it is certainly an investment that should boost their income in the future.

Part-time studies are expected to reduce the number of dropout students, hence protecting either the country's or individuals' investment in higher education which, in case of dropping out of studies, would be an unprofitable investment.

What measures and actions will be taken while introducing part-time studies in order to achieve what is intended by the passing of the Law?

Measures and actions	Executors
Passing a legal framework for part-time studies	Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development
Amending the statute of a higher education institution	higher education institution
Adopting a rulebook on part-time studies at a higher education institution	higher education institution
Starting the implementation of a part-time studies model	higher education institution
Informing the public about part-time studies	This project; Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development; Serbian Chamber of Commerce

2.2 DEFINITIONS OF THE RECOMMENDED POLICIES

1. **Part-time studies** are study regime for students who cannot attend lectures regularly and fulfill enough obligations to collect 60 ECTS credits during an academic year due to their job and family obligations, health problems, financial or any other difficulties. A program students study part-time has the same scope, teaching subject and outcomes as those studied full-time, thus allowing part-time students to acquire the same professional or academic title as full-time students.

A student who opts for studying part-time can acquire less than 60 ECTS credits per every academic year, most often about 30 ECTS credits, and study for the double number of academic years needed for the completion of a study program, and it is still considered to be regular studying within the part-time study regime.

In short, one study program can be implemented within two study regimes: full-time and part-time.

2.3 PROPOSAL OF THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR PART-TIME STUDIES INTRODUCTION (activity 2.6)

Pursuant to *The Strategy For Education Development In Serbia 2020*

("Official Gazette of RS ", no. 107/2012 from November 92012) and the accompanying Action plan, this document, prepared within the PT&SCHE project activities, provides the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia with an elaborate proposal of amendments to the current legislation on higher education in the section which refers to the introduction of part-time studies in higher education in the Republic of Serbia.

Legal framework for the introduction of part-time studies in the Republic of Serbia is provided by amendments to:

- the Law on Higher Education
- the acts of higher education institutions

As a supplement to this document you will find annexed a proposal of amendments to higher education institutions' acts which is in accordance with the introduction of part-time studies.

2.3.1 Proposal of the amendments to the Law on Higher Education

The Law should give fundamental legal grounds for part-time studies, leaving to by-laws the details such as accreditation standards and general acts of higher education institutions. The Law should be relieved of all the details that general acts of higher education institutions should regulate, but it also needs to be specific enough so as to ensure that all higher education institutions implement the outlined concept of part-time studies in Serbia in the same way.

Bearing this in mind, a proposal of the amendments to the current Law on Higher Education is offered, which should enable the application of the part-time studies concept to all students who cannot study full-time due to their job, health problems, family obligations, lack of financial means or any other problems.

Article 81

The following two paragraphs are to be added after paragraph 1 of this article:

"With regard to *study regimes*, the following may be organized:

1. **Full-time studies.** A student shall study 40 hours per week (at least 50% of which shall be contact hours) and acquire 60 ECTS credits per academic year.
2. **Part-time studies.** A student who cannot meet the demands of full-time studies, owing to his/her being employed or other personal reasons, shall study 15-20

hours a week at the most and shall acquire less than 60 ECTS credits, most often 30 ECTS credits.

3. **Accelerated studies.** A student may complete his/her studies within a timeframe shorter than the stipulated study program timeframe. Upon the completion of the first year of studies, a student may opt for a number of subjects provided that the total scope of studies shall not exceed 90 ECTS credits per academic year, and that he/she acquired the stipulated and binding 60 ECTS credits during the first year of studies.

With regard to *the organization of the teaching process*, studies shall be realized in one of the following three ways:

- a. **Face-to-face teaching** shall be realized in its entirety on the premises of a higher education institution based on the teaching plan prepared in accordance with students' abilities. This teaching plan shall be available to students at the beginning of an academic year. The schedule of academic subjects/lectures shall be organized in such a way as to allow every student to opt for the combination of subjects in order to acquire 30 ECTS credits. Lectures shall be organized in the evenings, on weekends or as instruction blocks and shall have the same teaching subject and scope as in full-time studies regime.
- b. **Online teaching.** A student shall utilize higher education institution's system for online learning, and shall have access and possibility of selecting teaching materials under the obligation to communicate interactively with a teacher and a tutor appointed for every subject, as well as with fellow students.
- c. **Blended learning.** A student shall participate in the teaching process partly online and partly through face-to-face instruction taking place on the premises of a higher education institution. Teaching on the premises of a higher education institution shall be realized when a high level of interaction between a student and a tutor/fellow students is expected and in case of a need for the use of special equipment a student cannot possess at home

XI STUDENTS

Enrollment

Article 82

The following paragraphs are to be inserted before the last paragraph of this article:

"Only a person who can put at least 40 hours a week into studying shall be enrolled in full-time studies.

A person who cannot fulfill the condition for full-time studies referred to in the previous paragraph shall be enrolled in part-time studies.

In the course of studies, a student may change his/her study regime (full-time or part-time), as well as the manner of studying (face-to-face teaching, online teaching, blended learning) the same study program.”

