Mario Spremić describes how a Croation business faculty has used EPAS both as a way to devdelop itself and also as an international framework and proactive platform for exchanging experiences and ideas

EPAS Network: Forerunner of changes

It is not very common that a single bachelor programme with around 3% of enrolled students drives the way for improvement throughout a whole institution.

Yet the Faculty of Economics and Business (FEB) at the University of Zagreb in Croatia has done just that, using the EPAS framework as a guideline for strategic development of the entire institution (see page 62.) FEB has made an EPAS-accredited bachelors programme (BDiB – Bachelor Degree in Business) strategically important, with the improvements planned to be used in all its programmes.

Changes and improvements arising from the EPAS "journey" have inspired accreditation processes at the institutional level, ending up with the EPAS "Network of Networks" – an internationally oriented ecosystem and collaboration platform for EPAS-accredited programmes (or, indeed, any other accreditation system such as EQUIS).

FEB Zagreb is one of 32 autonomous constituents of the University of Zagreb, which was founded in 1669. FEB is slightly younger, founded in 1920, but this still places it among the oldest public institutions for higher education in economics and business in South-Eastern Europe. It has influenced and actively supported the establishment of public and private faculties of economics and business in Croatia and neighbouring countries.

FEB is the only EPAS-accredited institution in Croatia and has developed networks, such as EPAS Network, with its competitors nationally and internationally.

FEB's motto*: Tradition and innovation in education and research – The path to the future* reflects the importance of its long tradition and emphasis on innovation.

Tradition arises from the 97-year history of the institution with more than 80,000 graduates, over 800 PhDs in economics and business and a strong and respected alumni network.

Innovation comes from imaginative pedagogy, teaching excellence and enviable facilities.

The EPAS-accredited bachelor programme (BDiB) is driving the strategic development of the entire institution through the three phases shown over the page.

The BDiB programme served as a model for strategic development, academic rigour, international focus and teaching excellence throughout the entire institution, fully applying its motto: *BDiB - forerunner of changes*.

The strategic development of the BDiB programme paved the way for the entire institution to move forward, especially in the areas of students and staff international experience, imaginative pedagogy, enhanced educational experience (teaching and academic excellence, experiential learning, student centred teaching, international and corporate study visits, internships), corporate input, wide range of assessment methods and a quality assurance framework.

A new element is the introduction of the of EPAS "Network of Networks" (EPAS NofN), established with EFMD support in March 2016 as a proactive platform for exchange of experiences and practices of EPAS-accredited programmes.

All EPAS-accredited programme representatives were invited to the launch event.

We have agreed on the following suggested EPAS NofN activities:

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80k

Across its 97-year history FEB Zagreb has more than 80,000 graduates, and over 800 PhDs in economics and business

Using the EPAS framework as a guideline for strategic development

Phase	Major activities	Results	Transformation phase
First phase (till around year 2000)	Initial phase of internationalisation by offering courses in English Attracting international students Improved staff international experience	Large number of courses offered in English Enhanced international activities by professors (projects, research, study visits etc) International visiting professors EFMD membership	Starting to realise the need for transformation
Second phase (2006 – now)	Separate bachelor study programme entirely taught in English (bachelor degree in business - BDiB) FEB professors are regularly attending EFMD conferences and seminars BDiB and EPAS as frameworks for internationalisation and strategic development of the entire institution (improved programme design, imaginative pedagogy, experiential learning, student centred teaching, effective assessment methods, external evaluation, international advisory input, corporate relations, four level QA) EPAS reviewers from FEB Zagreb	EPAS accreditation (2011) EPAS re-accreditation (2014) Strategic impact of the EPAS accredited BDiB programme on the institution's long-term objectives: flagship programme, "forerunner of changes" at institutional level, internationalisation of the entire institution, start of four additional masters programmes in English, corporate input, effective QA Enhanced international experience: 155 foreign students from 30 countries in 2015/16 compared to 136 in 2014/15, 93 in 2013/14, 77 in 2012/13, 44 in 2011/12 35 visiting professors from 21 countries in 2015/16 compared to 7 from 2 countries in 2010/11	Transformative why? New strategic plan (What to transform?) Building capacities for change (How to transform?) Change of values Staff engagement
Third phase (2016–)	BDiB programme and EPAS experience as a model for institutional international accreditations (AACSB, EQUIS) BDiB double degree EPAS Network of Networks	5 year EPAS accreditation (2017) FEB Zagreb co-organised EFMD workshop FEB Zagreb initiated EPAS Network of Networks as a platform for collaboration of EPAS programmes	Leading, inspiring, orchestrating Change of values

Fostering student international and corporate experience within EPAS network – study visits, experiential learning, collaboration on online courses, student engagements in problem solving, corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities, corporate visits, international (business) weeks, international student competitions, case study writing, joint international case study competitions.

EPAS exchange programme for students, professors and staff – to establish the EPAS network exchange for students in order to increase the number of outgoing students who will spend a semester on an EPAS-accredited programme. This might help many programmes, especially those with an imbalance between incoming and outgoing students (often Erasmus exchange students join the programme, making large groups which is good for cross cultural experience for diploma seeking students but the numbers of outgoing diploma seeking students might be much lower). EPAS network exchange should also work for faculty members (short visits, guest lectures, longer stays, an exchange semester, co-mentors on thesis and so on).

Supporting external examinations within EPAS network – external exam assessment (online or on-site), final thesis external examination (online or on-site), EPAS pre-PRV or mock reviews.

Other activities – promotion of EPAS accreditation, promotion of EPAS N of N through EFMD events (separate session on some EPAS events), organising workshops focused on specific topics (innovative pedagogy, experiential learning, ILOs).

In digital (network-based) economy many institutions do not design their business models just around efficiency and certainly not using hierarchical and control tools but on innovation and agility, with an entrepreneurial organisational culture that is customer focused and includes people engagement and empowerment.

At FEB Zagreb we are suggesting building an EPAS Network of Networks (or EQUIS network or similar) with "co-opetition" (co-operation *and* competition) as a key idea and around the following open innovation framework, commonly used in digital transformation:

Closed innovation	Open innovation	EPAS (or EQUIS) Network as an open innovation framework
Competition	Co-operation	Co-opetition (collaboration *and* competition)
Dependency	Independency	Interdependency
Solo	Cluster	Ecosystem
Win/lose game	Win/win game	Win more/win more
Control	Management	Orchestration
Box thinking	Out of the box	No boxes!
Single entity	Single discipline	Interdiscipline

As we and EFMD are both aware of other EPAS networks, we think of the EPAS Network of all Networks as an umbrella framework and proactive platform for exchanging experiences and ideas. We strongly believe these initiatives will strengthen the EPAS community and may help facilitate EQUIS and similar networks.

The model of change we have used in our EPAS "journey" might be interesting for other institutions. Also, as BDiB programme changed our institution, the EPAS Network framework proposed here may be the model for change (or forerunner of change) towards achieving and maintaining EPAS (or EQUIS) accreditation. Positive experiences that arise from the network may also help other institutions to go through transformation processes quickly, easily and smoothly.

Do join us on interesting EPAS network journey and support the EPAS network as a forerunner of change!

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