

Expert group joint opinion

Evaluation Procedure: Assessment of Study Field

Higher Education Institution: European Christian Academy

Study field: Social Welfare

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Summary Assessment of the Study Field

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Assessment of the Study field Social Welfare in European Christian Academy (ECA): Over the past 30 years, European Christian Academy (earlier Latvian Christian Academy) has developed into a institution of higher education capable of providing educational, research and development services in Latvia and Europe with a special profile in the field of social welfare. The whole administration/management at the Academy is described clearly and in detail in the Self-assessment report of ECA. The description of the administration shows that the management has been developed over a long period, considering legislation of Latvian Society, Regulations of higher education and good practices concerning universities. The responsibilities, duties, functions, and subordination relationships of the governing bodies are spelled out. The administrative structure is oriented towards strategic steering of the study field, and quality assurance and development of the study programmes. The academic staff and the students' Council have strong representation in governing bodies.

ECA has five study programs in study field Social Welfare:

- 1) Caritative Social Work (42762), Professional bachelor study programme (160 CP), Secondary education, bachelor's degree in Caritative Social Work, professional qualification is social worker.
- 2) Social Work (44762), Second level professional higher education study programme (after first level professional study programme) (80 CP), qualification is social worker.
- 3) Caritative Social Work (47762), Professional master study programme (80 CP), master's degree in Caritative Social Work, qualification is Leading social worker.
- 4) Social Entrepreneurship Management (47762), Professional master study program (80 CP and 60 CP) for students with prior knowledge in commercial studies or economics), master's degree in social Entrepreneurship Management.
- 5) Supervision (47762), Professional master study programme (80 CP), master's degree in Supervision, qualification is Supervisor.

The aims, tasks, knowledge, skills, and competences of every study programme are well described. Each of them produces specific knowledge in academic research and practice of social work. All five ECA study programmes seem to be well interlinked. The studying is student-centred. To promote Latvian society and the national economy, the Academy wants to educate innovative social workers, who can take responsibility for the social policy of the welfare state and influence its development.

The total number of students in 2021/2022 has been 162. Based on both, the self-assessment report (SAR), and the assessment visit, ECA students are highly motivated by ECA's study programmes. They value the social welfare education they receive. They also value their professionalism. They are motivated to work in different positions in social work. ECA emphasised that quality activities, internationality, and the principle of "shared ownership" have been important tools for achieving the aims of education. The students have the possibility for international mobility. Students learn to know social work as science and social work practices also on the European level (visiting professors, seminars etc.). ECA has created technical opportunities for students to study also online.

The implementation of the study field is ensured by highly qualified 32 teaching staff members, including 9 professors, from them 4 visiting professors, 1 associate professor, 12 assistant professors and 4 lecturers and social welfare practitioners involved in the study field. 20 teaching staff members have a doctor's degree. ECA has established a structured system of professional development and job evaluation of teaching staff. During the onsite visit, the experts group asked the teaching staff their workload and balance between academic, research and possible administrative activities. The teaching staff stated that it is well balanced, and they do not experience overload of work tasks. However, some indications point towards certain overrepresentation in the curriculum by certain staff members. Additionally, it would be beneficial for the study field if more of the involved staff members possessed qualifications in the field of social

work, which currently appears to be at low levels.

ECA provides all the necessary resources that are needed for students, teaching staff and overall provision of the funding, materials, technical provision and literature. The financial resources are mostly dependent on students' fees, income from courses and seminars, publishing and from the EU research projects. ECA has all the necessary infrastructure, resources, material, and technical support for a successful implementation of the study field. The whole house as a teaching and study environment is beautiful and cosy. During the assessment visit, it seemed clear that the Rector has been able to create a strong ECA spirit that carries the entire ECA activities.

The expert group has found many strengths in the activities of ECA. The expert group also has found weaknesses. Challenges exist in the study field concerning the adherence of study programmes to the regulatory framework, both in terms of educational standards and professional standards where applicable. There is a significant risk that certain necessary competencies required by professional standards have not been adequately addressed. Some study programmes raise concerns due to their overly theological nature (including emphasis on ancient European and patristic anthropological tradition), which appears to overshadow the necessary competences mandated by the professional standard. Consequently, the curricula of these study programmes lack an adequate amount of new sources and literature on the latest findings in the field.

In light of institutional improvement, experts have prepared a couple of strong recommendations for study programmes, mainly concerning compliance with standards to ensure ongoing adherence. There is hope that by fixing and addressing these issues, the institution can continue to prosper in the future.

1. Management of the Study Field

Analysis

[1] According to the self-assessment report of ECA, the strategic background for development of the social welfare study field is clear and it comply with the study programmes: "1) European Social Agenda with a focus on European Social Dialogue; 2) the national concept of Latvian higher education development 2030; 3) the new Law of Higher Education (approved 2021); 4) strategic normative documents of Ministry of Welfare regarding Development of social work profession until 2027".

ECA underlines its good link with the European guidelines for higher education and cooperation in research and education. In the visit discussions it was clear that ECA actively has conversations with the state of Latvia, with the Latvian Parliament, the Ministry of Welfare, employers in the social sector and various Christian denominations to create the conditions for the relevant study programmes. ECA also has used SWOT- analysis from the perspective of students, study processes, study programmes, academic staff and any other aspects for the self assessment and strategic development. The SWOT analysis has provided a wealth of material on the current situation of ECA higher education and also on future challenges. Therefore the aims of the welfare study field and the study programmes in ECA comply with the needs of the society and the strategy of the ECA.

In the self-assessment report, p. 22-23, ECA has presented and justified its aims in the field of social welfare education in an understandable way and in relation to the aims of the European higher education sector and the welfare state. Among other things, ECA wants to join the Common European Higher Education Area and innovatively solve the common tasks of the European Commission's Social Agenda in its professional activities. In order to promote Latvian society and the national economy. The University wants to educate innovative social workers, who are able to take responsibility for the social policy of the welfare state and influence its development.

Social workers who graduate from ECA's field of social welfare should be understood as the experts of science and practice of social work. The education sector aims to develop new interventions to

implement social justice and well-being for vulnerable groups, as well as different approaches to meet and help clients. In this way, effective results can be achieved in the professional skills and activities of social workers and their research activities. Social workers are educated to be able to increase "human capital" both as actors and activate the internal resources of clients. In its educational aims, ECA emphasises the learning of the activating welfare state and coordinated and integrated forms of health and social services, which models can be found at European level. All five ECA study programmes in the field of social welfare seem to be clearly interlinked.

The study programmes have bachelor and master levels and each of them produces specific knowledge in academic research and practice of social work. A significant area of special expertise is the education of supervision, which is an essential activity now and in the future in all social services. The second is Social entrepreneurship, which the welfare state will definitely need in the future also from the point of view of the national economy. Based on both the self-assessment report and the assessment visit, ECA students are highly motivated by ECA's study programmes. They value the social welfare education they receive. They also value their professionalism. They are motivated to work in different positions in social work.

During the assessment visit, ECA's management underlined the strong commitment to understand social development lines in Latvia and Europe, the changes and challenges, and to find new inspiration for the development of the higher education sector.

ECA considers its study programmes to be innovative, strategically proactive and regenerative in social work. ECA has been a pioneer in developing its innovations from Judeo-Christian values and studying them in relation to the current European social agenda and a holistic understanding of human life and its challenges. Social work research uses the methodology of integrative theology. The development of innovative study programmes has been made possible by the Academy's long-term development of study programmes in cooperation with international universities and organisations in the field of social welfare. Continuous development of professional knowledge, creation of new educational innovations and ensuring the quality of higher education through international cooperation have created a good reputation for ECA in Latvia and among international partners. ECA is also aiming towards doctoral studies, which provides an opportunity to further raise ECA's position in the international field of higher education. The innovative development of the study programmes so far gives confidence that ECA will be able to further raise the level, topicality and diversity of its educational innovations.

The self-assessment report and the assessment visit to ECA emphasised that quality activities, internationality and the mental principle of "shared ownership" have been important tools for achieving the aims of education. The concept of "shared ownership" refers to intrapreneurship, where everyone, administrative staff, academic staff, support staff and students do their best for the success of the Academy and themselves. The idea came up several times during the assessment visit and it had been adopted at different levels of the Academy.

As critical aspects, it should be noted that a relatively small Academy has the same requirements in society as a large university. ECA struggles in hard competition with other universities in Latvia and Europe for good social work students, academic staff and development resources. A small staff will have to make a lot of effort. The European operating environment also includes major crises and uncertainties. The assessment visit did not reveal that ECA had a plan for risk management at the university or its welfare study programmes. If there is no risk management plan, it would be necessary to do.

Another critical aspect is that the number of students at ECA is relatively small. During the assessment visit, the students missed their fellow students, who are an important support in their professional growth. In a pluralistic society, a "Christian academy" may be a foreign-sounding place of study for some applicants to study. The number of students are also affected by the life situation of adult students and tuition fees, which not everyone can afford to pay. In view of the threat of dropping out, it would be valuable if the Academy could create, for example, a scholarship fund to

support the study costs of students in a difficult financial position. On the other hand, digitalization throughout Europe and new programmes created on the E-platform may also enable an increase in the number of new international students as international recognition of ECA expands.

Over the past 30 years, ECA has developed into Academy capable of providing educational, research and development services in Latvia and Europe with a special profile in the field of social welfare. ECA also aims to implement doctoral studies in caritative social work in international cooperation. This would be a further step in ECA's activities along the lines of the European model of educational development. The social welfare study field in ECA complies with the prescribed requirements.

[2] In the ECA self-assessment report (pp.12-14 and 36-37.), the whole administration/ management of the Academy is described clearly and in detail for efficient decision making in the study field. The description of the administration shows that the management has been developed over a long period of time, taking into account legislation of higher education and good practices concerning universities. The responsibilities, duties, functions and subordination relationships of the governing bodies are spelled out. Students have significant representation in key governing bodies. The governance of the ECA includes: Board of Governors (Founder); Statutory Advisory Board / Constitutional Assembly (15 members); Senate, the central academic decision-making body (13 members); ECA International Council for strategy and development (6 international members); Rector and Academic Arbitration Court.

The self-assessment report says that the study field social welfare contains five social work study programmes, and "they are run by one Director under authority of the Study department". There are also individual directors for master's degrees "Social entrepreneurship" and "Supervision".

In its self-assessment report, ECA has presented its social welfare education development plan until 2027 based on an assessment of the current situation. At its core is the creation of ECA as a centre of excellence and social care innovation centre in Latvia, the Baltic countries and Europe in cooperation with European actors. ECA also constantly wants to ask itself who we are, what we do and also what we should strategically aim for in social welfare higher education. ECA operates in line with the European Commission's new social priorities, promoting European aspects of democracy, digitalisation and mobility and in line with the ERASMUS+ programme. ECA aims to organise doctoral studies in caritative social work in international cooperation and to implement three new master's programmes during the planning period.

Continuous learning to acquire knowledge, research-based study programmes that meet the needs of working life and taking care of one's own professional development provide students with the prerequisites for success as social workers. If ECA could also offer shorter professional courses for professionals working in the field of social work, it could be an opportunity to increase student numbers, collaborate with professional associations, promote the dissemination of professional knowledge in social work and promote opportunities for lifelong learning.

During the assessment visit, the Rector of ECA described the management of higher education and study programmes in the field of social welfare as "efficient, strong and transparent". The administrative structure is oriented towards strategic steering at the study field and ensuring and developing the quality of study programmes. ECA's work, teaching and guidance has a problem-solving approach which helps to find solutions in a timely manner.

The students' Council and academic staff have strong representation in governing bodies. Other administrative and technical staff also seamlessly support the implementation of higher education. "The Shared ownership" - idea brings mutual support of the staff and can be secured flexibly and without delay for different educational needs. The rector, also as the owner, has significant responsibility and power at the Academy. During the assessment visit, it seemed clear that the Rector has also been able to create a strong and constructive ECA spirit that carries the entire ECA activities. The self-assessment and the assessment visit did not particularly highlight how things are going when the key persons are unable to perform their duties for one reason or another.

During the assessment visit, it became clear that ECA has created an International Council for

strategy and development, for the development of educational programmes, as well as a network of university researchers, who are able to assess the academic level of ECA's research and teaching work. Experts heard statements by a Professor from Germany and Former Principal from Norway. They emphasised the high standard of the Academy's study programmes and the unique and specific educational offer of the social welfare study field, where the requirements of the human and social sciences are met, while taking into account theological and spiritual aspects and their importance in holistic social work.

[3] It became clear during the assessment visit that ECA has written instructions on student admissions and related practices, as well as on the accreditation of previous studies. The ECA Senate has approved rules and guidelines for both domestic and foreign students. Studies completed abroad (under the ERASMUS programme) are also accepted according to the instructions. According to the ECA Self-Assessment Report (p. 38), students carry out their work in accordance with the order of the Rules of the Council of Ministers No. 436 (About the Education Development Guidelines 2021-2027). In ECA, students' achievements are recorded in the study register. Tests, grades, attendance at lectures, periods of practical work and exams are listed in the study registers. Employers' representatives are also involved in the processing of traineeships. Students' assignments, coursework and bachelor's/master's theses are presented in writing but also orally for evaluation. This also highlights students' digital competence.

Regulation on transfer of previously gained education and practice is in place. Such regulations are explained in Regulation on evaluation and recognition of competences acquired outside of formal education or acquired in professional experience and study results achieved in previous education
ECA (lv -

<https://kra.lv/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Nolikums-Neformalas-izglitibas-atzisana-2022.pdf>). Although, there is regulation on the transfer of the study period, professional experience, and the previously acquired formal and non-formal education there were lack of proof how and when such procedure would be implemented when students are enrolled in the study programme "Social Work", including actual examples of such cases..

Learning outcomes have been defined for each course. Courses are evaluated on a 10-point scale. The quality of study-related work is assessed at the end of the academic year in the Senate. Students are informed in advance of the expected results. During the assessment visit, the expert group learned that there is scope for students to improve their performance and this seemed to have a positive impact on students. Students are allowed to discuss their studies and assessments with study programme directors in Whatsapp groups and directly with teaching staff. The Student Council can also bring matters to the Senate for discussion, where students are represented. During the assessment visit, nothing specific came up that ECA did not take into account regarding the evaluation of student achievements.

[4] The Academy's principles of integrity are explained on page 39 of the ECA Self-Assessment Report. Also during the assessment visit of the expert group, the theme was discussed. The Academy emphasises the responsibility of Christian students. The principles of Honesty are published in the Academic Honesty Codex. It can be found on the website (<https://kra.lv/lkra-dokumenti/>). The principles of academic integrity are also attached to the students' study agreement. According to the ECA's self-assessment, "Both bachelor's and master's theses in official certification ECA use a uniform plagiarism and originality detector plag.lv/plagramme.com." The rules are strict. The staff is responsible for the prohibition of plagiarism and a personal discussion is held with the students.

According to the self-assessment report, there have been very few cases of plagiarism in the ECA, but there is no time period reported. Honesty is one of the Academy's core values. The whole thing seems to have been properly managed.

[5] According to the ECA self-assessment report, students' admission to studies is guided by the

Regulation of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 846, beginning from 10.10.2006. "Regulations Regarding the Requirements, Criteria and Procedures for Admission to Study programmes". Admission instructions and instructions at ECA are published on the website (<https://kra.lv/lkra-dokumenti/>). Also admission Regulations and necessary instructions for Foreign Students can be found on the website (<https://en.kra.lv/degree-students/application-for-studies>, https://en.kra.lv/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2022/11/LKrA_Arvalstnieki_2022-2023_EN.pdf). ECA has published important information in Latvian and English languages on its website about the study programmes, studies and work and life at the ECA. There is also information in the Russian language. The information is clear and helps applicants and students to apply to the studies and to know the work of ECA

Information about the study programmes submitted for accreditation is also available in the public register on www.viis.gov.lv and AIKA e-platform eplatforma.aika.lv. ECA website contains information about the same study programmes. However, information on VIIS register seems outdated and is in need of updating as it does not feature accreditation terms and lists non-existent programmes. Taking into account that the parameters of the study programmes have been clarified as part of the assessment procedure, after making a decision on the accreditation of the study field and corresponding programmes, the ECA must make sure that the information included on the website and in the official registers (E-platform and VIIS) is indicated correctly. No other gross discrepancies has been found in official registers and information generally complies with information provided by ECA.

Conclusions. Strengths and weaknesses

According to the self-assessment report of ECA, the strategic background for development of the social welfare study field is clear. The strategy complies with the development work of the social welfare studies at the ECA. During the assessment visit, ECA's management underlined the strong commitment to understand social development lines in Latvia and Europe, the changes, and challenges, and to find new inspiration for the development of the higher education sector.

ECA has been a pioneer in developing its innovations from Judeo-Christian values and studying them in relation to the current European social agenda and a holistic understanding of human life and its challenges in the field of social welfare and education. Over the past 30 years, ECA has developed into Academy capable of providing educational, research and development services in Latvia and Europe with a special profile in the field of social welfare.

ECA has five social welfare degree programmes. They are from bachelor to master levels and each of them produces specific knowledge in academic research and practice of social work. All five ECA study programmes seem to be interlinked. The studying is student-centred. ECA students are highly motivated by ECA's study programmes. They value the social welfare education they receive. They also value their professionalism. They are motivated to work in different positions in social work.

The whole administration/management of the Academy is described clearly and in detail. The description of the administration shows that the management has been developed over a long period of time, taking into account legislation of higher education and good practices concerning universities. The responsibilities, duties, functions, and subordination relationships of the governing bodies are spelled out clear. The administrative structure is oriented towards strategic steering to the study field and ensuring and developing the quality of study programmes. The rector, also as the owner, has significant responsibility at the Academy. During the assessment visit, it seemed clear that the Rector has also been able to create a strong and constructive "ECA spirit" that carries the entire ECA activities. The students' Council and academic staff have strong representation in governing bodies.

During the assessment visit, it became clear that ECA has created a prestigious International Council for strategy and development, for the development of educational programmes, as well as a

network of university researchers, who are able to assess the academic level of ECA's research and teaching work. In its self-assessment report, ECA has presented the ECA and its social welfare education development plan until 2027 based on an assessment of the current situation. At its core is the creation of ECA as a centre of excellence and social care innovation centre in Latvia, the Baltic countries and Europe in cooperation with European actors. ECA aims to organise doctoral studies in caritative social work in international cooperation and to implement three new master's programmes during the planning period.

The students' admission and achievements are recorded in the study register systematically. Tests, grades, attendance at lectures, periods of practical work and exams are listed in the study registers. The principles of Honesty are published in the Academic Honesty Codex. ECA use a uniform plagiarism and originality detector plag.lv/plagamme.com." The rules are strict.

Admission instructions and instructions at ECA are published on the website (<https://kra.lv/lkra-dokumenti/>). The website of ECA gives information on the welfare study field in Latvian and English languages. There is also information about the work and life of ECA in Russian language. Through the website the candidates and students will find relevant information about the studies and ECA as a study place.

Regulation on transfer of previously gained education and practice is in place, however there is lack of proof that such procedure would be implemented.