Competition

Article 83

The following is to be added to the paragraph 2 of this article:

”A competition shall contain the number of students to be admitted to the first year of certain full-time study programs and the number of students to be admitted to the first year of part-time studies, ...”

Number of students

Article 84

The following is to be added to the paragraph 2 of this article:

”... and shall also be expressed through a number of full-time and part-time students.”

Rules of studies

Article 87

Paragraphs 3 and 4 of this article are to be amended and paragraph 5 is to be added:

”A full-time student financed from the state budget shall opt for as many subjects as are necessary to acquire at least 60 ECTS credits, unless fewer than 60 ECTS credits are necessary to be acquired for his/her completion of a study program.

A self-financing full-time student shall opt for as many subjects as are necessary to acquire at least 37 ECTS credits, unless fewer than 37 ECTS credits are necessary to be acquired for his/her completion of a study program.

A self-financing part-time student shall opt for as many subjects as are necessary to acquire at least 30 ECTS credits, unless fewer than 30 ECTS credits are necessary to be acquired for his/her completion of a study program.

Termination of the status of student

Article 94

Point 4 of this article is to be replaced with the following:

”4) if a full-time student fails to finish his/her studies before the expiration of the deadline defined as the number of academic years needed for the completion of a study program, that is if a part-time student fails to finish his/her studies before the expiration of the deadline defined as the double number of academic years needed for the completion of a study program;”

2.3.2 Recommendations to higher education institutions for the harmonization of the legal acts for regulating part-time studies

This refers to the need for a higher education institution wishing to organize part-time studies to adjust its statute so that it predicts everything that is necessary for that institution to be able to organize part-time studies. Every higher education institution can apply some specific solutions.

Draft amendments to The Statute of Belgrade Metropolitan University are annexed as a supplement to this document (Annex 2.1).

2.4 PROPOSAL OF PART-TIME STUDIES ACCREDITATION AND ACCREDITATION STANDARDS AMENDMENTS

Essentially, a study program is the same regardless of the study regime. For this reason, if a legal possibility for part-time studies is introduced, we consider there is no need for additional accreditation of study programs realized as part-time studies.

In the accreditation process, the number of students who can be enrolled in the first year of a study program is determined. A higher education institution can, but does not have to, organize the teaching process in different regimes (full-time and part-time) for each study program every academic year, which is a matter of higher education institution's decision. In addition, a higher education institution can already divide the total number of students enrolled in one study program into full-time and part-time students when announcing its admission competition, but it can also determine and fill the number of places for part-time studies in some other way. These matters are regulated by the acts of a higher education institution.



3 PROPOSAL OF THE POLICY OF INTRODUCTION OF SHORT CYCLE STUDIES IN THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

3.1 Basic propositions

3.1.1 Objective

The objective of short cycle programs introduction into the higher education system of the Republic of Serbia is to enable students to get, in a short period of time, effective and efficient education and training for specific jobs based on the expressed need of employers.

Education gained through short cycle programs is, most often, related to specific demands of business entities/employers for quick solutions to certain problems and training for particular jobs, specific or highly specialized.

Short cycle programs are primarily intended for the labor market. They do not provide for the acquisition of a new qualification. These programs constitute training for performing a job belonging to a higher, same or lower level of qualification that an individual already possesses.

***Short cycle program** in higher education is a special type of program which consists of an organized set of subjects¹ and practical training, the main objective of which is to provide the acquisition of more specific and functionally connected knowledge and skills in order to train a student to do a specific job.*

A student who has passed all the exams and completed all the other obligations, defined by the short cycle program curriculum, receives the national certificate of a completed short cycle program. This public document is a confirmation that a student is trained to perform a specific job.

Depending on the task of education and the scope and type of knowledge and skills to be provided to students, short cycle programs may be organized as part of academic or professional career higher education. A short cycle program may involve from 300 to 600 (900) contact hours. The scope of a short cycle program may be represented by the number of ECTS credits, but it does

¹In this document, as it is customary in the course of short cycle studies teaching, that is, when we talk about short cycle programs, the term "subject" involves a different content and organization from the same term used to talk about subjects as part of academic or professional career study programs. With their scope and structure, subjects within short cycle programs represent a unique combination of theoretical and practical knowledge and training for their specific implementation intended for solving a particular problem or completing a task. A subject as part of a short cycle program should not be a copy of a subject of a similar academic or professional career program. Moreover, when it comes to short cycle programs, teaching takes a form of instruction blocks, that is, a concentrated form of teaching only one subject, followed by an assessment of acquired knowledge and skills. That is what makes short cycle programs so distinctive. In this sense, subjects should be less extensive and more practical.

not have to. A volume of contact hours from 300 to 600 (900) corresponds to the number of ECTS credits from 30 to 60 (90).

Short cycles programs may be organized by an accredited higher education institution which has an accredited study program in a related or the same specific area as the short cycle program.

In addition, a higher education institution may offer a short cycle program only if it has the support of employers. This support is documented with a readiness contract signed by at least one employer agreeing to, after additional examinations and candidate selection, employ the persons who have completed the short cycle program.

More detailed instructions and procedures for the preparation and implementation of short cycle programs are determined in a higher education institution's legal acts. A higher education institution's legal acts must be in accordance with the general rules on short cycle programs determined by the National Council for Higher Education or the Ministry.

A higher education institution that prepares and implements a short cycle program should report it to the National Council for Higher Education, the Ministry or another independent body which has the obligation to keep records of short cycle programs. In this way, the Register of Short Cycle Programs is formed. Using this Register, we can monitor jobs for which education is carried out through short cycle programs and national certificates are issued. Establishing and maintaining the Registry can also be regulated in some other way in the new Law on Higher Education.

Bodies that have the obligation to monitor the quality of higher education institutions, through regular or other types of external quality assessment, also assess the quality of short cycle programs realization. In the same manner, the Ministry controls the legality and harmonization of all aspects of a higher education institution, as well as short cycle programs, with the national and the higher education institution's legal acts.

3.1.2 Position of short cycle studies in the higher education of the Republic of Serbia
Study programs of the first level of higher education, according to the Law on Higher Education, provide diplomas after acquiring 180-240 ECTS credits for bachelor academic studies and 180 ECTS credits for bachelor professional career studies. With a master degree, students gain additional 60 or 120 ECTS credits, and with a degree in specialist professional career studies students gain at least 60 ECTS credits. (Figure 1.)

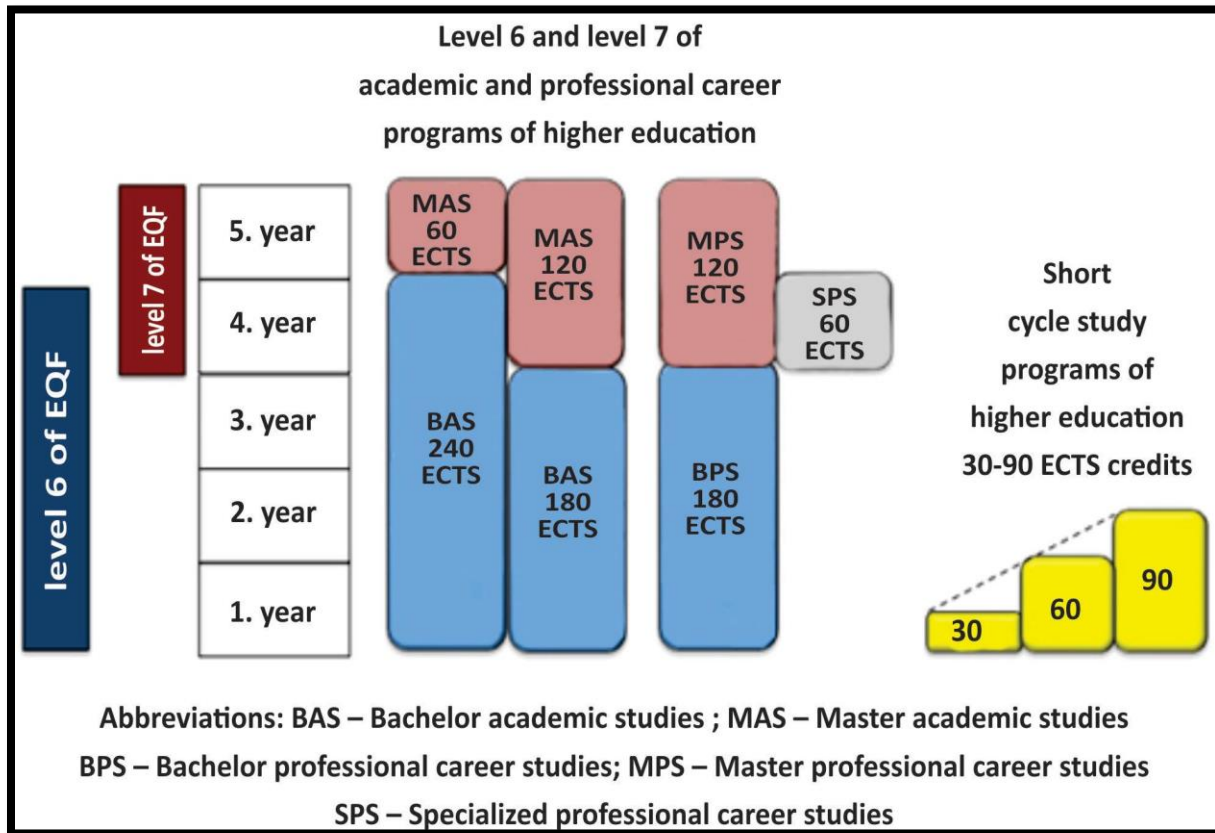


Figure 3. Short cycle program timeframe

With such an offer of study programs, higher education in Serbia cannot meet the requirements for faster and more focused education based on employers' needs which change dynamically, that is, they fluctuate from existing to non-existing depending on the development of new technologies, the economic structure, the demands of foreign investors, the needs of the market, etc. Short cycle programs should meet these requirements because they do not provide education for a particular field or discipline, but for specific jobs or competencies.