STRENGTHS:

- 1) In its activities and strategic work ECA complies with higher education legislation, guidelines and standards in human and social sciences in Latvia, as well as the European Social Agenda and higher education policies.
- 2) ECA has a strong and effective management structure, a clearly defined division of responsibilities between governing bodies and defined responsibilities in social welfare study programmes.
- 3) The students' Council and academic staff have strong representation in governing bodies.
- 4) Over the past 30 years, ECA has developed innovative and unique social welfare study programmes in collaboration with European researchers. The studies have a high academic standard and have been able to combine the requirements of human and social sciences with the foundations of Christian and European culture. Due to their specific profile, they do not overlap with similar study programmes in the social welfare study field in Latvia.
- 5) ECA's work, teaching and guidance has a problem-solving approach.
- 6) ECA openly informs interested parties about university studies, applying for them, rules, instructions and other necessary information on its website and internal pages (e.g. Moodle and WhatsApp groups).

WEAKNESSES:

- 1) As a small university ECA struggles in hard competition with other universities in Latvia and Europe.
- 2) The number of students at ECA in different study programmes is relatively small.
- 3) Study opportunities at ECA are not yet sufficiently known in Europe.
- 4) ECA has not presented the risk management plan for the university or study programmes.

2. Efficiency of the Internal Quality Assurance System

Analysis

[1] ECA has established quality policy and quality system which is described in System of Internal Quality Provision at ECA which is publicly available at ECA's web site (eng - https://kra.lv/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Nolikums-par-ieksejas-kvalitates-nodrosinasanas-sistemu_

GALA1.pdf). Quality policy is based on 4 core values: educational vision; further monitoring; assessment of programme; implementation of the programme.

During on-site visit it was stated that ECA implements 3 levels of quality monitoring: students and staff questionnaires on needed changes and improvements; demand in the labour market will impact which direction should be improved and/or supported; targeted assessment – specific domain of science – it is evaluated which direction should be developed.

System of Internal Quality Provision at ECA includes regulations on quality measurements, analysis of exams, the Quality Assessment Council, submission of self-assessment report, overall university quality monitoring, strategic foresight, system of internal and external quality evaluation, student-centred learning, teaching and assessment, student admission, progression, recognition and certification, teaching staff, learning resources and student support, information management, public information, on-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes.

On-site visit approved that in the Quality Assessment Council are involved students, teaching staff, employer representatives, rector and meetings are organized every month. As stated by the team, one of the discussions which took place was how to keep good quality of work not only on-site but also online and especially hybrid.

The System of Internal Quality Provision at ECA also explains the order how students or any of the staff members can submit suggestions and complaints. On-site visits proved that students have used this possibility by informing on a complaint to a staff member, after which it was satisfied and the result has been found. Another document where procedure for submission and examination of student complaints is explained is Study Regulations (lv - https://kra.lv/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/studiju_nolikums_ekra_2022.pdf).

As stated by the staff, the quality assurance system is implemented and works efficiently, it orients on the development of the study programmes.

When asked what can be seen as a new challenge in the development of quality assurance, it was stated that ECA would like to reflect on how to attract different foreign students. It is planned to develop this regulation and supplement the QA document.

[2] ECA has implemented Regulations on the procedure for creating, approving and revising study programme (approved on 15.06.2016.) (lv - <https://kra.lv/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Nolikums-par-studiju-programmemu-izveidesapstiprinasanas-un-parskatisanas-kartibu.pdf>), which describes the procedure on how a new study programme must be developed, approved and revised. The Senate is body of decision making if programme should be closed (SAR p. 42). System of Internal Quality Provision at ECA (eng - https://kra.lv/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Nolikums-par-ieksejas-kvalitates-nodrosinasanas-sistemu_GALA1.pdf) has unit on programme development and approval (approved on 15.06.2022.).

Although in the SAR in the section Main Strategic Action Initiatives in the Social Welfare Study field of (until 2027) (SAR p. 30) it is mentioned that one of the aims is to develop 3 master study programmes until 2026: 1) this plan is not connected with the Plan for the Development of the Study Direction “Social Welfare” 2020 - 2027 (Annex II. 1.3); 2) it is not connected with the SWOT analysis; and 3) no proof of development of new study programmes in current state during on-site visits was identified.

ECA collects feedback from several stakeholders: students, graduates and employers.

According to SAR (p. 42) two types of questionnaires are given to students: 1) a teachers' performance each semester with an aim to evaluate study courses; 2) students' satisfaction with the study process is collected annually. As stated in the meeting questionnaire for the students are available both online and in paper. It was stated that the response rate by students is 100%, although in the meeting with study programmes directors it was admitted that not all of students fill in the questionnaires. A positive aspect in the organization of the questionnaire statistician is employed to analyze the quantitative data received in questionnaires. Annex II. 1.3 provides statistics on students' satisfaction index which is 4,1 in 2021/2022 and 4,5 is to be expected in

2030. Index of employability of graduates in the sector in 2021/2022 is 63% and is expected to be 80% in 2030.

Another way how students' feedback is collected is through non-formal discussions and WhatsApp groups (SAR p. 38) where the study programme director is admitted together with students.

Graduates feedback is collected right after a diploma defense. It is advisable that questionnaires of graduates would be collected not only at the moment of the graduation but after some period of time, which would allow to gain valuable data on alumni workplace, allow to evaluate efficiency of gained knowledge and skills during studies, trends in labour market, etc.

Employers feedback is collected during field placement when supervisors at the institution give feedback on students' performance. During on-site visit with employers it was approved that almost all of them provides field placement, nevertheless none of them approved that they would fill the questionnaire on how to improve and/or the study programmes, which means that: 1) questionnaires of employers should be improved if they are given during field placements; 2) there should be separate questionnaires for employers to evaluate the results of the study programmes and needed improvements; 3) clarify to employers the aim of the evaluation of the students performance during field placement and development of a study programme.

Those results of employers questionnaires which are provided as annexes to each study programme do not give sufficient information on when the questionnaire was held, was it organized during students field placements or separately, how many participants there were (exception would be master study programme "Supervision" with 3 employers, bachelor study programme "Social Work" with 5 employers, master study programme "Caritative Social Work" with 4 employers). Considering the number of enrolled students in each study programme, number of alumni, number of institutions which provide field placements to ECA students, it would be possible to reach out to more employers. Also, clarity on what gained results means (for instance, clarity whether 1 is used as the best or worst ability to perform skills and knowledge) as well as explanation of gained data in comparison of provided study programmes would be in place.

Study programmes director is responsible for analysis of the gained data from students, graduates and employers' questionnaires and prepares suggestions to rector.

ECA also monitors quality of the exam results and practical work (SAR p. 41). Those students who are not satisfied with the grade, can redo the task in order to gain a higher mark. Furthermore, in case of dissatisfaction with the final mark, it is possible to dispute it, which was approved in the meeting with students.

Apart from mentioned feedback systems, in the context of internal review processes, there are questionnaires - self-report forms - for staff members as well. Experts' panel had the opportunity to inspect document folders containing these forms during on site-visit. Some of the forms included check-marks on agreement with the institution's strategic aims, lack of criticism towards management decisions and other biased notions that staff members had to agree upon. While it is the institution's prerogative to establish its staff policy and promote staff cohesion, good practice of managing an academic institution includes fostering a healthy environment of self-criticism, including constructive feedback among peers and towards management. Therefore, a soft recommendation would be to ensure that unwarranted sycophancy does not overshadow the internal review processes and to cultivate an environment that encourages criticism, enabling further positive development in the study field.

It's essential to note that according to experts, two study programmes, namely the professional bachelor programme "Caritative Social Work" and "Social Work," appear to be nearly identical. The curriculum for both programmes largely overlaps, with minor distinctions, and the qualifications awarded are also the same. Consequently, considering the criteria for developing and reviewing study programmes, it remains unclear what sets these programmes apart. A soft recommendation would be to investigate the potential of merging these programmes to streamline administrative processes and reduce the burden of managing two similar programmes.

Another concerning aspect of the study programme review process is the significant number of inconsistencies identified by the experts' panel regarding compliance with regulatory enactments including those related to education and professional standards. Also there were issues regarding transfer of practice credit points in 2-year study programme is in place (according to study plan total amount of field-placement is 16 KP but Minister Cabinet Regulation No. 512 (lv - <https://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=268761>) states that programmes in the amount of 40 KP should provide field placement of 20 KP). However, in the meeting with students who studies at this programme one students stated that ECA takes care of it although could not describe the procedure which was taken in order to do that, and other student could not remember such case but stated that everything that was needed was done. This indicates a lack of internal quality procedures and competencies that could facilitate the early identification and resolution of these issues. Additionally, frequent changes in the state's regulatory framework have occurred recently. Therefore, it is imperative that study programmes maintain compliance consistently over time. Consequently, there is room for improvement regarding further development of internal quality assurance procedures.

[3] One of the main tools to assure quality assessment is Senate meetings, where teaching staff and students are involved.

self-assessment report on the Study Field, which is prepared by the director of the Study Field and other stakeholders, is updated annually (SAR p. 42). There is ensuring evidence on impact of students questionnaires, which can have an effect on the outcome of the content of the study course, satisfaction with the teaching staff, implementation of the new study courses (as stated during meeting with students and graduates), however there are lack of evidences on recent suggestions on how study programmes should be improved or what have been done in latest period to develop study programmes, which would be suggested by the study programme directors or employees during this self-assessment report. It means that two aforementioned parties should be more actively involved in the decision-making process.

In the SAR in several units, it was stated contradictory information that study course descriptions should be revised once per year, once per two years (SAR p. 41) and in some cases once per three years. During the meeting it was clarified that academic staff must revise the course syllabus every 2 years.

One of a set of data which is gathered by the ECA is a drop-out rate. SAR with its annexes do not provide data on drop-out rates. During the meeting with the BA study programmes directors it was admitted that the drop-out rate is high, however precise numbers were not provided by ECA. In order to decrease drop-out rates additional enrollment criteria might be implemented.

ECA also collects data on a student's mobility. Data shows (annex 3.1) that there is a stable flow of outgoing and incoming students. Students are very active in participation in the outgoing mobility in 2019/2020 (36 students) and 2021/2022 (29 students), lower number describes incoming flow of students. Most active students are in the bachelor study programme "Caritative Social Work".

[4] ECA has identified the standards set forth in Part 1 of the ESG, which is reflected in the document System of Internal Quality Provision at ECA. All of the aspects of Part 1 of ESG are explained in the System of Internal Quality Provision at ECA. SAR gives insight into how Part 1 of ESG is implemented. On-site visit provided proof that ECA pays scrupulous attention to student's feedback and implements suggested changes based on these reviews. Students' devotion to ECA creates no doubts. One way ECA keeps a link with the graduates is that they become employers and later admit students to field placements. Almost all of the employers who were present on-site stated that they provide field-placements and also employ graduates of ECA.

Although development of three new master study programmes was mentioned (Annex II. 1.3) no information was gained that actual procedure would be in place.

Since ECA implements 2-year BA study programme "Social Work" it is crucial that regulation on transfer of previously gained education and practice is in place. Such regulations are explained in

Regulation on evaluation and recognition of competences acquired outside of formal education or acquired in professional experience and study results achieved in previous education ECA (lv - <https://kra.lv/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Nolikums-Neformalas-izglitiba-atzisana-2022.pdf>) ECA maintains the web page where all of the necessary information is published: studies, research, proceedings, courses, summer school, etc. Information is updated on a regular basis and gives clear insight into activities held by ECA.

Conclusions. Strengths and weaknesses

ECA has established a quality policy and a quality system. The quality policy contributes to the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study field. Strong focus is on students' feedback, less on graduates especially in a later stage and employers. ESG are correctly identified and addressed. There is no clarity on how transfer of credit of field placement is implemented in a 2-year bachelor study programme; how three master study programmes will be implemented; lack of evidence of drop-out rate; low involvement of employers in the study programmes development. New initiative on how to develop a quality system is in place. There are some indications that staff self-report forms discourage criticism.

STRENGTHS

- 1) ECA strives to implement and establish a functional internal quality system.
- 2) Regular feedback from students is taken into account.
- 3) New initiative on how to develop a quality system is in place.

WEAKNESSES

- 1) The formal involvement of employers in the development of the study programs is weak.
- 2) No proof that transfer of field placement credit points in a 2-year bachelor programme is implemented according to regulation.
- 3) No clarity if and when three new master study programmes will be developed.
- 4) The Plan for the Development of the Study Direction "Social Welfare" 2020 – 2027, SWOT analysis and Main Strategic Action Initiatives in the Social Welfare Study Direction are not interconnected.
- 5) Data on employers' questionnaires do not provide sufficient information on the number of employers involved (exception would be master study programme "Supervision" with 3 employers, bachelor study programme "Social Work" with 5 employers, master study programme "Caritative Social Work" with 4 employers) and interpretation on gained data is missing.
- 6) Lack of visibility of drop-out rate. High drop-out rate as stated by the staff, no evidence on the drop-out rate in the SAR.
- 7) No clear demarcation between some of the study programmes.
- 8) Internal quality processes have failed to address issues related to compliance with regulatory enactments

3. Resources and Provision of the Study Field

Analysis

[1] ECA is a private university without State budget funding. The necessary financing required for the implementation of the study field is covered by income from: 1) students' fees; 2) from provided life-long courses for professional development and implementation of programmes for improvement of professional qualification; 3) from participation in international research projects; 4) from regular cooperation with European Commission's organizations (SAR p. 48).

Positive aspect is that ECA and the International Support Council are administering a foundation that ensures financial sustainability and stability in conditions when the number of students decreases, -

it takes care of academic visits of guest professors and assistant professors, organizing Christian mission activities, which cover these services with their own funds.

During the experts visit, ECA management stated that the Academy pays less attention to the number of students in each individual programme from a financial point of view, because the strategy for increasing the number of students must be modeled separately for each study year.

ECA develops the social welfare study field as a whole and if there are fewer students in a study programme in the relevant study year, to ensure the programme's profitability, ECA uses so-called cross-financing from other study programmes with more students, thus equalizing the costs of the programme.

The academy develops the entire study field in general, taking into account that there is a great lack of specialists in social work, then social entrepreneurship is one of the main forms of how to restore the former prestige of social work in the country, because social entrepreneurship is an innovative and developing form of social work.

During the visit, ECA management stated that the Academy has developed a strategy for increasing the number of students in the study field: annual analysis, at the end of the study year; specific marketing strategies that connect universities with similar study programmes (University of Klaipeda LT, recruiting students in social entrepreneurship from Germany); in-bound marketing (blog posts, webinar); marketing materials; the Academy offers listener status in the "Open Academy"; the campaign "A student needs help" (foreign Christian church congregations have been approached so that they could grant a scholarship).

According to SAR (p. 48) the sufficiency of study field resources is regularly confirmed: 1) in sociological surveys of students; 2) in the Senate's analysis of the compliance of the academic staff with the content of the study field and academic qualification requirements; 3) in the self-assessment reports of the academic staff, and 4) in the reports of the technical staff of the Academy regarding the need for material and technical improvements.

The direct costs of the study field consist of remuneration of academic staff, teaching materials, costs of events, and other direct costs related to the realization of the study field. Partly direct costs are related to remuneration of academic staff for those teaching staff who are not directly related to the implementation of a study programme, but perform expert work or advisory activities, as well as develop distance learning materials. They also include administrative costs, compensation for organizing study work. The partial costs also include business trips, conference attendance expenses, membership fees in different organizations, stationery expenses, student aid and other expenses. The indirect costs are the other costs of the Academy, where the costs of organizing the study process, the costs of organizing public relations and events, etc. are added. Here also is added the costs of building management and the cost carrier – the number of students in the programme, the number of contact hours of study courses realized within the study programmes per year (SAR p. 49).

A system for funding scientific research for ECA is incorporated in the form of study courses as well as in separate research projects. According to SAR (p. 50) the resources for the implementation of the content of the study field and the programme include expenditures of scientific activity in the amount of 1.1% of the budget of the study field.

[2] ECA has adequate infrastructure resources in use and the material and technical provisions that ensure the implementation of the study field are available for the implementation of the study programmes.

During the assessment visit, the expert team also had access to ECA's administrative and teaching facilities, library, computer software, etc. for the needs of the welfare study programmes. The experts could check that the infrastructure of ECA is well developed and friendly for both the teachers and the students. The facilities of ECA provide a good study environment, the workplaces in the auditoriums are well-equipped. ECA offers use of appropriate equipment for lectures, seminars and discussions such as web cameras, microphones, wireless screens and beamers. The library offers free use of computers and broadband Wi-Fi connection. The whole house is beautiful and cosy. ECA is very accessible by public transport, but students who use their own car would like to have parking spaces near the Academy.

ECA methodical and informative provision for the study field as well as informative basis fully complies with both goals and needs of the study field. The methodical and informative provision is fully sufficient for implementation of the study field.

Library resources and databases are available to students.

The Scientific Library of ECA has been registered at the Register of Latvian Scientific Libraries since 1993 which is proved by official Registration Certificate (SAR p. 54). According to SAR (p. 55) the Academy annually invests in buying new books for its Scientific Library. Both students and teaching staff receive regular once-in-semester information about new purchases. Decisions about the necessary literature purchases are made by the Senate in cooperation between teachers, directors of study programmes, Head of the Scientific Library and Rector.

Funding for the collection of ECA library collections is approved at the Senate meetings and distributed annually by study fields, as the library's resources are used by students in all study fields (SAR p. 56).

The Library of the Academy is a member of the Latvian Library Universal Catalog (LIIS). Nine databases are available through signed cooperation agreements with the National Library of Latvia (EBSCO, Rubicon, Britannica Online, Academic Edition, AkadTerm, Encyclopedia of Religions, Mythica, Central Intelligence Agency, etc.) (SAR p. 56).

The information and communication technology solutions used to ensure the study process is appropriate and effective. The ECA uses various solutions and platforms within the study process and implementation of the study field. The databases available in the library with the latest industry publications.

ECA indicated that WhatsApp, Zoom, MS Teams or Google Meet communication tools are used for the distance learning process (SAR p. 54). There are available webinar texts for studies, developed presentations for almost every study course. For students an e-system for learning courses is available in the Moodle system ("E-Studies"). The e-study website provides all the necessary materials for studies.

For purchasing material, technical, methodological, and other goods or services for improving the study process for the students and academic staff, the ECA has a procurement policy in place. This

policy regulates the procedure of the procurement process as well as the operation of a procurement commission.

[3] ECA has established fair and open procedures related to the recruitment, performance and evaluation of teaching staff, ensuring high quality standards, in accordance with the ESG. Engaging and employment of teaching staff processes are carried out in compliance with the Law of Higher Education and other normative regulations, and Regulations of Election in Academic Positions at ECA.

Teachers are elected to academic positions by the Senate of ECA following Regulations of elections in academic positions at ECA (available: <https://kra.lv/EKrA-dokumenti/>). Vacant academic positions are announced by the website of European Christian Academy as open academic competition. Following results of elections ECA signs work agreement with the elected teacher in the prescribed order (SAR p. 57).

The academic, research and administrative workload of the teaching staff partly balanced. During the onsite visit, an experts group asked the teaching staff their workload and balance between academic, research and possible administrative activities and the teaching staff stated that it is well balanced, and they do not experience overload of work tasks, however, overseeing study programmes plans, experts see a risk of overloading teaching staff (information included in the corresponding study programmes).

The evaluation of the teaching staff as well as the evaluation of the qualification system is comprehensive, motivating, strategic and providing feedback. The qualifications of the teaching staff of ECA are assessed, improved and stimulated.

Academy has its System of Internal Quality Provision at ECA (eng - https://kra.lv/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Nolikums-par-ieksejas-kvalitates-nodrosinasanas-sistemu_GALA1.pdf).

According to SAR (p. 57) the teaching staff of the Academy regularly improve and enriches knowledge which is later assessed by students in Sociological enquiries and also the teaching staff assesses its performance in annual self-assessment reports. Both students' assessment and teachers' self-assessment report results in a coefficient. Coefficient plays an important role when teacher's wages are discussed - the value of it determines higher wages. Good scientific publications and prepared study materials are prized additionally. Students are regularly informed about high quality international or local achievements of their teachers.

Academic and administrative personnel of ECA are selected in compliance with the strategic goal and are assessed on five quality criteria. These points invest in measurements of the added value and actual understanding of performance of each teacher. The added value measuring model is unified, complex and transparent and it reflects key components which are necessary for education, quality performance and creativity of students (SAR p. 58).

According to SAR (p. 60), the teaching staff members take part both in outgoing and incoming mobility, which brings added value to the implementation of the study process and the study quality. Mobility processes at ECA are regular, mandatory and directly related to tasks of internationalization of the study process and peculiarities of the professional specialization.

[4] The Academy has identified the necessary support for students and a functioning support system has been established to meet the needs of students. There are various kinds of supporting activities

for students in place at the Academy.

Considering the small number of students, studies at ECA are actually individual training. In addition, ECA is a theological and anthropological university, thus the students receive very complete knowledge of how to implement the processes of both social and individual life in such a way as to be able to feel stable in various situations, including crisis situations. Therefore, a psychological support service at the academy is not necessary. There are several priests among the students who can provide qualified spiritual advice in case of need (SAR p. 60).

During the visit, the experts could check that the building's 1st floor is accessible to persons with mobility impairments and is appropriately equipped. In the academy there is a sign language interpreter, which helps conduct lessons for deaf and hard-of-hearing students. For the visually impaired and the blind, the academy offers an assistant service. It should be noted that ECA has received a special recognition diploma from the Ministry of Education and Science for the fact that students with special needs feel particularly comfortable at the Academy (SAR p. 60).

The Academy provides living spaces for exchange students in the territory of the academy and in the adjacent hotel Semarah Hotel Lielupe (SAR p. 48).

Students receive academic assistance and support for career development. For the good development of the academic process and the promotion of quality, the academy identifies the needs of students through surveys and offers adequate solutions.

According to SAR (p. 61) ECA has entrusted the development of students' careers and its evaluation to the tasks of the Quality Management Council. The Quality Management Council for the purpose of promoting students' professional careers: 1) organizes student meetings with employers; 2) the employer's representative participates in fieldwork defending conferences; 3) at the beginning of each academic year, teaching staff present the research analysis scientific sources that examine career's concept of social workers, supervisors, social entrepreneurs, its developments and opportunities for its implementation.

The Academy also organises studies that strengthen study readiness for new students at no additional cost.

Students are also informed about ERASMUS + mobility and study opportunities at partner universities.

During the visit, students describe the teaching staff and director as very open and happy to help at any point when needed.

Conclusions. Strengths and weaknesses

ECA provides all of the necessary resources that are needed for students, teaching staff and overall provision of the funding, materials, technical provision and literature. The financial resources are mostly dependent on students' fees, income from courses and seminars, publishing and from the EU research projects. ECA has all the necessary infrastructure, resources, material and technical support for a successful implementation of the study field. The library provides students with the necessary study literature and regularly updates the resources when needed. However, ECA should consider all possibilities to update the literature related to the modules/courses of each study programme. The ECA uses various solutions and platforms within the study process and implementation of the study programmes. ECA uses the Zoom platform for the lecture provision online as well as use of Microsoft Teams. The "E-Studies" environment "Moodle" is used for the administration of the study process. ECA has fair and open procedures related to the recruitment,

performance and evaluation of teaching staff. The evaluation of the teaching staff as well as the evaluation of the qualification system is comprehensive, motivating, strategic and providing feedback. The qualifications of the teaching staff of ECA are assessed, improved and stimulated. The academic, research and administrative workload of the teaching staff is balanced. ECA provides students with a functional support system.

STRENGTHS:

- 1) The study infrastructure provided to the teaching staff and the students at ECA is good.
- 2) There is a support system available for students.
- 3) ECA has established a structured system of professional development and job evaluation of teaching staff.
- 4) Regular feedback from students is taken into account.
- 5) ECA has developed a strategy for increasing the number of students in the study field.

WEAKNESSES:

- 1) ECA should update the literature related to the modules/courses of each study programme.

4. Scientific Research and Artistic Creation

Analysis

[1] The directions of scientific research of the study field is generally aligned with the goals of the Academy (SAR, p. 62-70), several directions being pursued by the institution (e.g. 1) direction - Interdisciplinary research in the development of the Social Model of the European Union using the Method of Integrative Theology, 2) direction in the interdisciplinary field of Orthodox theology and Social sciences; 3) direction in corporate research - Social welfare studies, using the resources of Orthodox theology and patristic anthropology in the study of social problems, 4) direction - Caritative social work methodology and innovations in social work and social entrepreneurship. 5) direction - European Social Model: Social dialogue processes in the European Union and Latvia / in unity with EC EZA (European Center for Workers' Questions)), 6) direction - Social diakonia/ research in unity with the International Deaconate Center (IDC, Germany); 7) direction - Research of the history of the Orthodox Church in Latvia). Expert evaluation is that not all these directions are relevant for the study field. For instance, within 3) direction in corporate research - Social welfare studies, using the resources of Orthodox theology and patristic anthropology in the study of social problems at no.5 (SAR, p.63) a number of translations are mentioned, but these have no relevance to social work field. In general publications of the teaching staff are relevant for the study field, though in low profile academic publications (e.g. ECA Scientific Proceedings). A scientific work plan of the academic staff is established yearly (SAR, p.62) and each member of the teaching staff is required to publish at least 2 papers, participate with a paper in the EC EZA (European Center for Workers' Questions) annual international seminar, be involved in international projects coordinated by the Academy (Erasmus+ Strategic Partnerships; Social work research project with young people; Nordplus Higher Education and Nordplus Horizontal projects), publish in the Scientific Proceedings of the Academy, in the collection of scientific articles of the University of Klaipėda (Lithuania) "Tiltai" or from other universities, especially if a collaboration with ECA exists. The relevance of the publications is low, as most of the publications are in outlets of the ECA or partner organisations and not in the flux of international peer-reviewed journals. No member of the teaching staff published an article in a journal indexed in Clarivate Web of Science. No teaching staff member has a public profile on Scopus, Web of Science, ORCID or Google Scholar. The number of citations of the publications of the teaching staff is very low (expert counted one author with professor rank with 5

citations, only one in a publication indexed in Web of Science). This represents an indicator of the very low relevance of the publications of the teaching staff of ECA.

[2] Scientific research is generally linked with the study process by the inclusion of some research outputs into the curricula and study materials for students, but the integration of the research carried out by the teaching staff into the curriculum is evaluated by the expert as limited. For instance, recent publications of the teaching staff are not included in the required bibliography of the courses. The main ways to achieve the integration of scientific research into the study process include students' fieldwork research conference reports, involvement with teachers' research projects, meetings with graduates, or involvement in annual EZA (European Center for Workers' Questions) conference. More emphasis needs to be placed on Social Work courses. Annual revision of course syllabus is recommended, as some titles are rather old. In the SAR (pp.70-71) some examples of activities with students are given (e.g. meeting with alumni/graduates, critical reflection on field practice placements, research study groups, career days, etc.).

[3] ECA has developed international collaborations with research network organizations (EZA (European Center for Workers' Questions), IXE-Group: Initiatives of Christians for Europe, Semaines Sociales de France, International Deaconate Center, IDC) and several European universities (SAR, pp. 72-74). The research component of these collaborations is limited mainly to policy analysis, though there are some scientific outputs (e.g. 2 books, international Summer School, etc.). However, ECA is not member of some of the main international network in the field of social work education and research such as: European Association of Schools of Social Work, International Association of Schools of Social Work, European Social Work Research Association.

[4] The Academy has developed several functional mechanisms for the involvement of the teaching staff in scientific research (e.g. 1. 2 academic publications per academic year are mandatory, 2. Participation with a paper in the EC-EZA annual international seminar, 3. Involvement in international projects coordinated by the Academy (Erasmus+ Strategic Partnerships; Social work research project with youth; Nordplus Higher Education and Nordplus Horizontal projects), 4. Publications in the Scientific Proceedings of the Academy corresponding to the study field, 5. Publications in the collection of scientific articles of the University of Klaipėda (Lithuania) "Tiltai" and in the scientific articles of other universities with which inter-university cooperation agreements have been concluded. 6. Publications on the corporate social platforms of the European Commission, in which ECA is a cooperation partner). They publish mostly in the Scientific Proceedings of the Academy and in the collection of scientific articles of the University of Klaipėda (Lithuania) "Tiltai" and present their research in events organised with partner organisations. As each teaching staff is required to publish at least 2 articles per year, formally the mechanisms are in place and functional. However, more efforts are needed in order to increase the visibility of research by publishing in mainstream Social Work journals indexed in Web of Science. Translation of different theological works from English, Greek or Russian to Latvian can be useful for students, but has limited scientific relevance.

[5] The involvement of students in scientific research includes: students' fieldwork research conference reports, competition for students' scientific research work, involvement with teachers' research projects, meetings with graduates, involvement in annual EZA conference, or the writing of their graduation theses (SAR, p. 80). During the on-site meeting students did not mention a specific research project in which they have been involved, but they pointed out the guest lecturers in different courses. There is a wide variety of opportunities for students to be involved in research projects, but the degree of involvement varies, so expert opinion is that these mechanisms are to an average degree functioning and efficient.

[6] Several innovative solutions have been presented in the SAR (pp. 81-83), linked with the mix between the social work field of study and a theological approach (e.g. connection with the European Social Agenda, integrative theology methodology, calligraphy masterclass). However, expert evaluation is that calligraphy as a form of therapy is relevant for some types of service users,

but it is less relevant for the education of social work students. When considering work with children and adolescents with mental disorders other therapies have proved effective across the world, depending on the type of disorder (e.g. art-therapy, animal-therapy, music therapy, occupational therapy, etc.). Regarding “integrative theology methodology” the expert consider that it is not “ancient innovation” as it is claimed in the SAR (p. 81). If this concept would have been so innovative it would have had more than 2 citations in the academic literature in social work. Neither the client-centered social work is new, as it dates back to beginnings of social work as a discipline in the writings of Mary Richmond in her manual “The Social Diagnosis” from 1917 (the first handbook on casework intervention). Another process innovation presented in the SAR (p.81) is the “Corporate doctoral studies in Social Work” which is based on a collaboration of 3 universities from Lithuania, Finland and Latvia, the thesis being defended in Finland (University of Lapland). This collaboration has the potential for innovation, but is dependent on a higher research and publication profile of the teaching staff of ECA. Overall the degree of innovative solutions is rather low.

Conclusions. Strengths and weaknesses

The directions of scientific research of the study field is generally aligned with the goals of the HEI (SAR, p. 62-70), several directions being pursued by the institution. In general publications of the teaching staff are relevant for the Study field, though in low profile academic publications (e.g. ECA Scientific Proceedings). A scientific work plan of the academic staff is established yearly (SAR, p.62) and there are mechanisms in place to encourage and support the publication of staff. Scientific research is generally linked with the study process by the inclusion of some research outputs into the curricula and study materials for students.

ECA has developed international collaborations with research network organizations (EZA (European Center for Workers’ Questions), IXE-Group: Initiatives of Christians for Europe, Semaines Sociales de France, International Deaconate Center, IDC) and several European universities. However, at the time of the site visit ECA was not member of some of the main international networks in the field of social work education and research. The involvement of students in scientific research is in place, though limited. Overall, the degree of innovative solutions is rather low.

STRENGTHS:

- 1) International collaborations with research network organizations and various European universities.
- 2) Several projects with international partners have been carried out, creating the premises for valuable exchanges.

WEAKNESSES:

- 1) The relevance of the publications is low, as most of the publications are in outlets of the ECA or partner organisations and not in the flux of international peer-reviewed journals. No member of the teaching staff published an article in a journal indexed in Clarivate Web of Science.
- 2) The integration of the research carried out by the teaching staff into the curriculum is evaluated as limited.
- 3) International research projects are limited and the dissemination of results is not visible enough at international level (e.g. no publications in mainstream social work journals, small number of citations).

5. Cooperation and Internationalisation

Analysis

[1] ECA has developed international collaborations with research network organizations (EZA (European Center for Workers’ Questions), IXE-Group: Initiatives of Christians for Europe, Semaines Sociales de France, International Deaconate Center, IDC) and several European universities (e.g. the

University of Klaipeda (LT), the University of Cologne (DE), Finnish social work professional education network DIAK - Diakonia University of Applied Sciences (7 universities), the University of Malmö (SE), the University of Białystok, the University of Warsaw (PL)). Collaborations with Latvian institutions are also reported (SAR, pp. 85-86), such as universities, employers, social services providers and associations of different professionals (e.g. Riga Stradins University, University of Latvia, Baltic International Academy, Cooperation Council of Social Work Specialists (SDSSP) of the Ministry of Welfare of the Republic of Latvia, the Latvian Confederation of Free Trade Unions (LBAS), the Deaconal centre of Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia, Chaplaincy service of the Orthodox Church in the Latvian army, the social service services of the municipalities of Riga and the whole of Latvia, the Confederation of Employers of Latvia; the Society of Social Workers of Latvia (LSDB), the Christian Professional Education Association (KPIA) and the Association of Latvian Supervisors (LSA), etc.). Most of these cooperations are relevant to SF and , though many are religious organisations. These cooperations contribute to the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the SF and the type of collaborations are selected in view of the specific features of the study field and the relevant study programmes. During the on-site meeting with employers of ECA graduates most participants expressed their satisfaction with the resilience of graduates in facing professional burnout and stress. On page 85 of the SAR is stated that "ECA is a member of the International Association of Universities of Social Work (IASSW).", but the information is false as ECA is not listed on IASSW website of member organizations (<https://www.iassw-aiets.org/our-members/#1580474856533-43de923d-7ab9>).

[2] ECA established collaboration with research network organizations (EZA, European Center for Workers' Questions), IXE-Group: Initiatives of Christians for Europe, Semaines Sociales de France, International Deaconate Center, IDC) as well as with different European universities such as: the University of Klaipeda (LT), the University of Cologne (DE), Finnish social work professional education network DIAK - Diakonia University of Applied Sciences (7 universities), the University of Malmö (SE), the University of Białystok, the University of Warsaw (PL).

The selection of international collaboration is reported to be based on the area of interests of the Study field, namely European social policies/agenda, social cohesion or religious affinities. Expert evaluation is that these collaborations are relevant to the study field. The Strategy of HEI is to expand European collaborations. Teaching staff exchanges are reported as regular (SAR, pp.86-87). Students mobility is in place (on average 10 incoming students per academic year are involved in exchanges), mainly through the Erasmus agreements. During the on-site meeting with students no student mentioned studying abroad, but the number of participating students was not high. The students are adults with families and work and it is not very easy to take part in mobility. During the assessment visit experts met two students from abroad. They were very satisfied with their studies at ECA. In the beginning of every study year, the ECA and ERASMUS+ department organizes a seminar for all students where students and teachers explain their experiences after mobility.

Expert evaluation is that students' mobility is reasonable. Teachers' mobility contributes to the improvement of the study process (only 9 teachers out of all teaching staff taught in European universities).

[3] ECA has internship agreements with about 30 field places (SAR, p.88) and some outside the country (e.g. in Lithuania). It developed several regulations for the implementation of internships: 1) Regulations on fieldworks (for each study program), and 2) Regulations for each fieldwork. In bachelor study programs - 4 fieldworks; in master's programs - 2 fieldworks. The training by fieldwork manager takes place at the Academy and at the fieldwork site; 3) Mandatory fieldwork diary, which must be submitted after defending the fieldwork together with the description of the fieldwork manager. At the end of the fieldwork, a research paper is required and must be presented during a "conference of the fieldwork" in which other students and employers are present. The system in place for internships is evaluated as well developed.

[4] N/A

Conclusions. Strengths and weaknesses

For the small university it is a great deal to have cooperation with many organizations. ECA has long term agreements for example with many European Universities like Klaipeda (LT), the University of Rovaniemi (Finland), University of Malmö (Sweden), the University of Bialystok (PL) etc. The higher education institution established collaboration with research network organizations like EZA (European Center for Workers' Questions), which has an annual conference at ECA. Students mobility is in place, on average, 10 incoming students per academic year are involved in exchanges. Expert evaluation is that students' mobility is reasonable with less in-coming than out-going students. The last years have been challenging for the mobility of students because of the Covid pandemic. The students are adults with families and work and it is not very easy to take part in mobility. During the assessment visit experts met two students from abroad. They were very satisfied with their studies at ECA. In the beginning of every study year, the ECA and ERASMUS+ department organizes a seminar for all students where students and teachers explain their experiences after mobility. The system in place for internships is evaluated as well developed.

STRENGTHS:

- 1) Collaborations with Latvian and European partners
- 2) Long-term strategy to expand European collaborations
- 3) Students' internship

WEAKNESSES:

- 1) Misinformation on membership to International Association of Universities of Social Work (IASWW)

6. Implementation of the Recommendations Received During the Previous Assessment Procedures

Analysis

[1] The recommendations issued in previous accreditation and their implementation are described in the ECA self-assessment report pp. 90-91 and APPENDIX No.3, List of implementation of recommendations. For the Caritative Social Work study programmes, ECA had presented its positive aspects in the SWOT analysis, but not the development needs. According to Annex 3, ECA has continued to develop the strengths of all study programmes in greater detail. In addition, ECA has continued to develop a Caritative social work study programme proactively to assist clients. ECA takes into account the recommendations of students, graduates and the labor market according to the quality assurance programme.

ECA notes that there are now 30 field work places instead of the 7 previously mentioned. Fieldwork guidance has been increased and weekly meetings and via Zoom have also been utilized. The orientation of the Caritative Social Work study programme and its different courses has been strengthened. Online communication facilities have been developed to inform students and staff. The library's resources for students have been increased every year.

ECA has stated that 'during the reporting period, the professional master's study programme 'Supervision' (47762) was licensed as part of the study direction. Unlimited duration license was issued on February 27, 2015". In addition, the professional master's study programme "Social Entrepreneurship Management" (47762) was licensed as part of the study field.

Some of the observations made in the previous evaluation are of such quality that they should be taken into account in connection with further continuous quality improvement. As a whole, the expert team can conclude that the recommendations have been taken into account in the ECA's activities and implemented. In general, the expert team concludes that the development work continues at ECA, but the recommendations have been completed according to the plan in the

relevant study year.