Short cycle programs, depending on their objective, are expected to last from 3 to 18 months, that is, they can be worth between 30 and 90 ECTS credits. Some are of the opinion, and it is usual in some European countries, these short cycle programs can last up to two years, that is, they can be worth 120 ECTS credits. In the conditions in Serbia, it is likely that the short cycle programs' two-year timeframe is neither necessary nor desirable, as it is in a way similar to the three-year bachelor professional career studies and bachelor academic study programs. The legislator should state their opinion on this option. It is mentioned here only as a possibility and practice in some of the European countries. The PT & SCHE project team's proposal is that a

short cycle program cannot have a timeframe longer than 18 months (or 900 contact hours) and provide more than 90 ECTS credits. If training for a certain job requires more than 900 contact hours, then it is not appropriate for a short cycle program participant, but for a graduate student of bachelor academic or bachelor professional career studies.

Serbia's national qualification framework is in a preparation phase, based on the schemes adopted by the National Education Council and the National Council for Higher Education, and it will probably be based on the European Qualifications Framework – EQF as well. Short cycle programs, defined in this document in accordance with the PT & SCHE project, relate only to the programs that provide the necessary knowledge and skills for jobs that are within the 6th and 7th level of the National Qualifications Framework (highly educated experts – title defined in some proposals).

In contrast to regular study programs, short cycle programs do not provide qualifications that indicate competence for a specific area of a field, but provide training only for a specific job within the specific area of a field. Therefore, short cycle programs do not provide any particular title upon the completion of the program and students do not receive a diploma, but the national certificate of competence for a specific and precisely defined job recognized in the profession, and sought by employers. While regular study programs educate students for a profession (within which there are several possible jobs in different positions), short cycle programs train students for only one precisely defined job.

Short cycle programs that educate and prepare their participants for specific jobs and particular positions in a profession defined by the level of qualifications within the framework of pre-university education, are not included in the category of short cycle programs of higher education in Serbia, and this document does not apply to them.

Apart from the timeframe and objective, what distinguishes short cycle programs from the first and second level higher education study programs is that they provide certificates, not diplomas. The national certificate in its supplement should contain a detailed description of the skills and knowledge acquired by the certificate holder, as well as the description of the job for which he/she is qualified. As is well known, the diploma, with its supplement, gives a description of knowledge and competencies for an entire education/ scientific/ artistic field, that is, discipline, which makes much wider employment and work opportunities possible, but requires much more time to acquire. Figure 2. illustrates the difference between a short cycle program and a bachelor academic study program.

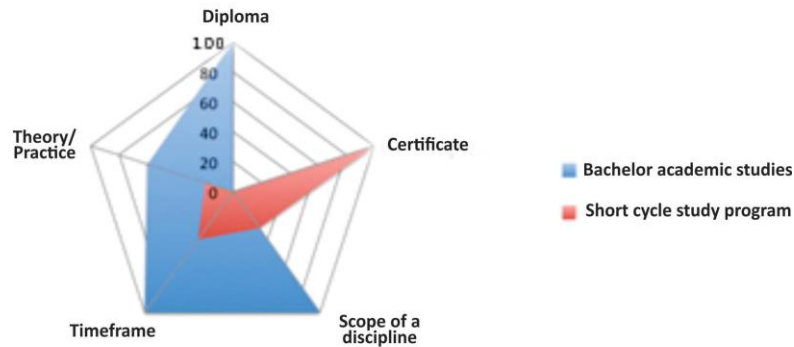


Figure 4. Comparison of some properties of a short cycle study program and a bachelor academic study program.

Solutions related to short cycle programs should not contribute to unclear boundaries appearing between short cycle programs and bachelor academic and professional career study programs. By definition, they differ significantly so their implementation must be clearly different.

3.1.3 Basic guidelines

The concept of short cycle programs within the higher education in Serbia should be based on the following guidelines:

2. **Timeframe of studies.** Short cycle programs can last from 3 to 18 months, that is, they can involve from 300 to 900 contact hours, depending on the required volume and type of knowledge and skills that a program must provide for students in order to prepare them for a specific job. The knowledge, skills and competences that a student must acquire during a maximum of 18 months must be clearly stated, described and harmonized with the timeframe of a short cycle program.
3. **Number of ECTS credits.** A short cycle program may, but does not have to (depending on a higher education institution), be organized based on the ECTS credit system and provide a student with a certain number of ECTS credits. Such an approach is beneficial because in this way short cycle programs can be compared to other types of higher education. As in other programs, one ECTS credit corresponds to 25-30 contact hours per week.
4. **Recognition of short cycle program ECTS credits when enrolling in a bachelor academic or professional career studies program.** A person who has completed a short cycle program and wishes to enroll in bachelor academic or

professional career studies must get admitted to the first year of the study program via usual process (competition application, entrance examination, secondary school leaving examination). Upon student's request, a higher education institution can accept as valid a certain number of credits based on the subjects/subjects' segments that the student has taken within a short cycle program, depending on the overlap level with the subjects of the study program the student is enrolled in. A higher education institution may make a special decision about accepting the credits with an explanation (in accordance with *the Rulebook on the Procedure for Preparation, Adoption and Quality Appraisal of Short Cycle programs*, which has been previously accepted by the higher education institution), in which the subjects/subjects' segments completed within a short cycle program are presented, as well as the corresponding number of ECTS credits that will be recognized in the study program the student is enrolled in.