Conclusions. Strengths and weaknesses

As a whole, the expert team can conclude that the recommendations of the Previous Assessment Procedures have been taken into account in the ECA's activities and implemented. In general, the expert team concludes that the development work continues at ECA, but the recommendations have been completed according to the plan in the relevant study year.

STRENGTHS:

1. The ECA has taken into account the results of previous assessment work. It has worked on them and developed study programs and the activities of the Academy on the basis of recommendations.
2. ECA has given information about recommendations and their implementations in APPENDIX no.3.

7. Assessment of the Requirements for the Study Field

- 1 R1 - Pursuant to Section 5, Paragraph 21 of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education, the higher education institution/ college shall ensure continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study direction whilst implementing their internal quality assurance systems:

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

ECA has been working on development of internal quality system, however identified shortcomings regarding compliance with regulatory framework in study programmes indicates that internal quality system have no sufficient capacity to timely identify and address those issues. The feedback collection from the employers could be strengthened.

- 2 1.1. The higher education institution/ college has established a policy and procedures for assuring the quality of higher education.

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

There are identified shortcomings regarding compliance with regulatory framework in study programmes indicates that internal quality system have no sufficient capacity to timely identify and address those issues. Also curriculum and course descriptions sometimes feature unrealistically large amount of reading and/or outdated literature.

- 3 1.2. A mechanism for the development and internal approval of the study programmes of the higher education institution/ college, as well as the supervision of their performance and periodic inspection thereof has been developed.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

ECA has implemented Regulations on the procedure for creating, approving and revising study programme (approved on 15.06.2016.) (lv - <https://kra.lv/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Nolikums-par-studiju-programmu-izveidesapstiprinasan-un-parskatsanas-kartibu.pdf>) and System of Internal Quality Provision at ECA (eng - https://kra.lv/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Nolikums-par-ieksejas-kvalitates-nodrosinasanas-sistemu_GALA1.pdf) has unit on programme development and approval (approved on 15.06.2022.).

- 4 1.3. The criteria, conditions, and procedures for the evaluation of students' results, which enable reassurance of the achievement of the intended learning outcomes, have been developed and made public.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Generally ECA has a certain policy regarding students' grading. There were no indications regarding issues regarding evaluation of students' results in general coursework.

- 5 1.4. Internal procedures and mechanisms for assuring the qualifications of the academic staff and the work quality have been developed.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Academic staff generally are qualified. However, an analysis of teaching staff indicates that it would be beneficial to involve more staff members in implementation of study programmes of social welfare with some qualification in the field of social work.

- 6 1.5. The higher education institution/ college ensures the collection and analysis of the information on the study achievements of the students, employment of the graduates, satisfaction of the students with the study programme, efficiency of the work of the academic staff, the study funds available and the disbursements thereof, as well as the key performance indicators of the higher education institution/ college.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Regular feedback from students is taken into account. It is advisable that feedback from alumni at a later stage would be collected. It seems that there would be a weak involvement of employers in the development of the study programmes.

- 7 1.6. The higher education institution/ college shall ensure continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study direction whilst implementing their quality assurance systems.

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

The study programs show deficiencies in complying with the regulatory framework, suggesting that the internal quality system lacks the ability to promptly identify and rectify these issues. Additionally, curriculum and course descriptions often include excessively large reading lists and outdated literature.

- 8 R2 - The cooperation with different organisations from Latvia and abroad implemented within the study direction ensures the achievement of the aims of the study direction.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

ECA has a cooperation with other national and international level organisations and institutions regarding the field of social work.

- 9 R3 - Compliance of scientific research and artistic creation with the development level thereof (if applicable).

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

Low international profile of publications. For example, no member of the teaching staff published an article in a journal indexed in Web of Science. In general, the research output could be higher especially regarding publishing in peer-reviewed and indexed journals.

- 10 R4 - Elimination of the shortcomings and deficiencies identified during the previous assessment of the study direction, if it has been conducted, or the implementation of the provided recommendations.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Identified shortcomings during previous procedures have been addressed.

8. Recommendations for the Study Field

Short-term recommendations

Clearly communicate the institution's membership status in IASSW through official channels such as the website.

ECA should update module/course literature and study materials in all study programmes annually in accordance with the ECA Quality Programme. ECA should reduce the number of mandatory literature (specify the chapters and pages which students should read to meet realistic capabilities of students), update the literature to the newer sources - include newest findings and articles in the field

Long-term recommendations

ECA should develop a risk management program for the Academy and for the welfare study programmes (because of the risk situation in Europe).

ECA teaching staff should strengthen its research output. For example by publishing research articles with regularity in international peer-reviewed journals in the field. This would improve the relevance of the publications and the international visibility of the ECA.

Encourage collaboration between academic staff and industry professionals to ensure the study programmes are aligned with labour market needs. Establish a structured framework for active employer engagement, such as advisory boards or regular consultation sessions, ensuring their input in curriculum development, thereby aligning the programmes with industry needs and demands.

Conduct a thorough review of existing policies and regulations regarding credit transfers for field placements. Provide clear guidelines to students and faculty on the process of transferring credit points and establish a monitoring system to track adherence.

Develop a transparent roadmap outlining the timeline, milestones, and responsible parties for the development of the new master study programmes.

Integrate the findings from the SWOT analysis directly into the development of Main Strategic Action Initiatives. Ensure that the weaknesses and threats are addressed by specific action plans. Regularly review and adjust the initiatives based on ongoing evaluation and feedback.

Improve the data collection process by clearly defining the required information from employers.

Track and analyse student drop-out rates. Regularly assess the reasons for drop-outs and use this information to implement necessary actions.

Integrate teaching staff's research into the curriculum.

Actively promote student mobility programs, both incoming and outgoings. Provide support services to facilitate the mobility process for students, encouraging them to participate in exchange programs.

Explore opportunities to potentially consolidate similar programmes or ensure that having two similar programmes are internally justified.

Develop internal processes to proactively identify and rectify issues related to compliance with regulatory enactments.

II. "Caritative Social Work" ASSESSMENT

II. "Caritative Social Work" ASSESSMENT

1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

Analysis

[1] "Caritative Social Work (42762)" - The BA programme is a Professional bachelor degree in Caritative Social Work and partly meets the competence requirements in social work in the field of welfare. The title of the study programme and the degree to be completed mostly comply with Latvian legislation of higher education and social work. After graduating from the programme, the qualification is "Social worker". The degree is Bachelor degree in Caritative Social Work, however, it is technically incorrect and the more correct version would be - Professional bachelor degree in Caritative Social Work. In order to achieve professional degree and qualifications, the admission requirements for the study programme is Secondary education and for those studying in English as well knowledge of English at least at B2 level. The Academy organises studies to strengthen study readiness for new students with deficient study skills at no additional cost.

The objectives of the study programme are clearly and in detail defined from the perspective of legislation corresponding to social services in the field of welfare and society, the European Social Agenda, the ethical aspects of the social work profession and the professional responsibilities of social workers. The professional competence of caritative social workers aims at a holistic understanding of the client, social work and the operating environment of social work. The education of caritative social workers provides a multidisciplinary knowledge base for professional social work among individuals and groups and for the development of social work in society. The name, professional requirements, content and competence acquired in the study programme correspond to each other.

According to SAR of the ECA the study programme is implemented as full time studies for 4 years, part time studies 4,5 years and part-time studies as distance education in Latvian language. There is also implementation as full time studies in English language. At the side-visit at ECA the expert group could also meet students from abroad who were satisfied with the implementation of the studies.

The study programme is an innovation of ECA and has been implemented for a long time. Social workers who have completed the study programme are valued by various employers. Students also find employment well. The feedback received from working life and students is analysed and, based on the feedback, ECA makes the necessary changes to the content of the study programme and its implementation on a regular basis. The number of admissions could be increased, as we are talking about adult students. Students must commit to their studies for four years. Anyway, the time of the studies is reasonable in both languages, Latvian and English.

ECA's descriptions of the programme and caritative social workers mean that they can work in the public and private sectors, as well as in secular and ecclesiastical social work. It is not easy for applicants to understand the multidisciplinary nature of studies when applying for studies. A caritative social worker needs professional skills, but also intrinsic motivation to work caritatively. The student must grow as an expert and as a person. During the discussions with the students and the graduates on the side visit, it was possible to see and experience the skills and intrinsic motivation of the students and caritative social workers for their work. They experience a meaningful profession and study programme.

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

ECA has clearly defined the admission requirements for the "Caritative Social Work (42762)" - BA study programme, the objectives of the programme, the professional qualifications and

competences produced by the programme. The title of the study programme and the degree to be completed mostly comply with Latvian legislation of higher education and social work, however, the title of the degree needs to be technically clarified. The descriptions of the programme and the professional qualifications of social workers educated at ECA means that caritative social workers are able to work in public and in private as well as in secular and in ecclesiastical social work. The caritative social workers are valued by various employers. The study programme is implemented as full time studies for 4 years, part time studies 4,5 years and part-time studies as distance education in Latvian language. There is also implementation as full time studies in English language. The number of students is quite small. The students are mostly adults with families. Committing to studying for four years is a challenge for adults but reasonable.

STRENGTHS:

- 1) The objectives of the study programme are clearly and in detail defined.
- 2) The education of caritative social workers provides a multidisciplinary knowledge base for professional social work among individuals and groups and for the development of social work in society.
- 3) Caritative social workers have a holistic, special profile and they have a wide working field of secular and ecclesiastical social work nationally and internationally.
- 4) There are implementation models of the study programme as part time distance learning and also in English language.

WEAKNESSES:

- 1) The interdisciplinary nature of the studies may not be clear for applicants, when they are applying for the studies.
- 2) The number of students is quite small.

2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

Analysis

[1] "Caritative Social Work (42762)" is a study programme and innovation of ECA implemented by ECA since 1993. Study programme includes 160 CP studies in caritative social work and is partially compared to social worker's professional standard which was approved on 14.10.2020. (Annex 7). Experts compared compliance of the programme's content with the requirements defined in the professional standard and state standard.

During the site visit it was mentioned that the aims and content of the study programme meets the needs of the welfare sector work and is relevant. The study programme introduces the starting points of European and Judaeo-Christian culture for the welfare sector. In this way, an innovative holistic approach of social work has been found, and the emphasis is in persona both in the student's professional growth and in the professional work of a social worker. The innovative approach of the study programme is manifested in understanding the person as a whole by combining the physical, mental, social and spiritual dimensions in a holistic way, when meeting people and their questions and adopting the practices of secular and ecclesiastical social work in the study programme. The professional competence of caritative social workers is a holistic understanding of the client, social work and the operating environment of social work. The ethical foundation of the social work profession combines Christian anthropology with the starting points of social work. The study course "Patristic anthropology" as a methodological tool in working with the client with "charity", helps a social worker to solve client's problems creatively. Research education in social work science is multidisciplinary, guiding critical thinking, analysis and argumentation. The methodology supports the learning of scientific knowledge and professional skills.

The study programme provides 55 study courses, including: Module of general educational study

courses (20 CP); theoretical basic courses of the social work (36 CP); professional specialisation of social worker courses in the amount of 60 credit points; compulsory elective courses (6 CP); four field works (traineeship) (26 CP) and the Bachelor qualification work (12 CP).

One professor from Germany and Rector from Norway also gave written statements about the high quality of the studies to the expert group during the assessment visit, because they could not be within discussions by side-visit.

Compering programme with requirements set in state standard - Minister Cabinet Regulation No. 512 "On the state standard of second-level professional higher education" (lv - <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/268761-noteikumi-par-otra-limena-profesionalas-augstakas-izglitiba-valsts-standardu>) - experts identified several aspects, which the Academy should prevent, for instance:

regulation states that a study programme must include knowledge stated in the Law on Environmental Protection and the Law on Civil Defense, which is implemented by providing following study courses (Annex 6): The European Social Model, Medicine in Caritative Social Work Practice and Caritative Social Work in Hospital, however, none of these study courses include topics on environmental protection and civil protection.

regulation states that there should be study courses/topics for building professional business competence in the amount of 6 CP. After reviewing the content of the study courses, it was discovered that there is a lack of topics on organization and establishment of companies, management methods, and the basics of business economics.

regulation states that there should be free choice study courses in the amount of 6 KP. ECA provides in C part 3 study courses, however there is lack of a choice (Annex 9).

Experts conclude that other requirements specified in Minister Cabinet Regulation No. 512, such as - requirements of mandatory included content in the professional bachelor's study programme in terms of the minimum amount of credit points of the study programme, field placement (in amount of 26 KP), mandatory content, awarded degree, etc.- can be considered fulfilled.

According to SAR (p.188-190) 4 field placements are provided: 1) Introductory practice in the specialty (institutional practice) (3 CP); 2) Case management practice (9 CP); 3) Professional practice (8 CP); 4) Qualification and pre-diploma practice (6 CP). Controversial information is mentioned in the field placement guidelines which were given to the expert team on demand after on-site visit, which state that amount and titles of the field placements are different than it is mentioned in the SAR and Annex 9 Study plan. Most likely that practice guidelines are outdated and do not correspond to the current situation. This makes it difficult to judge whether field placements aims and objectives correspond to the professional standard.

After field placement students must defend it in front of a commission where representatives of employers and teaching staff are involved. In a meeting with students, it was approved that such defenses are ongoing.

During on-site visits the expert team was provided with some examples of field placement diaries where students' reflections and field placement supervision evaluations were included.

Looking to programmes content all together experts see that most of the study modules complement each other and are significant for the student, society and social work clients, however, in some cases, the study courses and the content included in them cause concern, as well as give reason to question whether the programme fully meets the requirements set out in the professional standard. For instance:

one of the required knowledge and competencies in standard is "3. To do social work with the case through psychosocial counseling." However, the provided course curriculum does not align with this competency. Specifically, the course "CARITATIVE WORK WITH MENTAL PATHOLOGIES OF A PERSON" (mapped against this competency) focuses on the anthropology of the Church Fathers and analyzes "the pathologies of human consciousness/mental pathologies (not to be confused with the psychopathologies known in psychiatry), their types and psycho-social manifestations." This indicates a specific understanding of pathologies, diverging from the broader psychosocial

counseling approach.

the course "MARRIAGE PSYCHOLOGY (BASIC RELATIONS)" (originally "Pamatattiecības") does not align with the required competency of "1. Manage the case" in social work. This course is solely theological in nature, as stated in the annotation, focusing on the sacramental nature of marriage based on biblical concepts and Church practice. Study course features such topics as "The roles and mental tasks of the spouses in the family and the main obstacles to their implementation", "Husband - wife's head" - spiritual, psychological and social aspects. "Wife - assistant of husband" - spiritual, psychological and social aspects. The course's predominantly theological and outdated study literature (older than 10 years) reflects a narrow, religion-based understanding of marriage. Consequently, this curriculum fails to contribute to the essential competencies in social work concerning marriage issues, and it lacks the broader perspective required for the field. In the worst case, it may perpetuate problematic notions of marriage and reinforce gender role stereotypes that do not align with the latest peer-reviewed scientific advancements and internationally adopted ethics of the field. This becomes a particular concern, considering that the programme aims to provide professional qualifications rather than providing interest-based academic education where theological interpretations can be fully valid fields of study. As a result, it becomes imperative to fulfill specific requirements.

Regarding competency "12. To identify and solve ethical dilemmas in professional activities." two study courses are mapped "Theology of the New Testament" and "Orthodox ethical principles and integrity of social work profession." Those study courses do not feature in any capacity code of ethics of Latvian Social Workers. (approved on 28.05.2022) or any international associations developed codes of ethics of social workers.

None of the study courses in their curricula or literature include the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence, despite its significance as an important document, particularly in relation to numerous study courses addressing EU policy and related topics. Its exclusion might suggest that the institution may be influenced by a broader agenda aimed at politicizing and misrepresenting women's rights and LGBTQ rights. It is important, that study programme striving to provide professional qualification follows the principles of human rights, dignity, and professional ethics of the field of social work. While the institution has the authority to determine its curriculum, it is crucial to thoroughly evaluate all aspects and potential risks. This is particularly significant because the programme aims to offer a state-recognized qualification that guarantees the necessary competencies to work with various vulnerable groups within state-run institutions. While graduates' abilities to work in value-aligned organizations like diaconies or specific NGOs are unquestioned, it is essential to exercise caution, particularly when working with marginalized segments of society, which fall under the purview of state or other social institutions.

Furthermore, the study literature provided in the course description is older than 10 years and predominantly consists of theological literature or highly dubious authors such as Rudzītis V., lacking proper scientific and/or peer-reviewed literature addressing psychosocial issues. Additionally, the inclusion of the concept in one of lectures of "model of victim behavior of young women" (originally - "jaunu sieviešu viktīmās uzvedības modelis") without scientific literature support raises concerns. It is important to note that victim behavior is not age or gender-specific, and all individuals can exhibit such behavior. Therefore inclusion of only this specific demographic is concerning.

These observations suggest that vital knowledge and competencies pertaining to psychosocial counseling may not be adequately covered in the curriculum. The course's focus on specific understandings of "pathologies" through theological dimension and the absence of peer-reviewed literature on related topics contribute to this concern.

Considering mentioned above, list of literature in all of the study courses should be revised as they sometimes include even a dozen number of literature sources; there is no specification on units or pages students should focus on. Latest research and publication are not included.

Regarding traineeship and the final thesis, experts can conclude that in general they give a sufficiently good picture of the studies and their implementation. As it was mentioned the programme prepares students for working in secular social organisations and enterprises, charities, community work, NGOs, volunteering and different congregations. The content of the caritative social worker profession responds to the challenging and growing need for social work in Latvian society and the European welfare labour market, however, in order to avoid misunderstandings and inconsistencies, the Academy should eliminate all deficiencies identified by experts.

After conducting experts visit, meetings with relevant parties, and reviewing the provided documentation, which included on-site available research proceedings, journals, and internal documents, experts have concluded that the institution successfully prepares Social Workers who are highly regarded within specific industry segments. Graduates demonstrate strong motivation. However, there are concerns regarding their preparedness to address issues such as domestic violence, identity-based discrimination, and sexual abuse, particularly in secular settings. Based on feedback from graduates and employers, it was observed that in certain instances, religious values took precedence over professional ethics, and in some cases, reinforcement of stereotypical notions occurred. The institution's emphasis on Church-centric education and limited integration of scientific research literature raises doubts about graduates' ability to fulfill the role of a social worker in contexts that may challenge their theological beliefs, due to a lack of necessary scientific background.

According to the ECA self-assessment report, the contents of the study courses of the Caritative Social Work programme have to be updated every second year according to the requirements of the Laws and Regulations of Latvia, the labour market and the development trends of social work as a science in Latvia and in Europe. The ECA self-assessment report states (p. 192) that "Amendments to the Social Services and Social Assistance Law" of the Latvian Parliament (2007) states: "Caritative Social Work is analogous to social work, the purpose of which is to help individuals, families, groups or society as a whole to function socially and spiritually." As a result, experts concluded that the programme has been created as unique unit and includes examples of good practice, at the same time, improvements should be made to ensure full compliance with normative acts.