5. **Quality.** The teaching process applied for the short cycle program implementation must be harmonized with the general principles of the accredited higher education institutions. A quality short cycle program is the one that meets employers' requirements, that is, the one that prepares and trains students for a specific job. The main indicator of the quality of a short cycle program is the number of students employed after they have completed the studies, and the positive opinions of the employers.
6. **Organizer and short cycle program provider.** Only an accredited higher education institution that realizes an accredited program in the same or similar field may prepare and organize short cycle programs with the number of contact hours from at least 300 to 600 (900) hours.
7. **Accreditation.** Short cycle programs do not need to be accredited, because only accredited higher education institutions can offer them. However, in the course of accreditation, a higher education institution indicates a readiness to organize short cycle programs in the area in which there is at least one accredited and realized study program. In addition, a higher education institution must have this activity listed in its statute and have appropriate legal acts (e.g. *Rulebook on the Procedure for Preparation, Adoption and Quality Appraisal of Short Cycle programs*) with which it regulates preparing, adopting and implementing short cycle programs. Within the regular and other types of external quality assessment, the Accreditation and Quality Assessment Committee (or other body that conducts the assessment) also monitors this type of a higher education institution's activity and adopts appropriate measures (a warning act) if it determines the existence of irregularities. All legal acts of a higher education institution, even those related to the regulation of short cycle programs implementation, must be in accordance with the Law on Higher Education and other legal acts and by-laws pertaining to this aspect of education.
8. Every accredited higher education institution that organizes short cycle programs is obligated to submit information about the program and its realization to the National Council for Higher Education through the Accreditation and Quality

Assessment Committee. These bodies will form the national register of short cycle programs. A detailed procedure for the national register establishment and the manner of keeping records on short cycle programs in the Republic of Serbia, participants and national certificates issued must be elaborated in the appropriate by-laws adopted by the the National Council for Higher Education or another body if it is stipulated in the new Law on Higher Education.

9. **Method of teaching organization.** A higher education institution can realize short cycle programs by applying one of the following three methods of organizing the teaching process:

- a. **Face-to-face teaching.** A student takes part in the planned curriculum in its entirety on the premises of a higher education institution based on the teaching curriculum which has been prepared in accordance with students' abilities and which is available to students at the beginning of an academic year.
- b. **Online teaching.** A student uses a higher education institution's e-learning system, he/she has the access and ability to choose teaching materials with the obligation to communicate interactively with the teacher or associate teacher of each subject, as well as other students. A higher education institution may use other teaching methods that entail utilizing contemporary electronic and communication technologies.
- c. **Blended learning.** A student completes one part of his/her study program through online teaching, and the other part through face-to-face teaching on the premises of a higher education institution. Teaching on the premises of a higher education institution is usually organized for the purposes of the teaching units for which a high degree of interaction between a student and teaching associate and other students is expected, and when the use of special equipment that students cannot own at home is necessary.

Teaching consists of a set of subjects and professional practice. As short cycle programs have a specific objective, the application of more specific pedagogical methods and approaches to the teaching process is expected, with emphasis on applying the acquired knowledge in practice. The teaching of short cycle programs takes place independently of the teaching of bachelor academic or professional career studies. This means that there must not be joint classes for students of short cycle studies and students of professional career and academic studies, not even in related subjects.

10. **Who can be a student of short cycle programs?** A student of short cycle programs may be a person with a completed secondary school education, a person who dropped out of higher education study programs, as well as persons who have completed bachelor academic studies, master academic studies, bachelor professional career studies or master professional career studies. The enrollment process and the number of students enrolling in a short cycle program are regulated by a higher education institution's legal acts.

Comment. When it comes to defining the requirements for the admission to a short cycle program, there has not been a complete harmonization of the viewpoints of all partners. The Ministry representatives have stated the opinion that only higher education graduates (after graduating from bachelor academic studies, or, for example, bachelor professional career studies, master academic studies, specialist professional career studies or specialist academic studies) can enroll in short cycle programs. In this way, the number of students entering higher education would not be decreased.

11. **Teaching staff.** The teaching staff that engages in short cycle programs implementation must be qualified for the successful realization of short cycle programs or subjects that they consist of. In addition to the employed teachers and associates, a higher education institution may engage lecturers, associates and tutors (for online study) who possess the necessary competencies (knowledge and skills) and references in the area of the professional field for which they are engaged by a higher education institution, based on an engagement contract or an additional work contract. In the case of engagement of university teachers, as well as associates, in teaching of short cycle programs, that engagement is not taken into account as part of teachers' workload which is regulated by the Law on Higher Education and accreditation standards.