[2] The teaching methods are diverse, such as lectures, seminars, study-related study diaries, reports, independent theoretical assignments, research assignments using the epistemological method of integrative theology, case report analyses, role-playing games, presentations, study visits, fieldwork presentations and assignments, tests and the defence of the thesis. ECA offers studies also as distance learning. Reports, analysis, independent working but also seminars are good methods by distance learning. ECA also has technical possibilities for that. At the side-visit experts also heard satisfied students from abroad, who were using distance learning. It can be seen that the implementation of studies and the evaluation methods contribute to the achievement of the aims of the study programme. At the same time, in the future, more attention should be paid to the development of distance learning materials, approaches to conducting tests, etc.

The course evaluation system is comprehensively presented and is based on the Decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia (2014 No. 512). The course evaluations correspond to the knowledge and skill requirements of each course. Students can apply for the opportunity to increase their grade (scale 1-10).

Teaching and studying at ECA is student-centred. This was fully demonstrated during the assessment visit. Students and graduates were very satisfied with their study programme, the education they received and the academy as an educational institution.

[3] ECA conducts regular surveys or interviews with students, graduates and employers, the results of which are presented in the appendices. Independent sociology is used to analyse the content and results of feedback. The aim is to rectify any shortcomings that have arisen as soon as possible.

[4] Latvia and Europe as a whole have just gone through the Covid pandemic, which has a big impact on student mobility. Despite this, there has been an increase in both outbound and inbound

mobility of charitable social work students at ECA. ECA guides students towards mobility and integrates studies abroad as fully as possible into students' studies. Adult students sometimes interrupt their studies to work abroad. If the working periods abroad are beforehand planned and goal-oriented, from experts point such an experience could be recognized as an traineeship as well.

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

The Caritative Social Work Study programme (42762), BA is innovative and includes examples of good practice in terms of content and implementation. The innovative approach of the study programme is manifested in understanding the person as a whole by combining the physical, mental, social and spiritual dimensions in a holistic way, when meeting people and their questions and adopting the practices of secular and ecclesiastical social work in the study programme. The content of the studies emphasises multidisciplinary theoretical, research-oriented and practical competence in caritative social work and professional specialisation of social workers. The knowledge and expertise of a caritative social worker is needed in Latvian and European social work. The programme has been implemented and developed for 30 years at ECA and it has proven to be relevant for students and necessary from the point of view of employers.

The study programme partly complies with Latvian higher education legislation and, as a whole and with the guidelines on professional qualifications in social work. ECA does not fulfil several requirements of the Minister Cabinet Regulation No. 512: 1) to include knowledge stated in the Law on Environmental Protection and the Law on Civil Defense; 2) lack of topics on organisation and establishment of companies, to management methods, and the basics of business economics to fulfil the requirements for building professional business competence in the amount of 6 CP; 3) there is lack of a choice for study courses in C part, at current state ECA provides C part study courses in the amount of 6 CP. Practice guidelines are outdated making it challenging to judge whether aims and objectives correspond to the professional standard. Although the study programme is mapped in accordance with the professional standard non-complacencies were identified.

Some courses in the study programme need to be supplemented and updated. A group of experts has given its attention to reviewing the details of the content of the study programme. Teaching and studying at ECA is student-centred. Students and graduates were very satisfied with their study programme, the education they received and the academy as an educational institution. ECA conducts regular surveys or interviews with students, graduates and employers for developing the study programme.

STRENGTHS:

- 1) The studies of the study programme "Caritative social work (42762)" on ECA's as a whole can be considered innovative and high quality.
- 2) In the study programme, ECA has presented an innovative holistic approach of social work and the emphasis is in persona both in the student's professional growth and in the social worker's professional client work.
- 3) The professional competence of caritative social workers is a holistic understanding of the client, social work and the operating environment of social work.
- 4) Teaching and studying at ECA is student-centred and students value their study programme, profession and the Academy as a place of study.

WEAKNESSES:

- 1) None of these study courses (European Social Model, Medicine in Caritative Social Work Practice and Caritative Social Work in Hospital) include topics on environmental protection and civil protection stated in the Law on Environmental Protection and the Law on Civil Defense. (Required by the Minister Cabinet Regulation No. 512 for Social Workers).
- 2) There is a lack of topics on organisation and establishment of companies, management methods,

and the basics of business economics to fulfil the requirements for building professional business competence in the amount of 6 CP. (In accordance with Minister Cabinet Regulation No. 512.)

3) List of literature is outdated and includes a dozen number of literature sources; there is no specification on units or pages students should focus on. Latest research and publication are not included.

4) ECA provides in C part 3 study courses, however there is a lack of a choice of study courses as stated in the Minister Cabinet Regulation No. 512.

5) Practice guidelines are outdated and do not correspond to the information provided during on-site visits.

3. Resources and Provision of the Study Programme

Analysis

[1] Resources and provisions, available for the Professional bachelor study programme “Caritative Social Work”, are described in ECA SAR (p. 198 - 205) and information obtained during the expert on-site visit, including the tour of material technical base.

The available resources that are accessible, including books in the library, materials onsite in the ECA and technical provision, comply with the necessary tools and conditions for the implementation of the Professional bachelor study programme “Caritative Social Work” and ensuring the achievement of learning outcomes.

The library provides students with access to literature, databases and information when needed. The availability of educational literature is good. Every year the ECA updates their methodological material base and improves the study courses of the programme. However, ECA should update the literature related to the study programme.

The financial provision is also in place and according to the needs of the number of the students. According to SAR (p. 201) the source of funding for the ECA study programme is the tuition fee. The funding for the Professional bachelor study programme “Caritative Social Work” is dependent on the tuition fee and is tied to a certain number of students.

Study information is available for students. During the assessment visit it was stated that study plans and study programme course descriptions are available to students at the Academy. The student familiarises himself / herself with the content of the study plan (full time studies, part time extramural studies, distance learning, English) and courses of his chosen study programme. Study plans and course descriptions are adjusted to the specifics of implementation. Some courses in the study programme need to be updated.

[2] N/A

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

The study provision, informative provision, material and technical provision and financial provision comply with specific features and the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and ensuring the achievement of learning outcomes. Technical and informative provisions are at a satisfactory level, however, the academy should plan to update literature related to the study programme. All the resources are accessible to students. Course descriptions and other relevant study information are available to students.

STRENGTHS:

1) ECA has a good infrastructure and material provision required for a successful study process and to ensure implementation of the study programme.

WEAKNESSES:

1) The academy should update literature related to the study programme.

4. Teaching Staff

Analysis

[1] According to the SAR (p.123), the changes in the composition of the teaching staff since the previous assessment of the study programme were minimal and new staff was identified to replace the missing ones. As some staff are undergoing doctoral studies in relevant areas connected with their course load it is assumed that they will be able to fill in positions made available, if the situation requires. Expert evaluation is that the HEI undertakes measures to fill the gaps when changes in the composition of the teaching staff occur (occurred).

[2] According to the SAR the teaching staff complies with the Law on Higher Education Institutions in Latvia. "The study programme employs 15 lecturers, 11 of whom have a Doctorate degree: 5 professors, of whom two are visiting professors; 2 associate professors; 6 assistant professors and 1 lecturer." (SAR, p.122). The teaching staff, in general, has qualifications similar to the courses they are teaching. However, there are some teachers with a high workload. These situations create not only a strain for the teachers, but also a risk for the study programmes due to overreliance on a few key persons. Academically it is unlikely that a teacher has the time to properly prepare and deliver such an amount of lectures. The number of teaching staff with qualifications or practice experience in Social Work is limited and it can be difficult to teach Social Work intervention methods without practical knowledge. Expert evaluation is that teaching staff are moderately prepared to achieve the aims and learning outcomes of the study programme.

[3] N/A

[4] The ECA has mechanisms ensuring that teaching staff is involved in the development and achievement of the aims and objectives of the study programme. As most of the teaching staff has academic, professional and research work experience, they comply with the requirements of regulatory acts. The participation of the institution in various network organisations ensures that the teaching staff has opportunities (e.g. Erasmus+ teaching exchanges, projects, etc.) to adjust the content of their courses to the European social policies and recommendations. More teachers could avail of the teaching opportunities abroad (in the reporting period only 9 did). At least 7 of the teaching staff did not publish any article in the previous six years in peer-reviewed journals, while those who did, published more than 90% of their articles in one journal (Tiltai/Bridges) which is edited by University of Klaipėda (Lithuania), a partner university or the Scientific Proceedings of Latvian Christian Academy. This situation raises questions about the unequal distribution of publication efforts among the teaching staff. The publications of the teaching staff comprise mainly research reports, projects-related publications and articles in regional/local journals. The information gained during the research projects is partially used in the study process as not always the publications are included in the recommended bibliography.

[5] The ECA has several mechanisms in place to promote collaboration between the teaching staff members, such as: Regular Theoretical Seminars, participation in international research projects, ERASMUS+ teaching exchanges, collaboration of master level lecturers with experienced teachers. Expert evaluation is that these mechanisms are functional.

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

The teaching staff complies with the Law on Higher Education Institutions in Latvia and most of the

15 staff involved in the bachelor programme have had research activity in the previous 6 years. However, publication efforts in international journals need to be improved. The teaching staff, in general, has qualifications similar to the courses they are teaching. The participation of the institution in various network organisations ensures that the teaching staff has opportunities (e.g. Erasmus+ teaching exchanges, projects, etc.) to adjust the content of their courses to the European social policies and recommendations and enhance cooperation among the staff members. Good command of English language would allow more teachers to avail of the teaching opportunities. Expert evaluation is that mutual cooperation mechanisms are functional.

STRENGTHS:

- 1) The teaching staff has academic, professional and research work experience and they mainly comply with the requirements of regulatory acts.
- 2) Collaboration with international partners ensures opportunities for teaching staff.

WEAKNESSES:

- 1) When taking into account all the programmes, there are some teachers with a high workload in the study programme.
- 2) The number of teaching staff with qualifications or practice experience in Social Work is limited and it can be difficult to teach Social Work intervention methods without practical knowledge.
- 3) Some teaching staff did not publish any article in the previous six years in peer-reviewed journals, while those who did, published more than 90% of their articles in 2 journals.
- 4) In the reporting period only 4 teaching staff taught at EU universities.

5. Assessment of the Compliance of the Study Programme "Caritative Social Work"

Requirements

- 1 1. The sample of the diploma to be issued for the acquisition of the study programme complies with the procedure by which state-recognised documents of higher education are issued.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Annexes: KSD Bak_diploms_LV + EN.pdf

- 2 2. Documents confirming that the higher education institution/ college will provide the students with the options to continue the acquisition of education in another study programme or at another higher education institution/ college (a contract with another accredited higher education institution/ college), in case the implementation of the study programme is discontinued.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Annexes: Sad.līgums(studenti)_KSD BAK_EN.pdf

- 3 3. Document confirming that the higher education institution/ college guarantees to the students a compensation for losses if the study programme is not accredited or the licence of the study programme is revoked due to the actions of the higher education institution/ college (actions or failure to act) and the student does not wish to continue the studies in another study programme.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Annexes: Apliecinājums_zaudējumu kompensācija_2-9-49_EN.docx

- 4 4. The teaching staff members involved in the implementation of the study programme are proficient in the official language in accordance with the regulations on the level of the official language knowledge and the procedures for testing official language proficiency for performing professional duties and office duties.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The teaching staff has academic, professional and research work experience and they comply with the requirements of regulatory acts. ECA has highly educated teaching staff.

- 5 5. The teaching staff members to be involved in the implementation of the study programme have at least B2-level knowledge of a related foreign language, if the study programme or any part thereof is to be implemented in a foreign language.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Highly educated teaching staff.

Annexes: Apliecinājums_pasniedzēju svešvalodas zināšanas_2-9-48_EN.docx

- 6 6. At least five teaching staff members with a doctoral degree are among the academic staff of an academic doctoral study programme, at least three of which are experts approved by the Latvian Science Council in the respective field of science. At least five teaching staff members with a doctoral degree are among the academic staff of a professional doctoral study programme in arts.

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

- 7 7. The academic staff of the academic study programme complies with the requirements set forth in Section 55, Paragraph one, Clause 3 of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

- 8 8. The sample of the study agreement complies with the mandatory provisions to be included in the study agreement.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Annexes: KSD Bak_Studiju līgums_EN.pdf

- 9 9. The descriptions of the study courses and the study materials have been prepared in all languages in which the study programme is implemented, and they comply with the requirements set forth in Section 56.1, Paragraph two and Section 56.2, Paragraph two of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

Study program is implemented in Latvian and in English languages and also in distance education. - The english material was not in discussions at the side visit, but expert group can read the materials in English. All the literature is not in English.

- 10 10. The study programme complies with the valid professional standard or the requirements for the professional qualification (if there is no professional standard required for the relevant occupation) provided that the completion of the study programme leads to a professional qualification.

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

Study programme partially comply to social worker's professional standard which was approved on 14.10.2020. (more detailed analyses are included in reports Chapter 2 " The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof")

- 11 11. Academic study programmes provided for less than 250 full-time students may be implemented and less than five professors and associated professors of the higher education institution may be involved in the implementation of the mandatory and limited elective part of these study programmes provided that the relevant opinion of the Council for Higher Education has been received in accordance with Section 55, Paragraph two of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

- 12 12. The study programme complies with the State Academic Education Standard or the Professional Higher Education Standard.

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

Professional Bachelor Study Program - Caritative Social worker/ Social worker.

The study programme is implemented in accordance with: Minister Cabinet Regulation No. 512 "On the state standard of second-level professional higher education"(lv <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/268761-noteikumi-par-otra-limena-profesionalas-augstakas-izglitiba-valsts-standartu>). Study courses are structured in compliance with the social worker's professional standard which was approved on 14.10.2020. (Annex 7) (LV - <https://www.lm.gov.lv/lv/sociala-darbinieka-profesijas-standarts>). The courses of the professional bachelor's study programme "Caritative Social Work" have been reviewed and approved in 2021. According to Minister Cabinet Regulation No. 512 ECA fulfills the requirements of mandatory included content in the professional bachelor's study programme in terms of the minimum amount of credit points of the study program, field placement (in amount of 26 KP), mandatory content, awarded degree, etc.

None of these study courses (European Social Model, Medicine in Caritative Social Work Practice and Caritative Social Work in Hospital) include topics on environmental protection and civil protection stated in the Law on Environmental Protection and the Law on Civil Defense. (Required by the Minister Cabinet Regulation No. 512 for Social Workers).

There is a lack of topics on organization and establishment of companies, management methods, and the basics of business economics to fulfill the requirements for building professional business competence in the amount of 6 CP. (In accordance with Minister Cabinet Regulation No. 512.)

- 13 13. The joint study programmes comply with the requirements prescribed in Section 551, Paragraphs one, two, and seven of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education (if applicable).

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

- 14 14. Each member of the academic staff has either publications published in reviewed editions within the last six years, including international editions (if they have worked for a shorter period of time, the number of publications shall be in proportion to the work period), or artistic creation achievements (for instance, exhibitions, films, theatre performances, and concert activity), or a five-year practical work experience (except for the experience in the implementation of the study programme) in accordance with the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

The ECA has the rule, that every member of the academic staff has to publish an research article once in two years. It was very clear at the site visit. The experts searched each teaching staff individually on Google Scholar. As a result it was found that 7 of the teaching staff did not publish any article in the previous six years in peer-reviewed journals. Some published in other types of publications (e.g. Scientific Proceedings, book chapters). However, the number of citations of the publications is very low which suggests that their scientific impact is limited.

- 15 R5 - Overall rating

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

To ensure that requirement is assessed as compliant it is necessary to ensure the compliance of the study programme with the requirements specified in the state standard and the

requirements specified in the professional standard. It must be ensured that all literature is available in English for those studying in English. The results of teaching staff's scientific activity, publication should be improved.

Requirements (R6-R8)

- 1 R6 - The compliance of the study provision, scientific support (if applicable), informative provision (including libraries), material and technical provision, and financial provision with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and ensuring the achievement of the learning outcomes.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The analysis of the expert group: good situation. It is described in ECA SAR (p. 198 - 205) and information obtained during the expert on-site visit, including the tour of material technical base. All the provisions of the study programme, including scientific, informative, material and technical and financial, are compliant.

The available resources that are accessible, including books in the library, materials onsite in the ECA and technical provision, comply with the necessary tools and conditions for the implementation of the Professional bachelor study programme .“

The library provides students with access to literature, databases and information when needed.

- 2 R7 - The compliance of the qualification of the academic staff members, visiting professors, visiting associate professors, visiting docents, visiting lecturers, and visiting assistants with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and the provisions set out in the respective regulatory enactments.

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

ECA has highly educated and motivated academic staff members to teach in the study program. The implementation of the study program is ensured by 15 lecturers, 11 of whom have a Doctorate degree: 5 professors, of whom two are visiting professors; 2 associate professors; 6 assistant professors and 1 lecturer.. However the number of teaching staff with qualifications or practice experience in Social Work is limited and the distribution of courses to teaching staff is unbalanced, some teachers having too many courses to teach ECA has established a structured system of professional development and job evaluation of teaching staff.

- 3 R8 - The study programme leading to the master or doctoral degree is based on the advances and findings in the relevant field of science or artistic creation.

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

The Caritative Social Work Study Program (42762), BA is innovative and of high quality in terms of content and implementation. It complies with Latvian higher education legislation and, as a whole, with the guidelines on professional qualifications in social work.

The innovative approach of the study program is manifested in understanding the person as a whole by combining the physical, mental, social and spiritual dimensions in a holistic way, when meeting people and their questions and adopting the practices of secular and ecclesiastical social work in the study program. The content of the studies emphasizes multidisciplinary theoretical, research-oriented and practical competence in caritative social work and professional specialization of social workers. The program has been implemented and developed for 30 years and it has proven to be relevant for students and necessary from the point of view of employers.

The Caritative Social Work (42762) programme is applying for accreditation following implementation modes - Full time studies / latvian / 4 years, 0 months; Part-time extramural studies - distance education / latvian / 5 years, 0 months; Part time extramural studies / latvian / 4 years, 5 months and full time studies / english / 4 years, 0 months. As of now there is no English study mode being implemented. However, ECA claims, that they do indeed currently have students in part-time modes as well, but clear numbers have not been provided. ECA, through emphasis on theological approaches, tries to combine secular and ecclesiastical social work, catering mostly to adult students. The programme is valued by employers and has received positive feedback from students and graduates. The objectives of the study programme are clearly and in detail defined. Teaching and studying at ECA is student-centred and students value their study programme, profession and the Academy as a place of study. However, the study programme also faces challenges such as outdated practice guidelines and regulatory issues - content gaps in environmental and civil protection, basics of business economics and misalignment with professional standard. While resources are accessible and provisions satisfactory, there's a need to update literature within the curriculum. The teaching staff is generally qualified, however the number of staff members featuring qualification in the field could be higher, international publication efforts require improvement. It must be highlighted that study programme and its offered curriculum in of itself is good and internally consistent with its chosen theological approach, however it must be understood that in order to have the right to award professional qualification, there must be certain level of confidence, that all necessary competences are covered, which, in this case, is only partial given that the programme is theological in nature. The distance learning capacity could not be sufficiently assessed, as ECA has not provided the information on how many students are enrolled in the distance learning study mode in the current programme on demand. However, based on what is available, the material availability and methodology of organising those part-time study forms could be improved further and making sure that it is clear for all involved stakeholders what constitutes part-time study modes. It should be clear what kind of teaching methodology is being applied here because it could be beneficial even for potential students, for example, by making publicly institutions webpages explanation on how exactly these study modes are being implemented. Feedback from stakeholders indicated that there are no issues, however a comprehensive picture of the actual state of distance learning within institution could not be formed. Based on mentioned aspects, overall evaluation of the study programme as of now is "average", however it can be upgraded to "good" if issues regarding compliance with professional education standard and professional standard mentioned are sufficiently and substantially addressed.

STRENGTHS:

- 1) The study programme is implemented in accordance with Latvian laws and regulations on welfare, social work and higher education.
- 2) Caritative social work is a meaningful profession and study program.
- 3) In the study program, ECA has presented an innovative holistic approach of social work and the emphasis is in persona both in the student's professional growth and in the social worker's professional client work.
- 4) ECA has a good infrastructure and material provision required for a successful study process and to ensure implementation of the study programme.
- 5) The teaching and studying is student-centered.

WEAKNESSES:

- 1) The ECA must ensure that the contents of the Caritative Social Work Study program include the information on environmental protection and civil protection required by the Minister Cabinet Regulation No. 512 for Social Workers.
- 2) The ECA shall ensure that social workers have knowledge of the organization and establishment

of enterprises, management methods and fundamentals of business administration in accordance with Minister Cabinet Regulation No. 512.

3) The list of literature and materials in the study program is extensive, but it must be updated in connection with the annual renewal process of the study program and specified regarding the requirements of each Module/study course.

Evaluation of the study programme "Caritative Social Work"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Average

6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Caritative Social Work"

Short-term recommendations

The ECA must ensure that the contents of the Caritative Social Work Study programme include the information on environmental protection and civil protection required by the Minister Cabinet Regulation No. 512. Must be implemented until a decision on accreditation is being made.

The ECA shall ensure that social workers have knowledge of the organization and establishment of enterprises, management methods and fundamentals of business administration in accordance with Minister Cabinet Regulation No. 512. Must be implemented until decision on accreditation is being made

Ensure that all competencies necessary for professional qualification are sufficiently covered taking into account latest developments in the field of social work. Must be implemented until decision on accreditation is being made

The degree should be technically specified to - Professional bachelor degree in Caritative Social Work. Must be implemented until decision on accreditation is being made

The list of literature and materials in the study program is extensive, but it must be updated in connection with the annual renewal process of the study programme and specified regarding the requirements of each Module/study course.

Field placement guidelines should be updated.

Elective part (C part) study courses should be free to choose from all of the offered study courses in ECA (or other institutions as well) as defined within regulations. Must be implemented until decision on accreditation is being made.

Curriculum should feature the latest peer-reviewed research in the field.

Long-term recommendations

Develop comprehensive promotional materials and website content that clearly outline the interdisciplinary aspects of the studies.

Consider activities to address the low number of students in the programme.

Redistribute workload among teaching staff to ensure a balanced and manageable teaching load.

Seek out ways to include more staff members with qualifications or practice experience in Social Work in the programme.

Provide support and resources for teaching staff to engage in research activities and publish in reputable journals. Encourage collaboration with experienced researchers and provide mentorship to improve publication rates.

Actively encourage teaching staff to participate in international exchange programs, conferences, and collaborative projects.

II. "Social Work" ASSESSMENT

II. "Social Work" ASSESSMENT

1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

Analysis

[1] The study programme Social Work (44762) complies with the welfare study field with the described learning outcomes of the studies and professional skills of the social workers educated in this programme. The Study programme is a Second level professional higher education degree (after first level professional study program) for Social Workers. The Study programme Social Work offers an opportunity for social work specialists with the 1st level professional higher education and practitioners with professional higher education in another sector to obtain a social worker qualification with the values of client-oriented social work in Latvian society and in European level. The 2nd level professional higher education programme "Social Work" is implemented at the Academy in the amount of 80 CP in the form of full-time (2 years) and part-time and distance education (2,5 years) studies and combines problem-oriented social work with client-oriented social work. The duration of the study programme is reasonable for the students with previous education in the welfare field. The implementation of studies and language are reasonable and justified. The achievable learning outcomes are fully consistent with the mission of the social welfare studies of the entire Academy.

The learning outcomes of the Social Work study programme are presented according to (<https://eplatforma.aika.lv/index.php?r=expert%2Fstudy-direction-programmes%2Fview&id=1249&key=2062>). The aims and professional qualifications of the study programme have been described carefully and in detail in the mood of knowledge, skills and competences and they correspond to the professional skill requirements of a social worker. The admission requirements, the objectives, aims, and the professional qualifications are interrelated.

The study programme is developed annually based on feedback from students, graduates and the labour market on the welfare field.

ECA has a good quality programme. Students, graduates, the labour market and international partners are regularly asked for feedback on the content and development needs of the study programme. Justified changes and corrections have been made to the courses of the Study programme after analysing the feedback and the changes in the operating environment.

The previous study programme did not include such lecture courses as "European Social Model", "Social Dialogue and Labor Law in the EU" and "Social Policy and the Welfare State in the 21st Century", which will give students a macro-level understanding of social work tasks.

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

The Study programme "Social Work" (44762) is a Second level professional higher education for client oriented social work in Latvia and at the European level. ECA has clearly defined the aims, knowledge, skills, and competences that the study programme produces.

The "Social Work" is implemented at the Academy in the amount of 80 CP in the form of full-time (2

years) and part-time and distance education (2,5 years) studies and combines problem-oriented social work with client-oriented social work. The study programme is developed annually based on feedback from students, graduates and the labour market on the welfare field.

ECA has a good quality programme. Students, graduates, the labour market and international partners are regularly asked for feedback on the content and development needs of the study programme. Justified changes and corrections have been made to the courses of the Study programme after analysing the feedback and the changes in the operating environment.

STRENGTHS:

1) The study programme "Social Work" is implemented at the Academy in the amount of 80 CP, in the form of full-time (2 years) and part-time and distance education (2,5 years) studies and combines problem-oriented social work with client-oriented social work.

2) The achievable learning outcomes are fully consistent with the mission of the social welfare studies of the entire Academy.

3) The study programme is a good chance for adult students to deepen their professional skills and raise the level of competence in social work because of part time study possibilities.

WEAKNESSES: non identified

2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

Analysis

[1] The study programme Social Work (44762) is the Second level professional higher education study programme (after first level professional study programme) at ECA. The programme offers the opportunity to obtain a qualification in social work if the student already has a level 1. vocational higher education in social work or an applicable vocational higher education in another field. The educational starting point of the students enables them to study this study programme and to achieve its objectives and learning outcomes. When entering the studies, students are adults, experts and often have work experience in the field. In the individual study plan, it is possible to recognize competences acquired outside formal education or work experience and studies completed during previous education (<https://kra.lv/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Nolikums-Neformalas-izglitiba-atzisana-2022.pdf>). However, below, experts highlight the concerns that have arisen in connection with the application of this regulation.

Full-time studies last two years (80 CP) and part-time studies two years and five months. Distance education and distance learning are well suited for adult students who already have knowledge and experience in the field. The students were satisfied with the studies and teaching as such, but sometimes they missed fellow students. However, there was a lack of proof that students who are enrolled in the distant learning study programmes fully acquire knowledge in distance sense in on-site visits. It was mentioned that students pass the examination at the ECA facility.

The main objective of the study programme is to obtain for students the qualification of a social worker according to Latvian professional standard of social work, as well as the expertise to promote trends in the field of social work science nationally and internationally. The aims and mission of the study programme as well as the knowledge, skills, competences, and expertise achieved by the student have been appropriately described and defined. Graduates of the study programme will be able to work as social workers at micro, macro, and mezzo levels in the society and in Europe with different groups of clients in an innovative and proactive way.

The studies are planned, presented, and implemented as modules and courses. They provide a clear picture of the content of the study programme. The courses included in the curriculum (APPENDIX No. 9.3.), (36 courses, two fieldwork periods 8+8 CP and thesis 20 CP), are in line with the objectives of the study programme and the direction of Latvian social welfare policies.

The study programme is implemented in accordance with:

Minister Cabinet Regulation No. 512 "On the state standard of second-level professional higher education" section "Mandatory content of the short professional content" (lv - <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/268761-noteikumi-par-otra-limena-profesionalas-augstakas-izglitibas-valsts-standartu>).

Study courses are structured in compliance with the social worker's professional standard which was approved on 14.10.2020. (Annex 7) (lv - <https://www.lm.gov.lv/lv/sociala-darbinieka-profesijas-standarts>).

The courses of the study programme "Social Work" have been reviewed and approved on 09.06.2021.

According to Minister Cabinet Regulation No. 512 ECA fulfils the requirements of mandatory included content in the 2nd level professional higher education programme in terms of the minimum amount of credit points of the study programme, mandatory content, awarded degree, etc.

One aspect related to the aforementioned regulation states that a study programme must include knowledge stated in the Law on Environmental Protection and the Law on Civil Defense, which is implemented by providing following study courses (Annex 6.4): The European Social Model, Medicine in Caritative Social Work Practice. None of these study courses include topics on environmental protection and civil protection.

Another requirement stated in the Regulation is that in the syllabus there should be study courses/topics for building professional business competence. After reviewing the content of the study courses, it was discovered that there is a lack of topics on organization and establishment of companies, management methods, and the basics of business economics.

Another requirement in the Regulation states that the minimum amount of field placement must be 20 CP, with an option to transfer field placement`s credit points from previous education. ECA in its programmes`s syllabus offers two field placements in total amount of 16 CP: 1) Social case solving fieldwork (8 CP) (field placement regulation approved on 15.10.2019.); 2) Community work fieldwork (8 CP) (field placement regulation approved on 10.03.2021.). Taking into consideration that ECA provides 16 CP of field placement, during on-site visit it was asked whether and how lacking 4 CP are transferred. programme director stated that they transfer these CP and during meeting with students of this programme, one declared that surely ECA does this, she should not do anything and another student mentioned that it should be fine, there should not be any problems, however when asked, he could not recognize or remember any action he have taken to transfer credit point. Although, ECA has Regulation on evaluation and recognition of competences acquired outside of formal education or acquired in professional experience and study results achieved in previous education ECA (lv - <https://kra.lv/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Nolikums-Neformalas-izglitibas-atzisana-2022.pdf>) on transfer of credit point, it is not assuring and lacking of proofs that it is implemented into practice. As stated by this regulation, students must submit to a rector an application.

Field placement regulation describes aims, objectives, number of hours on how field placement should be implemented. It also includes information on how field placement reports should be written. It is unclear who is responsible for managing field placement in ECA, it is not mentioned nor in SAR, nor Annex 9.3 on Study plan.

Given that client-centred approach is already mandated by professional standard and principles of the field, it must be highlighted that indeed a special feature of the Social Work study programme at ECA is the client-centred approach. Although this programme is mapped in accordance with the social worker's professional standard and is named as "Social Work", it includes theology related study courses which are not directly required in the professional standards in Latvia. Through this, the content of the studies expands the student's understanding of people, social work, and the working environment in the welfare sector.

ECA claims to be able to combine the standards of the human and social sciences in this study programme and at the same time open the theological perspective in such a way, that these have been creatively used as an innovative source of social work science and practice. These emphases, as claimed by ECA, are reflected in the content of the study programme and make the competence of ECA's social workers unique.

Although this programme is mapped in accordance with the social worker's professional standard and is named as "Social Work" it includes theology related study courses which do not correspond to professional standard. Content of the programmes is the same as in the bachelor's study programme of "Caritative Social Work", thus causing the question of the need to separate both of them keeping the same syllabus. In some cases titles of study courses slightly differs between two study programmes, however after reviewing content of the study courses it was discovered that study course descriptions in all courses were the same (study programmes "Social Work" study course Axiology in social communication and in bachelor study programme "Caritative Social Work" Axiology in the contexts of social communication; bachelor study programmes "Social Work" study course Social work with teenagers and young people and in bachelor study programme "Caritative Social Work" Caritative social work with adolescents and teenagers , etc. In total from all study courses offered in the bachelor's study programme "Social Work" differed from bachelor study programme "Caritative Social Work", which are: Client-oriented case work, System-oriented work with the family, Social work innovations, foresight strategies, Organization of social assistance in work with a social case and Research methodology in social work.

Some noncompliance with the professional standard of Social Worker has been identified. Given that the study programme in question is similar de facto to the programme "Caritative Social Work", the same identified issues apply in this case as well - For example, one of the required knowledge and competencies is "3. To do social work with the case through psychosocial counseling." However, the provided course curriculum does not align with this competency. Specifically, the course "CARITATIVE WORK WITH MENTAL PATHOLOGIES OF A PERSON" (mapped against this competency) focuses on the anthropology of the Church Fathers and analyzes "the pathologies of human consciousness/mental pathologies (not to be confused with the psychopathologies known in psychiatry!), their types and psycho-social manifestations." This indicates a specific understanding of pathologies, diverging from the broader psychosocial counseling approach.

Furthermore, the study literature provided in the course description is older than 10 years and predominantly consists of theological literature or highly dubious authors such as Rudzītis V., lacking proper scientific and/or peer-reviewed literature addressing psychosocial issues. Additionally, the inclusion of the concept in one of lectures of "model of victim behavior of young women" (originally - "jaunu sieviešu viktīmās uzvedības modelis") without scientific literature support raises concerns. It is important to note that victim behavior is not age or gender-specific, and all individuals can exhibit such behavior. Inclusion of only this particular demographic while excluding others is concerning.

These observations suggest that vital knowledge and competencies pertaining to psychosocial counseling may not be adequately covered in the curriculum. The course's focus on specific understandings of "pathologies" through theological dimension and the absence of peer-reviewed literature on related topics contribute to this concern.

Regarding competency "12. To identify and solve ethical dilemmas in professional activities." two study courses are mapped "Theology of the New Testament" and "Orthodox ethical principles and integrity of social work profession." Those study courses do not feature in any capacity code of ethics of Latvian Social Workers. (approved on 28.05.2022) or any international associations developed codes of ethics of social workers.

After conducting our visit, meetings with relevant parties, and reviewing the provided documentation, which included on-site available research proceedings, journals, and internal documents, we have concluded that the institution successfully prepares Social Workers who are highly regarded within specific industry segments. Graduates demonstrate strong motivation.

However, there are concerns regarding their preparedness to address issues such as domestic violence, identity-based discrimination, and sexual abuse, particularly in secular settings. Based on feedback from graduates and employers, it was observed that in certain instances, theological values took precedence over professional ethics, and in some cases, reinforcing stereotypical notions occurred. The institution's emphasis on Church-centric education and limited integration of scientific research literature raises doubts about graduates' ability to fulfill the role of a social worker in contexts that may challenge their theological beliefs, due to a lack of necessary scientific background.

Some study course descriptions should be improved in cases when topics of the study course are not broad enough described, like in case of a study course Organization of social assistance in work with a social case (Annex 10.4).

List of literature in all of the study courses should be revised as they sometimes include even a dozen number of literature sources; there is no specification on units or pages students should focus on. Latest research and publication are not included.

The descriptions of the study courses/ modules, the traineeship, and the final thesis are of high quality and comply with the provisions set forth in the regulatory enactments. The content is relevant and complementary, and it complies with the aims of the study programme. The content ensures the achievement of the learning outcomes and meets the needs of the relevant industry and the scientific trends.

The field work is directed towards social work for both individuals and communities. According to the ECA self-assessment report, students' field work must have a research-oriented approach so that they can find innovative solutions for the lives of individuals or communities. The theses, on the other hand, must reflect the ethical starting points of social work and a deep understanding of people, as well as the theory of social work and the development of the profession based on scientific knowledge.

[2] The implementing methods of studies are versatile and they help students to achieve their goals. During the assessment visit, ECA's practice of student-centred learning came up on many occasions, which already stems from the anthropological foundation of ECA. The students highlighted how they and their views are valued. Someone expressed appreciation, saying, "I'm called by name." In connection with the implementation of studies, the self-assessment report highlights listening to students, interacting with them and receiving constructive feedback. The students are willing to recommend the Academy for new students as a good university.

According to the ECA self-assessment report and its appendices, students learn critical and abstract thinking, systematics, research skills and analytical thinking skills during their studies. In connection with theoretical contact teaching and lectures, students simultaneously learn argumentation and social work research methods by working in groups. Students have a lot of independent study with their research assignments. In practical lessons, students model anthropological solutions to social problems of individuals or communities. The self-assessment report shows that the students are working by lessons holistically, theoretically, scientifically and practically with people's social issues. ECA has also developed distance learning possibilities for students. ECA has technical equipment and programmes for that which were introduced by the side-visit for the evaluation group. It was not possible to learn to know all those practical solutions like teaching materials or test practices. But it seemed to be usual to have lessons, group working, seminars and directing of independent tasks and working. In the future, more attention should be paid to the development of distance learning materials, approaches to conducting tests, etc.

In the assessment, a 10-point system is implemented. According to the self-assessment report, ECA has "Methodological guidelines for the development of study works and theses". Students receive feedback on their knowledge, skills and competence throughout their studies. Exams and tests are analysed twice a year.

The teaching follows laws, regulations and instructions, which can be seen, for example, in the appendices to the self-assessment report and their contents. Teachers have strong competence and responsibility for the quality of teaching. Teachers are able to use knowledge related to excellence in their field and guide students in its use. The teaching provides information needed for the profession of European social work in accordance with legislation and labour market requirements. Qualified teachers are able to renew teaching materials in accordance with ECA guidelines when renewing course plans. ECA's management and governing bodies take care of the achievement of the study programme and students' learning outcomes in their own work.

[3] ECA regularly conducts surveys of students, graduates and representatives of the labour market regarding the education provided at the Academy and the knowledge, skills and competences of students and graduates. In the ECA Self-Assessment Report (ss. 150-152.) and Appendix no. 13.3, are examples of survey results and how training has been improved based on feedback received. The surveys are analysed with the help of an independent sociologist from the University of Riga. Any shortcomings will be addressed at ECA as soon as possible.

The students gave oral feedback for the expert group during the side-visit: their views are valued, teachers know them by name, they can give and get feedback, they interact with the staff. The graduates miss the common seminars in the ECA and they want to come back to the Academy to study.

[4] According to the ECA self-assessment report, Academy students have the opportunity to participate in mobility abroad, either for theoretical studies at another university or for field work. Applying for student mobility is supported by the ERASMUS+ Department at ECA. It also organises a mobility conference at the beginning of each academic year, where previous mobility students and teachers share their experiences. Another important event promoting mobility at ECA is the annual international EZA seminar (European Center for Worker's Question). This seminar was praised by the students during the evaluation visit. The studies completed during the mobility are linked to the student's study attainments as widely as possible. The mobility of students helps them to compare and expand expertise of social work and find new ways for fieldwork. The experience abroad also facilitates employment elsewhere in Europe.