Comment. This version of the proposal was not unanimously accepted by the consortium members from Serbia.

12. **Preparation of short cycle program curriculum and accompanying documentation.** A higher education institution's documentation accompanying every short cycle program must contain the following information.

- a. Administrative information on the higher education institution
- b. A contract with at least one employer who is ready to employ students who complete a certain short cycle program (employer has the right to choose the candidates he/she employs) or with an employer who is ready to send his/her employees to university for additional training through a short cycle program.
- c. Name, objective, outcomes, scope of the program (organized based on ECTS credits or in some other way).
- d. Description of the specific job for which short cycle program students are trained and the necessary competencies that they must acquire in order to implement the program.
- e. Curriculum of the program with a schedule of lectures and other activities.
- f. Record of subjects that make a short cycle program (objectives, learning and training outcomes, program contents, teaching methods, the method of assessing the acquired knowledge and taking the final exam, teaching materials and literature, and the number of ECTS credits that students acquire upon passing the subject's final exam must be defined for every subject).

- g. Enrollment requirements and the method of enrollment.
 - h. A list and records of the short cycle program teaching staff.
 - i. Students' obligations.
 - j. The size of the teaching group.
 - k. Procedures for managing short cycle program quality.
 - l. Tuition fee, that is, the cost that a student must pay upon enrollment in order to have the right to enroll and realize the short cycle program curriculum.
- 13. Short cycle programs adoption.** Short cycle programs are prepared in accordance with the appropriate acts of a higher education institution (e.g. *Rulebook on the Procedure for Preparation, Adoption and Quality Appraisal of Short Cycle Studies*), and are adopted by professional bodies of a higher education institution. The Rulebook has to, among other things, include in the process of program analysis and adoption the representatives of employers interested in employing students who have completed short cycle studies or employers interested in their employees' training. Short cycle programs, defined as described in point 10 and supported by bodies consisting also of representatives of employers, are adopted by a professional body of a higher education institution for a three-year period. After three years, a professional body may prolong this period for the next three years if internal evaluation of short cycle studies realization is positive and if there is a demand in the labor market for jobs students get educated for on short cycle studies.
- 14. Professional practice.** Short cycle programs should also encompass professional practice in a company for jobs a student-trainee of short cycle studies is getting educated for. The duration of professional practice and training in a workplace should be from 10% to 30% of the duration of short cycle studies; it can also be expressed in ECTS credits.
- 15. National certificate.** A student who has passed all exams or the verification of acquired knowledge and skills, that is, has successfully achieved the intended learning outcomes, receives the national certificate of short cycle studies completion. This public document confirms that a student is trained and qualified for a specific job. The certificate supplement contains:
- a. a list of subjects a student has passed, with their ECTS credit value or in other way clearly stated scope of studies, and the acquired grades;
 - b. acquired knowledge and skills, as well as the achieved learning outcomes, which are relevant for the job the certificate is issued for;
 - c. a description of a job the certificate holder is trained and qualified for.
- The project team proposes that the form of the national certificate be uniform and printed in one place, and that, based on a higher education institution's report on short cycle programs and the number of students who have successfully completed it, serial numbers be assigned to the issued certificate forms. The process will be similar to the process of issuing secondary school certificates. This way the number of short cycle programs organized and certificates issued by each higher education institution will always be known.

16. Partial realization of a program. A student can choose to attend lectures and take only one or more examinations in the short cycle studies subjects. In that case, a higher education institution issues an academic transcript (a certificate on the completed part of a program; a record of grades achieved), which includes information on the subject (subject content and learning outcomes) as well as the student's final grades. In case a higher education institution offers the possibility of enrollment in only certain subjects, it has to determine the price of the tuition fee for every subject.

17. Short cycle studies financing. Short cycle studies are financed from tuition fees paid by students or employers. In specific cases, when the state wants to promote short cycle programs educating students for new occupations or jobs for which there is a lack of appropriate staff in the labor market, a tuition fee or a part of it can also be paid by the state body or organization in charge. In that case, the state body or organization is obliged to announce a competition for the distribution of the number of places per study programs it wishes to support financially. Any accredited higher education institution which adopted short cycle programs for jobs the state body in charge allocates financial support has the right to apply for the approval of these places.

3.1.4 Analysis of the effects of short cycle studies introduction

What problems are solved by the introduction of short cycle studies?

We live in a time when there is a constant need for new knowledge and skills, which indicates that once acquired formal qualifications are not enough for one's entire work life. There is also a number of occupations which are no longer needed in the labor market. For these reasons we can notice a double loss – on the one hand, employers cannot find sufficiently qualified workforce, and, on the other hand, our formal education system spends financial means on professions with no clear perspective. Of course, the greatest loss is felt either by young people who cannot find a suitable job or persons who have substantial work experience but there has emerged a need for additional knowledge and skills for their job positions. For years, in the Republic of Serbia, various trainings or courses have been organized by a large number of institutions or organisations which have been trying to solve the obvious problem. However, this type of approach very often does not give appropriate results.

What objectives are achieved by the introduction of short cycle programs?

The basic goal achieved by the introduction of short cycle programs is reflected in the efficient connection between the labor market and higher education established through, on the one hand,

clearly defined market needs, and on the other, well, rapidly and competently organized and implemented short cycle programs which meet the defined needs.

Have any options for solving the problem without the introduction of short cycle studies been considered?

The Republic of Serbia is a part of the European Higher Education Area and harmonizing primarily higher education with the examples of good practice of European countries is one of the means for achieving better results in the field of education. However, there is a great diversity in the field of short cycle studies in the EHEA member countries, which has enabled us to, based on various types of experience, consider different possibilities and opt for the model most suitable for Serbian education system

As mentioned previously, there are training programs which are implemented, but which mostly refer to professional qualifications below higher education level.

Why is the introduction of short cycle programs the best solution to the problem?

Short cycle programs will enable accredited higher education institutions, in close connection with employers, to take part of the responsibility for economic development. The introduction of the national certificate will systematically and transparently regulate the system of short cycle studies.

Who will the proposed solutions most likely affect and in what way?

Affected parties	Expected effect	Possible risks
citizens	Opening up a possibility for efficient acquisition of new competencies, that is, knowledge and skills;	Lack of understanding of short cycle studies (insufficiently informed public) or too high expectations;
employers (economy)	Fast and efficient gaining of qualified workforce in accordance with their needs;	Lack of interest in formal cooperation with a higher education institution; insufficiently informed public;

Higher education institution	Stronger connection with the economy and more efficient way of adapting the program to the labour market needs;	Insufficient understanding of employers' needs; Using short cycle studies for unsuccessful students;
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What costs will the introduction of short cycle studies incur to all citizens and the economy (especially to small and medium-sized enterprises)?

Do positive effects of the introduction of short cycle studies justify the costs they will incur?

The costs of short cycle studies will be borne by students themselves or employers, depending on their interest. Even though at first sight it seems as if the costs are covered by students and employers while a higher education institution makes a profit, in the long term short cycle studies should increase graduate students' income and boost the profit of companies through the use of acquired knowledge and skills.

What measures and actions will be taken while introducing short cycle studies in order to achieve what is intended by the passing of the Law?

Measures and actions	Executors
Passing a legal framework for short cycle studies	Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development
Adopting a rulebook on short cycle studies	National Council for Higher Education; Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development
Establishing short cycle studies register	National Council for Higher Education; Commission for Accreditation and Quality Assurance; Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development

	Technological Development
Amending the rulebook on public documents	Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development
Adopting a rulebook on short cycle studies at a higher education institution	higher education institution
Starting the implementation of short cycle studies	higher education institution
Informing the public about short cycle studies	This project; Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development; Serbian Chamber of Commerce

3.2 DEFINITIONS OF THE RECOMMENDED POLICIES

1. **Short cycle in higher education (SCHE)** is a *special type of program which consists of a well-designed set of subjects and practical training whose fundamental aim is to secure the acquisition of more specific and functionally related knowledge and skills so as to equip students for doing a specific job.*

The scope of these studies is from 300 to 600 (900) contact hours (corresponding to 30-60 (90) ECTS credits) and they do not allow for acquiring new qualifications, but for supplementing the previously acquired qualifications and equipping a person for doing a specific job. After the completion of short cycle studies, a higher education institution issues the national certificate.

These programs constitute training for performing a job belonging to a higher, same or lower level of qualification than an individual already possesses.

Short cycle studies are designed for persons who have completed secondary school, but also for those who have completed the first or the second level of academic or professional career studies.

Short cycle studies can be organized by an accredited higher education institution which has at least one accredited study program in the same field as a short cycle program.

2. **National register of short cycle programs** is a register of short cycle programs organized by accredited higher education institutions in the Republic of Serbia.

The register contains information on short cycle programs, the description of learning outcomes, the description of the specific job a student is being trained for, information on higher education institutions organizing them and the number of trainees and issued certificates.

A higher education institution keeps a detailed register of its trainees and issued certificates.

The Register offers insight into specific jobs for which students are educated and trained through short cycle studies.

The Register keeps track of all specific jobs for which the national certificate can be issued in the Republic of Serbia. The process and procedures for the creation of the national register should be developed by the National Council for Higher Education or another body if the new Law on Higher Education prescribes so. The National Council for Higher Education should also conduct the procedure for creating and updating the register.

3. **The national certificate** (with a certificate supplement) is a document issued to a person who has completed short cycle studies. The national certificate should contain all information about the student and the completed short cycle program, along with the description of specific knowledge and skills acquired and the description of the job the student is trained for. The national certificate should be an official public document issued by a higher education institution, and its form and content should be regulated by the *Rulebook on the Content of Public Documents Issued by a Higher Education Institution*.

3.3 PROPOSAL OF THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR SHORT CYCLE STUDIES INTRODUCTION

Pursuant to The Strategy For Education Development In Serbia 2020

("Official Gazette of RS ", no. 107/2012 from November 9 2012) and the accompanying Action plan, this section provides the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia with an elaborate proposal of amendments to the current legislation on higher education in the section which refers to the introduction of short cycle studies in higher education in the Republic of Serbia.