Students of the social work study programme have gone to study at Klaipeda University, and the Project Management Center in Vilnius has as well been a popular field work place for client-oriented social work. The development of mobility throughout Europe has faced major challenges due to the Covid pandemic. The Study programme in Social Work aims to be a training programme for European social workers. No foreign students have entered this programme to study at ECA in 2019-2021. It is worthwhile to promote the study programme more widely in Europe so that ECA can reciprocate the number of students from abroad. This would further enrich the content of studies at ECA.

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

The study programme Social Work (44762) is a Second level professional study programme at ECA. The programme offers the opportunity to obtain a qualification in social work, if the student already has a level 1. vocational higher education in social work or an applicable vocational higher education in another field. In the individual study plan, it is possible to recognize and acknowledge competences acquired outside formal education or work experience and studies completed during previous education. These principles at ECA did not appear to be completely clear during the assessment visit.

ECA does not fulfil several requirements of the Minister Cabinet Regulation No. 512: 1) to include knowledge stated in the Law on Environmental Protection and the Law on Civil Defense; 2) lack of topics on organisation and establishment of companies, to management methods, and the basics of

business economics to fulfil the requirements for building professional business competence in the amount of 6 CP; 3) there is insufficient amount for field placement in the amount of 20 CP and lack of proofs that ECA has implemented procedures on transfer of the field placement credit points; 4) there is lack of a choice for study courses in C part, at current state ECA provides C part study courses in the amount of 6 CP. Practice guidelines are outdated and did not match with the information provided during on-site visits. Although this programme is mapped in accordance with the social worker's professional standard and is named as "Social Work" it includes theology related study courses which do not correspond to professional standard. Content of the programmes is the same as in the bachelor's study programme of "Caritative Social Work", thus causing the question of the need to separate both of them keeping the same syllabus.

STRENGTHS:

- 1) The objectives and mission of the study programme as well as the knowledge, skills, competences, and expertise achieved by the student have been appropriately described and defined.
- 2) The study programme emphasises social work as a multidisciplinary practical activity with different client groups, as a research object and as a discipline.
- 3) The teaching and studying are student-centred. The students are willing to recommend the Academy for new students as a good university.

WEAKNESSES:

- 1) None of the mentioned study courses in the SAR, includes topics on environmental protection and civil protection to ensure requirements of the Minister Cabinet Regulation No. 512 to include knowledge stated in the Law on Environmental Protection and the Law on Civil Defense.
- 2) There is a lack of topics on organisation and establishment of companies, to management methods, and the basics of business economics to fulfil the requirements for building professional business competence in the amount of 6 CP, unless the student has previously completed these studies.
- 3) List of literature is outdated and includes a dozen number of literature sources; there is no specification on units or pages students should focus on. Latest research and publication are not included.
- 4) There is lack of evidence that the transfer of 4 CP of field placement from previous education is implemented (ECA provides 16 CP of field placement instead of mandatory 20 CP).
- 5) ECA provides in C part 3 study courses, however there is lack of a choice of study courses as stated in the Minister Cabinet Regulation No. 512
- 6) Practice guidelines are outdated and do not correspond to the information provided during on-site visits.
- 7) There are no differences in the study course descriptions between this study programme and "Caritative Social Work"; and the programme does not correspond with the professional standard as it mainly relies on competencies related to the theology.

3. Resources and Provision of the Study Programme

Analysis

[1] Resources and provisions, available for the study programme "Social Work", are described in ECA SAR (p. 153 - 160) and information obtained during the expert on-site visit, including the tour of

the material technical base.

The available resources that are accessible, including books in the library, materials onsite in the ECA and technical provision, comply with the necessary tools and conditions for the implementation of the study programme "Social Work" and ensuring the achievement of learning outcomes.

The library provides students with access to literature, databases and information. The availability of educational literature is good. However, ECA should work on all possibilities to ensure more literature related to the study programme "Social Work".

The financial provision is according to the needs of the amount of the students. ECA is a private university with no state budget funding. The funding required for the implementation of the study programme is covered, among other things, by student fees, participation in international research projects and regular cooperation with European Commission organisations (SAR, p. 48). The ECA's International Support Council ensures financial sustainability and stability if the number of students decreases. It takes care of academic visits by visiting professors and associate professors.

ECA states that the number of students, taking into account the demographic situation of Latvia, Latvian migration and mobility, is not large (students 6 to 20 and graduates 2 to 15 in years 2013-2021 (Appendix no. 5.4)), however, more and more students choose studies in Social Work at ECA with its focus on the client-oriented social work. Social workers have good possibilities for work places in Latvia and abroad.

During the assessment visit, ECA management has stated - considering that Academy has developed a strategy for increasing the number of students in the study field, the Academy pays less attention to the number of students in each individual programme from a financial point of view, because the strategy for increasing the number of students must be modeled separately for each study year, taking into account the financial difficulties of those living in Latvia.

ECA develops the social welfare study field as a whole and if there are fewer students in a study programme in the relevant study year, to ensure the programme's profitability, ECA uses so-called cross-financing from other study programs with more students, thus equalizing the costs of the programme .

ECA has also developed distance learning possibilities for students. ECA indicated that Zoom, MS Teams or Google Meet communication tools are used for the distance learning process. For students an e-system for learning courses is available in the Moodle system ("E-Studies")(SAR p. 54). In the future, more attention should be paid to the development of specific distance learning materials, approaches to conducting tests, etc.

Study information is available for students. During the assessment visit it was stated that study plans and study programme course descriptions are available to students at the academy. The student familiarizes himself / herself with the content of the study plan (full time studies, part time extramural studies, distance learning) and courses of his chosen study programme. Study plans and course descriptions are adjusted to the specifics of implementation. Some courses in the study programme need to be updated.

[2] N/A

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

The study provision, informative provision, material provision and financial provision comply with specific features and the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and ensuring the achievement of learning outcomes. Technical and informative provisions are good. ECA should update literature related to the study programme. All the resources, course descriptions and other relevant study information are available to students. ECA has all necessary resources for distance learning.

STRENGTHS:

- 1) ECA has a good infrastructure, material provision required for a successful study process.

WEAKNESSES:

- 1) ECA should update literature related to the study programme.
- 2) Small number of students.

4. Teaching Staff

Analysis

[1] According to the SAR (p. 205-206), the changes in the composition of the teaching staff since the previous assessment of the study programme were minimal and new staff was identified to replace the missing ones. As some staff are undergoing doctoral studies in relevant areas connected with their course load it is assumed that they will be able to fill in positions made available, if the situation requires. Expert evaluation is that the HEI undertakes measures to fill the gaps when changes in the composition of the teaching staff occur. The experts recommend that Social Work graduates with excellent academic performances to be targeted as possible teaching staff.

[2] The teaching staff, in general, fully meet the conditions of the implementation of the study programme and the requirements of regulatory acts, and have qualifications similar to the courses they are teaching. 22 lecturers work in the study programme, of which 7 are professors (of which 2 are visiting professors and 1 associate professor), 12 assistant professors and 3 lecturers" (SAR, p.160). The teaching staff, in general, has qualifications similar to the courses they are teaching. However, when taking into account all the programmes, there are some teachers with a high workload. For instance, some teachers have about 20, 17 or 10 different courses, though some with similar titles. These situations create not only a strain for the teachers, but also a risk for the study programmes due to overreliance on a few key persons. Academically it is unlikely that a teacher has the time to properly prepare and deliver such an amount of lectures. The number of teaching staff with qualifications or practice experience in Social Work is limited (only 6) and it can be difficult to teach Social Work intervention methods without practical knowledge. The involvement of former high-ranking officials can be relevant for the study programme, but their publication track is limited to national outlets with low intensity of recent academic publication. Expert evaluation is that teaching staff are moderately prepared to achieve the aims and learning outcomes of the study programme.

[3] N/A

[4] ECA has mechanisms ensuring that teaching staff is involved in the development and achievement of the aims and objectives of the study programme. As most of the teaching staff has academic, professional and research work experience, they comply with the requirements of regulatory acts. The participation of the institution in various network organisations ensures that the teaching staff has opportunities (e.g. Erasmus+ teaching exchanges, projects, etc.) to adjust the content of their courses to the European social policies and recommendations. Good command of English language would allow more teachers to avail of the teaching opportunities (in the reporting period only 9 did). Some of the teaching staff did not publish any article in the previous six years in peer-reviewed journals, while those who did, published more than 90% of their articles in one journal (Tiltai/Bridges) which is edited by University of Klaipėda (Lithuania), a partner university or the Scientific Proceedings of Latvian Christian Academy. This situation raises questions about the unequal distribution of publication efforts among the teaching staff. The publications of the teaching staff comprise mainly research reports, articles in regional/local journals. The information gained during the research projects is partially used in the study process as not always the publications are included in the recommended bibliography.

[5] The HEI has several mechanisms in place to promote collaboration between the teaching staff

members, such as: Regular Theoretical Seminars, participation in international research projects, ERASMUS+ teaching exchanges, collaboration of master level lecturers with experienced teachers. Expert evaluation is that these mechanisms are functional.

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

The teaching staff complies with the Law on Higher Education Institutions in Latvia and most of the 22 staff involved in the 2nd level professional higher education programme have had research activity in the previous 6 years. However, publication efforts in international journals need to be improved. The teaching staff, in general, has qualifications similar to the courses they are teaching. The participation of the institution in various network organisations ensures that the teaching staff has opportunities (e.g. Erasmus+ teaching exchanges, projects, etc.) to adjust the content of their courses to the European social policies and recommendations. Good command of English language would allow more teachers to avail of the teaching opportunities. Expert evaluation is that mutual cooperation mechanisms are functional.

STRENGTHS:

- 1) The teaching staff has academic, professional and research work experience and they mainly comply with the requirements of regulatory acts.
- 2) Collaboration with international partners ensures opportunities for teaching staff.

WEAKNESSES:

- 1) When taking into account all the programmes, there are some teachers with a high workload (e.g. 20, 17, 10 different courses).
- 2) The number of teaching staff with qualifications or practice experience in Social Work is limited (6) and it can be difficult to teach Social Work intervention methods without practical knowledge.
- 3) Some teaching staff did not publish any article in the previous six years in peer-reviewed journals, while those who did, published more than 90% of their articles in 2 journals.
- 4) In the reporting period only 9 teaching staff taught at EU universities (only 4 were mentioned in the SAR)

5. Assessment of the Compliance of the Study Programme "Social Work"

Requirements

1. The sample of the diploma to be issued for the acquisition of the study programme complies with the procedure by which state-recognised documents of higher education are issued.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Annexes: SD2.līm._diploms.pdf

2. Documents confirming that the higher education institution/ college will provide the students with the options to continue the acquisition of education in another study programme or at another higher education institution/ college (a contract with another accredited higher education institution/ college), in case the implementation of the study programme is discontinued.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Appendixes: Sad.Līgums(studenti)_2.līm.SOC.DARBS.pdf

3. Document confirming that the higher education institution/ college guarantees to the students a compensation for losses if the study programme is not accredited or the licence of the study programme is revoked due to the actions of the higher education institution/ college (actions or failure to act) and the student does not wish to continue the studies in another study programme.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Appendixes: Apliecinājums_zaudējumu kompensācija_2-9-49_EN.docx

- 4 4. The teaching staff members involved in the implementation of the study programme are proficient in the official language in accordance with the regulations on the level of the official language knowledge and the procedures for testing official language proficiency for performing professional duties and office duties.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Analysis of the program. Highly educated academic teaching staff.

- 5 5. The teaching staff members to be involved in the implementation of the study programme have at least B2-level knowledge of a related foreign language, if the study programme or any part thereof is to be implemented in a foreign language.

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

- 6 6. At least five teaching staff members with a doctoral degree are among the academic staff of an academic doctoral study programme, at least three of which are experts approved by the Latvian Science Council in the respective field of science. At least five teaching staff members with a doctoral degree are among the academic staff of a professional doctoral study programme in arts.

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

- 7 7. The academic staff of the academic study programme complies with the requirements set forth in Section 55, Paragraph one, Clause 3 of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

- 8 8. The sample of the study agreement complies with the mandatory provisions to be included in the study agreement.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Appendixes: STUDY AGREEMENT No 2-22/SD

- 9 9. The descriptions of the study courses and the study materials have been prepared in all languages in which the study programme is implemented, and they comply with the requirements set forth in Section 56.1, Paragraph two and Section 56.2, Paragraph two of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Study program is implemented in Latvian language.
Study program is implemented in distance education.

- 10 10. The study programme complies with the valid professional standard or the requirements for the professional qualification (if there is no professional standard required for the relevant occupation) provided that the completion of the study programme leads to a professional qualification.

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

Study programme partially comply to social worker's professional standard which was approved on 14.10.2020. (more detailed analyses are included in reports Chapter 2 " The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof")

- 11 11. Academic study programmes provided for less than 250 full-time students may be implemented and less than five professors and associated professors of the higher education institution may be involved in the implementation of the mandatory and limited elective part of these study programmes provided that the relevant opinion of the Council for Higher Education has been received in accordance with Section 55, Paragraph two of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

- 12 12. The study programme complies with the State Academic Education Standard or the Professional Higher Education Standard.

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

As a whole, the study programme is implemented in accordance with: Minister Cabinet Regulation No. 512 "On the state standard of second-level professional higher education" section "Mandatory content of the short professional content" (lv - <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/268761-noteikumi-par-otra-limena-profesionalas-augstakas-izglitiba-standartu>). Study courses are structured in compliance with the social worker's professional standard, which was approved on 14.10.2020. (Annex 7) (LV - <https://www.lm.gov.lv/lv/sociala-darbinieka-profesijas-standarts>). The courses of the professional bachelor's study programme "Social Work" have been reviewed and approved on 09.06.2021. According to Minister Cabinet Regulation No. 512 ECA fulfills the requirements of mandatory included content in the 2nd level professional higher education program in terms of the minimum amount of credit points of the study programme, mandatory content, awarded degree, etc.

The expert group states that the ECA must ensure that the study program must provide students with environmental protection and civil protection knowledge in accordance with the regulation, if it is not included in the student's previous degree. Similarly, students should be offered competence related to organization and foundation, management methods and the basics of business administration, unless the student has previously completed these studies.

- 13 13. The joint study programmes comply with the requirements prescribed in Section 551, Paragraphs one, two, and seven of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education (if applicable).

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

- 14 14. Each member of the academic staff has either publications published in reviewed editions within the last six years, including international editions (if they have worked for a shorter period of time, the number of publications shall be in proportion to the work period), or artistic creation achievements (for instance, exhibitions, films, theatre performances, and concert activity), or a five-year practical work experience (except for the experience in the implementation of the study programme) in accordance with the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

At the ECA is the rule that each member of the academic staff has to have publication once in two years.

Some of the teaching staff did not publish any article in the previous six years in peer-reviewed journals, while those who did, published more than 90% of their articles in one journal (Tiltai/Bridges) which is edited by University of Klaipėda (Lithuania), a partner university or the Scientific Proceedings of Latvian Christian Academy.

- 15 R5 - Overall rating

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

To ensure that requirement is assessed as compliant it is necessary to ensure the compliance of the study programme with the requirements specified in the state standard and the requirements specified in the professional standard. The results of teaching staff's scientific activity, publication should be improved.

Requirements (R6-R8)

- 1 R6 - The compliance of the study provision, scientific support (if applicable), informative provision (including libraries), material and technical provision, and financial provision with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and ensuring the achievement of the learning outcomes.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The study provision, informative provision, material provision and financial provision comply with specific features and the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and ensuring the achievement of learning outcomes. Technical and informative provisions are good. All the resources, course descriptions and other relevant study information are available to students.

- 2 R7 - The compliance of the qualification of the academic staff members, visiting professors, visiting associate professors, visiting docents, visiting lecturers, and visiting assistants with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and the provisions set out in the respective regulatory enactments.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The teaching staff complies with the Law on Higher Education Institutions in Latvia and most of the 22 staff involved in the 2nd level professional higher education programme have had research activity in the previous 6 years. However, publication efforts in international journals need to be improved.

- 3 R8 - The study programme leading to the master or doctoral degree is based on the advances and findings in the relevant field of science or artistic creation.

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

The study program Social Work (44762) is a Second level professional study program at ECA. A special feature of the social worker study program at ECA is the client-centred approach. ECA has been able to combine the standards of the human and social sciences in this study program and at the same time open the theological perspective as an innovative source of social work science and practice. The teaching and studying are student-centred.

The Social Work (44762) programme is applying for accreditation following implementation modes - Full time studies / latvian / 2 years, 0 month; Part-time extramural studies - distance education / latvian / 2 years, 5 months and Part-time extramural studies / latvian / 2 years, 5 months. However, ECA claims, that they do indeed currently have students in part-time modes as well, but clear numbers have not been provided. Although this programme is mapped in accordance with the social worker's professional standard (non-compliances were identified) and is named as "Social Work", it includes theology related study courses which do not correspond to the professional standard. Content of the programme is the same as in the bachelor`s study programme of "Caritative Social Work" (even though some of titles of study courses are changed, content is exact same), thus it is

recommended to consider the necessity of two study programmes and possibility to merge this programme with "Caritative Social Work", which would also allow ECA to optimize used resources taking into consideration small amount of students enrolled in the programme. Following this most of the experts' findings made for "Caritative Social Work" is nearly identical and applies for "Social work" as well. The programme is valued by employers and has received positive feedback from students and graduates. The objectives of the study programme are clearly and in detail defined. Teaching and studying at ECA is student-centred and students value their study programme, profession and the Academy as a place of study. While resources are accessible and provisions satisfactory, there's a need to update literature within the curriculum. The teaching staff is generally qualified, however the number of staff members featuring qualification in the field could be higher, including professionals who are working in the field, international publication efforts require improvement. The distance learning capacity could not be sufficiently assessed, as the information on demand and in the SAR on how many students are enrolled in the distance learning studies was not provided. However, based on what is available, the material availability and methodology of organising those part-time study forms could be improved further and making sure that it is clear for all involved stakeholders what constitutes part-time study modes. It should be clear what kind of teaching methodology is being applied here because it could be beneficial even for potential students, for example, by making publicly institutions webpages explanation on how exactly these study modes are being implemented. Feedback from stakeholders indicated that there are no issues, however a comprehensive picture of the actual state of distance learning within institution could not be formed. Based on mentioned aspects, overall evaluation of the study programme as of now is "average", however it can be upgraded to "good" if issues regarding compliance with professional state standard and professional standard mentioned are sufficiently and substantially addressed.

STRENGTHS:

- 1) The study program emphasizes social work as a multidisciplinary practical activity with different client groups, as a research object and as a discipline.
- 2) A special feature of the social worker study program at ECA is the client-centered approach.
- 3) ECA has been able to combine the standards of the human and social sciences in this study program and at the same time open the theological perspective as an innovative source of social work science and practice.
- 4) The teaching and studying are student-centered. The students are willing to recommend the Academy for new students as a good university.
- 5) ECA has highly qualified academic staff and a good infrastructure, material provision required for a successful study process.