Legal framework for the introduction of short cycle studies in the higher education system of the Republic of Serbia is provided by amendments to:

- the Law on Higher Education
- the Rulebook on the Content of Public Documents Issued by a Higher Education Institution.

It is also necessary to propose that the Minister or the National Council for Higher Education pass a new by-law which would deal with the matters of importance for short cycle studies realization in more detail (e.g. *Rulebook on the Organization of Short Cycle Studies in Higher Education in the Republic of Serbia*).

3.3.1 Proposal of the amendments to the Law on Higher Education

The current Law on Higher Education does not regulate short cycle studies in higher education. A new draft Law on Higher Education is being prepared and it will most likely offer a proposal for regulating short cycle studies in accordance with the presented concept.

III STUDIES AND STUDY PROGRAMS

Program of study

The following article is to be added after article 24:

"Short cycle study programs in higher education"

Article 24a

Short cycle program in higher education *shall be a special type of program consisting of a well-designed set of subjects and practical training whose fundamental aim shall be to secure the acquisition of more specific and functionally related knowledge and skills, so as to equip students for doing a specific job.*

Education acquired through short cycle studies shall most often be related to the concrete demands of business entities/employers for rapid problem solving and training for concrete jobs, specific or highly specialized.

Short cycle studies in higher education shall be organized only by an accredited higher education institution which has at least one accredited study program in a related or the same specific field as the short cycle program.

The scope of short cycle studies shall be from 300 to maximum (600) 900 contact hours (30-60 (90) ECTS credits) and shall allow for acquiring the national certificate.

The details on the guidelines for organizing and implementing short cycle studies in higher education, issuing of the appropriate certificate and keeping records of the certificates issued shall be determined by the National Council for Higher Education.

3.3.2 Proposal of the amendments to the Rulebook on Public Documents Issued by Higher Education Institutions

There is a need for amending the *Rulebook on the Content of Public Documents Issued by a Higher Education Institution*.

The following should be included in the Rulebook: the concept of the National certificate and certificate supplement, the stipulated content of these documents, as well as the layout of the appropriate forms.

A student who has passed all exams and completed all other obligations defined by the curriculum of short cycle studies acquires the national certificate of the completed short cycle studies. This public document confirms that the student is trained for a specific job.

The National certificate contains information about a higher education institution, a study program and the holder of the certificate, as well as the date of short cycle studies completion and the date of issue.

The certificate supplement, apart from the information about a higher education institution, personal information about the holder and the information about the short cycle studies, also contains the following:

- a. the description of the job the certificate holder is trained for;
- b. knowledge and skills acquired by the student which are relevant for the job the certificate is issued for;
- c. the list of subjects the student has passed, with their ECTS credit value and the acquired grades.

3.3.3 Proposal of a new by-law (Rulebook on Short Cycle Studies in the Republic of Serbia)

You will find annexed the draft by-law passed by the National Council for Higher Education which regulates more closely short cycle teaching process realization (Annex 1).

3.3.4 Recommendations to higher education institutions for the harmonization of the legal acts for regulating short cycle studies

This section gives recommendations to higher education institutions interested in organizing short cycle studies (based on the need expressed by at least one employer) for a way of harmonizing their legal acts. Higher education institutions should harmonize or create their statutes and other acts in accordance with the law and by-laws.

As a supplement to this document you will find annexed a proposal of amendments to the Statute of Belgrade Metropolitan University and the draft *Rulebook on the Procedure for Preparation, Adoption and Quality Appraisal of Short Cycle Studies* (Annex 2).

3.4 SHORT CYCLE STUDIES ACCREDITATION

1. Short cycle programs should not be accredited because only accredited higher education institutions can organize them. However, during the process of accreditation, a higher education institution should announce its intention to organize short cycle studies in case of employers' demand. If such intentions exist, a higher education institution should have the appropriate *Rulebook on the Short Cycle* for the studies it organizes. During a scheduled or non-scheduled external appraisal of quality of higher education institutions, Accreditation and Quality

Assessment Committee examines, among other things, whether short cycle studies are harmonized with the rulebook and other acts.

2. *The Rulebook on the Short Cycle* of a higher education institution must be in accordance with the Law on Higher Education of the Republic of Serbia and the appropriate rulebook on short cycle studies in higher education in the Republic of Serbia enacted by the Minister or the National Council for Higher Education. Educational inspection deals with the harmonization of legal acts and the control of higher education institutions.

The scope of short cycle studies is from 300 to 600 (900) contact hours (worth 30-60 (90) ECTS credits) and these studies can be organized only by an accredited higher education institution which has at least one accredited study program in a related or the same specific field as the short cycle program.

3. A higher education institution which prepares and implements a short cycle program should report it to the National Council for Higher Education (or any other body if the new Law on Higher Education prescribes so) in order for it to be registered and for the National register of short cycle programs to be created. Based on this Register, we can keep track of specific jobs for certain professions for which students are educated in short cycle programs and national certificates are issued.