WEAKNESSES:

- 1) The ECA must ensure that the content of the "Social Work" study program includes the environmental protection and civil protection competence required by the Social Worker Regulation, unless it is part of the student's previous studies.
- 2) The ECA must also verify the student's competence related to organization and foundation, management methods and the basics of business administration, unless the student has previously completed these studies.
- 3) The presented study literature and study material included in the studies require updating and course-specific specification according to the ECA's quality process.
- 4) In Latvia the studies in social work must include 20 CP of fieldwork. In the curriculum is 8+8 CP field work. If ECA has recognized the student's previous work experience for the studies, this should be reflected in the study program or in the written fieldwork instructions, for example.

Evaluation of the study programme "Social Work"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Average

6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Social Work"

Short-term recommendations

The ECA must ensure that the content of the "Social Work" study program includes the environmental protection and civil protection competence required by the Social Worker Regulation, unless it is part of the student's previous studies. Must be implemented until a decision on accreditation is being made.

The ECA must also verify the student's competence related to organization and foundation, management methods and the basics of business administration, unless the student has previously completed these studies or if the competence is not included, for example, in module number 4 (Social work in community).

The presented study literature and study material included in the studies require updating and course-specific specification according to the ECA's quality process.

In Latvia the studies in social work must include 20 CP of fieldwork. In the curriculum is 8+8 CP field work. If ECA has recognized the student's previous work experience for the studies, this should be reflected in the study program or in the written fieldwork instructions, for example. Must be implemented until a decision on accreditation is being made.

We recommend ECA to update the field placement guidelines.

Ensure that all competencies necessary for professional qualification are sufficiently covered taking into account latest developments in the field of social work. Must be implemented until decision on accreditation is being made

Long-term recommendations

The presented study literature and study material included in the studies require updating and course-specific specification according to the ECA's quality process.

II. "Caritative Social Work" ASSESSMENT

II. "Caritative Social Work" ASSESSMENT

1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

Analysis

[1] The study programme "Caritative Social Work (47762)" complies very well with the welfare study field. The study programme: "Caritative Social Work (47762)" is a Professional master study programme. The acquired degree is Master degree in Caritative Social Work and the qualification is Leading social worker. The degree is Master degree in Caritative Social Work, however, it is technically incorrect and the more correct version would be - Professional master degree in Caritative Social Work. The goal of the programme is to "prepare highly qualified specialists in the social work field, to deepen interdisciplinary research in client-oriented caritative social work and at

the intersection of social, theological, anthropological and care sciences'. The goal, tasks and learning outcomes of the study programme have been carefully defined. The aims, objectives, professional qualifications and admission requirements of the study Caritative Social Work study programme are interrelated.

There have been no significant changes in the study programme (14.07.2015. Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 407, 8.6, 8.7 points). According to the self assessment report of ECA (p. 99) the content of the master's degree study programme has been compared with the new "Leading social worker" professional standard (which has been approved on 11.08.2021) (Leading Social Worker - 5th level of the professional qualification (5.PKL/PQL) corresponds to the 7th level of the Latvian qualifications framework (7. LKI/LQF).

There are different study programme implementation options which lead to the same degree and qualification but have different admission requirements.

With admission requirements ([1] Higher academic and 2nd level professional higher education in caritative social work, social work, social pedagogy; [2] Bachelor's Degree in Psychology, Health Care, Education/Psychology, Management, Theology; [3] 2nd level higher professional (or equivalent) education in pedagogy) ECA has following implementation options: Full time studies (2 years, 80 CP); Part time extramural studies (2,5 years, 80 CP); Part-time extramural studies - distance education (2,5 years, 80 CP).

With admission requirements (Higher academic and 2nd level professional higher education in caritative social work, social work, social pedagogy) ECA has following implementation options: Full time studies (1,5 year, 60 CP); Part time extramural studies (2 years, 60 CP); Part-time extramural studies - distance education (2 years, 60 CP).

Distance teaching and learning possibilities have been created anew, which is important for adult students with families. In spite of this, sometimes it is challenging for students to complete their studies in the specified time. The implementation is in Latvian language. The study programme is of a high standard in terms of content, well-grounded but reasonable to implement. In general, experts believe that offering a study programme to applicants with different previous education is valuable, at the same time, it is necessary to follow up and ensure that the content of the programme helps to achieve defined learning outcomes of the study programme.

ECA has a quality insurance system based on which Students, graduates, the labour market and international partners are regularly asked for feedback on the content and development needs of the study programme. The study programme is developed annually based on feedback which ensures a good quality study process.

According to the APPENDIX No. 5.1, The number of students has been 3-9 per year, in years 2013-2021. The number of programme graduates since 2013/14. of the study year ranges from 5 to 8 graduates per year (SAR, p. 100). The employment rate is good by Caritative Social workers. Most students are working already at the time of their studies. In order to ensure the possibility of implementing several variants of the study programme, ECA should look for ways to increase the number of students.

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

The study programme "Caritative Social Work (47762)" is a Professional master study programme. Degree to be acquired is Master degree in Caritative Social Work and the qualification is Leading social worker. The title of the degree needs to be technically clarified. There are different study programme implementation options: the form of full-time and part-time (evening) and part-time distance learning, which is important for the adult students. The content of the master's degree study programme has been compared with the new "Leading social worker" professional standard. The Caritative Social Work, professional master study programme corresponds to the 7th level of the Latvian qualifications framework. The study programme is developed annually based on feedback

from students, graduates and labour market, which ensures a good quality study process. There is a need for Caritative social workers in the labour market in Latvia and Europe.

STRENGTHS:

- 1) There are different study programme implementation options: the form of full-time and part-time (evening) and part-time distance learning, which is important for the adult students.
- 2) The goal, aims, objectives and learning outcomes of the study programme have been carefully defined.
- 3) The study programme is developed annually based on feedback from students, graduates, working life and international partners, which ensures a good quality study process.

WEAKNESSES:

- 1) The adult students with families and work sometimes have challenges of completing the studies in the specified time.
- 2) The title of the degree is not technically correct.
- 3) The number of students is quite small.

2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

Analysis

[1] The Caritative Social Work (47762), Professional master study programme is designed for students with a previous Higher academic and 2nd level professional higher education in caritative social work, social work, social pedagogy or a Bachelor's Degree in an applicable field of science. This means that students are adults and already experts in various positions of welfare services, when they enter their studies. Their previous work experience or competence can be taken into account in the student's personal study programme.

The aim of the study programme is to prepare highly qualified experts in the field of social services and to deepen multidisciplinary research (e.g. human and social sciences, theology, anthropology, nursing science) in client-oriented, caritative social work. The study programme utilises knowledge of patristic anthropology and strategic foresight as well as the methodology of integrative theology in innovative research in the science of social work. ECA considers that the level of study corresponds to level 7 of the Latvian Qualifications Framework (7th LKI/LQF).

According to the ECA Self-Assessment Report, completion of the Caritative Social Work (47762) study programme will provide the student with a Master's degree in Social Work and a caritative leading social worker professional qualification. The contents of the studies provide expertise in holistic social work for individuals, families and groups, solving social problems in multi professional cooperation, people management, qualitative management, social work development, analysis of social processes and development strategies, study of social problems and justice issues in society, coordination and management of administrative processes in social work, and for the development of professional activities, as well as for research work in the field of social work and welfare. ECA has a European network of 70 organisations for a research partnership (European Center for Workers' Questions). In seminars, students can also learn about the importance of social work at the European macro level.

The objectives, tasks, knowledge and skills included in the modules and courses, planned learning outcomes and professional competence of the PMSP study programme are appropriately described. By evaluating study courses in accordance with leading social worker`s professional standard some discrepancies were identified: provided Annexes for study course description differs in the translated

study courses between Latvian and English versions (Annex 10.1 (lv) and Annex 10.2 (eng)). The purpose and content of the fieldwork are presented, for example, pp. 107–108. The requirements for completing the thesis and master's degree are presented. These provide a sufficient understanding of the study programme as a whole, content, implementation and quality.

According to level 7 of the framework structure defined in the Latvian Classification of Education, students' theses require in-depth, multidisciplinary theoretical and practical research skills as well as innovations in client work and social work reform. Based on the ECA self-assessment report, its appendices and interviews with the expert group, it is possible to assess the studies as relevant to students and social work in Latvia and in the European context. In the study programme, students receive a theoretically, methodologically and practically high-quality education that meets the requirements of the evolving working life of social work.

The profile and specificity of ECA is related to the fact that the Academy has been able to innovatively exploit the roots of Europe and Christian culture into a holistic view of people and social work. This is particularly evident in the objectives, content, research methods and special professional skills of the caritative PMSP study programme.

The PMSP study programme (80 CP) as full-time studies includes: Study courses that provide learning of the latest achievements in the theory and practice of the industry (15 CP); Study module of research work and creative work (12 CP); Study module of pedagogy and psychology (7 CP); Field work (26 CP) and Development and defence of the master thesis (20 CP). The studies include 21 different courses, Field work I and II, which is implemented in three semesters (6 + 10 + 10 CP) and a thesis.

The study programme is implemented in accordance with:

- Minister Cabinet Regulation No. 512 “On the state standard of second-level professional higher education” (lv - <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/268761-noteikumi-par-otra-limena-profesionalas-augstakas-izglitiba-valsts-standardu>).

- Leading social worker`s professional standard (lv - <https://www.lm.gov.lv/lv/vadosa-sociala-darbnieka-profesijas-standarts>)

The courses of the professional master's study programme “Caritative Social Work” has been reviewed and approved on 06.09.2021, the descriptions (study course annotation and description of the study results).

According to Minister Cabinet Regulation No. 512 ECA fulfils the requirements of mandatory included content in the professional master's study programme in terms of the minimum amount of credit points of the study programme, field placement, mandatory content, awarded degree, etc.

One aspect related to the aforementioned regulation states that a study programme must include knowledge stated in the Law on Environmental Protection and the Law on Civil Defense for those students who have not acquired this knowledge in the lower educational level. Realisation on the demanded knowledge at ECA is implemented at two stages (Annex 6.3):

1. Topics of environmental protection are included in the study course The European Social Model. However, after reviewing the content of the study course no topics on environment are included; the literature list does not reflect any of these topics; field of science of this course is mentioned Sociology; number of literature sources is excessively exaggerated – 49 in total.

2. CA provides needed knowledge on civil defense in the Caritative Social Work bachelor study programme in two study courses: Medicine in Caritative Social Work Practice and Caritative Social Work in Hospital. Study course Medicine in Caritative Social Work Practice (topics on dementia, somatic illness, work with aggressive clients, mental causes of illnesses) and Caritative Social Work in Hospital (topics on function of caritative social workers, work in multidisciplinary teams, mental

care of staff, relatives, etc.).

Considering that the aforementioned study courses do not include topics on environmental protection, civil protection, ECA does not provide opportunity to reach needed knowledge in environmental protection and civil defence to those students who have not acquired it during earlier studies in bachelor study programme.

According to Annex 9.1 Study plan, field placement for 80 CP study programme is 26 CP (1st field placement in amount of 6 CP; 2nd – 10 CP; 3rd – 10 CP) and 40 CP study programme – 6 CP. Controversial information can be gained from field placement guidelines provided by ECA on demand, which states that both 80 CP and 40 CP study programmes have two field placements in amount of 6 CP and 20 CP. Provided guidelines do not describe field placement as two separate courses (each 10 CP for 80 CP study programmes as stated in the Annex 9.1) but as one, thus creating confusion whether those two field placements are implemented as one or two separate.

Special regulations during epidemiological situations for carrying out field placement were approved on 10.03.2021.

If the 6 CP field placement (Caritative social work fieldwork (I)) is evaluated in the context of leading social worker professional standard, it can be stated that it fulfills the aim of research and scientific activities. This objective slightly overlaps with one of the aims in the field placement of 20 CP (Caritative social work (professional qualification) fieldwork (II)) which also focus on development of research skills. Master level studies should focus on extending research skills instead of acquiring them (according to the seventh level of the Latvian Qualifications Framework). Second practice aim focuses on gaining skills in leading social cases which more characterize social work at micro level instead of macro level on which leading social worker professional standard focuses.

By evaluating study courses in accordance with leading social worker`s professional standard some discrepancies were identified: provided Annexes for study course description differs in the translated study courses between Latvian and English versions (Annex 10.1 (lv) and Annex 10.2 (eng)). Some of study courses tend to focus on theological topics when professional standard demand skills and knowledges for practice at macro level: evaluating and attracting financial resources, analysis of social policy and proposing new initiatives, involve in the international and national cooperation, evaluate needs of communities and society, plan and develop new social services, organize and coordinate social work in crises, etc. For instance, the study course Integration of the Church doctrines in the social environment offers topics on symbolic meaning of belief, God, creation of a human, incarnation, etc., which do not correspond to professional standard. Similar situation is in following study courses: Patristic anthropology as a method-logical tool in Caritative Social Work, Research topical methods in theology and social sciences, Method of Integrative Theology in interdisciplinary research, etc.

List of literature in all of the study courses should be revised as they sometimes include even a dozen number of literature sources; there is no specification on units or pages students should focus on. Latest research and publication are not included.

The study implementation methods, including the evaluation methods, contribute to the achievement of the aims and learning outcomes of the study courses and the study programme. Student-centred learning and teaching principles are taken into account.

[2] According to the ECA self-assessment report, the purpose of different teaching methods is to develop the student's research skills, abstract and analytical thinking. The studies take place as contact teaching or a lot of independent work for the student. Distance education and learning is a good way to study for adult students with families, because they can better organise their life, work and studies together. Teaching is carried out in a diverse manner using modern teaching methods. Professional teachers are able to use teaching methods suitable for the content of the course. At the

same time, in the future, more attention should be paid to the development of distance learning materials, approaches to conducting tests, etc.

The students' fieldwork takes place, for example, in local public administration institutions, social centres, crisis centres, health care institutions, monasteries, churches, the Latvian Red Cross and other institutions with which ECA has a long-standing cooperation and cooperation agreement. ECA has not provided experts with a contract with any employer they have stated to cooperate with on fulfillment of the field placement in general, rather ECA implements a strategy where individual contract for each individual student is in place, which does not guarantee the long-term cooperation, especially when different crisis should be resolved by employers (Covid-19, situation after war in Ukraine when Latvian institutions admitted thousands of refugees, etc.). Thus, creating the risk that in such a crisis employers would not be able to provide field placements due to their occupancy. According to the ECA's self-assessment report, the aim of fieldwork is to strengthen students' professional competence, professional identity and research skills. In these jobs, students can find employment in both social work and spiritual positions.

In the ECA, students' knowledge and skills are assessed according to a 10-point scale approved in the Republic of Latvia. The evaluation shall be based on a cumulative evaluation system. The development and defence of the thesis is carried out in accordance with the written methodological guidelines of the ECA "Methodological guidelines for the development of research work and theses". During the expert group's visit to ECA, various interviews revealed "like one voice" how student-centred teaching and learning is implemented at ECA. Student orientation is included in ECA's patristic, anthropological and ethical value base in all teaching. The students recognized the student-oriented approach as a special feature of their university and appreciated it.

[3] According to the ECA self-assessment report, the Academy regularly and systematically evaluates its academic activities, its administration, the work of academic staff, student satisfaction with the content of studies and teaching staff, graduates' views on their studies and the labour market's views on the competence of university graduates, improving the study programme and the work of the academy. The feedback and evaluations received are analysed. The results of the assessment are described in the self-assessment report with examples and in the appendices. The evaluations are generally positive for the Academy's activities. Any shortcomings will be addressed as soon as possible.

[4] Students receive information about mobility opportunities through the ERASMUS+ department, academic staff and seminars. In 2021/22, ECA's mobility plans were renewed with the easing of Covid-19 restrictions. Five students have used mobility for both studies and internships. The Master's programme in Caritative Social Work should be marketed as a study possibility more extensively in a European context.

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

Caritative Social Work (47762), Professional master study programme (80 CP) is the result of long scientific and educational development work at the European Christian Academy. The aim of the study programme is to prepare highly qualified experts in the field of social services and to deepen multidisciplinary research (e.g. human and social sciences, theology, anthropology, nursing science) in client-oriented, caritative social work. Completion of the study programme will provide the student with a master's degree in social work and a caritative leading social worker professional qualification. ECA considers that the level of study corresponds to level 7 of the Latvian Qualifications Framework (7th LKI/LQF).

The objectives, tasks, knowledge and skills included in the modules and courses, the planned

learning outcomes and professional competence are described appropriately in the ECA application, the self-assessment report and its appendices. The study programme (PMSP) is implemented in accordance with Minister Cabinet Regulations and standards. By evaluating study courses in accordance with leading social worker`s professional standard there were some discrepancies identified which needhas to be corrected at ECA. Also the list of literature in all of the study courses should be revised. The study programme uniquely presents the standards of the human and social sciences and, at the same time, a theological and spiritual perspective. In the future it is necessary for ECA, that the Academy will make more clear, how ECA understands connection with the theological courses and the professional standards of leading social workers. As a whole the content of the studies is partly relevant and complementary.

The feedback from students on the studies and teaching, from labour market experts on the competence and professionalism of the caritative social workers, is commendable. The study implementation methods, modern teaching methods, contact teaching, independent work, distance learning and teaching and mobility possibility are used to develop the student's research skills, abstract and analytical thinking, professional competence of leading social workers and to achieve the aims of the study programme. In the ECA, students' knowledge and skills are assessed according to a 10-point scale approved in the Republic of Latvia. The evaluations are based on a cumulative evaluation system. The development and defence of the thesis is carried out in accordance with the written methodological guidelines of the ECA "Methodological guidelines for the development of research work and theses".

The Academy regularly and systematically evaluates, analyses and makes corrections to its academic activities, its administration, the work of academic staff, students satisfaction with the content of studies, graduates' views on their studies and the labour market's views on the competence of university graduates. The evaluations are generally positive for the Academy's activities. Any shortcomings will be addressed as soon as possible.

STRENGTHS:

- 1) In the study programme, students receive a high-quality education theoretically, methodologically and practically, that meets the requirements of the evolving working life of social work and is relevant for students and social work in Latvia.
- 2) The study programme uniquely combines the standards of human and social sciences, with simultaneously theological and spiritual perspectives.
- 3) During the expert group's visit to ECA, various interviews revealed "like one voice" how student-centred teaching and learning is implemented at ECA.
- 4) Feedback on the study programme is generally positive (students, graduates, specialists in the labour market). Any shortcomings will be addressed as soon as possible.

WEAKNESSES:

- 1) Study courses do not include topics on environmental protection and civil protection stated in the Law on Environmental Protection and the Law on Civil Defense.
- 2) List of literature is outdated and includes a dozen number of literature sources; there is no specification on units or pages students should focus on. Latest research and publication are not included in the literature list.
- 3) Provided field placement guidelines and Annex 9.1 Study plan includes controversial information on the amount and number of field placements. Provided Annexes for study course description differs in the translated study courses between Latvian and English versions (Annex 10.1 (lv) and Annex 10.2 (eng)) in comparison of needed competencies stated in the social worker`s professional standard.
- 4) Some study courses tend to focus on theological topics when professional standards demand

skills and knowledge for practice at macro level.

5) ECA does not have contracts with employers on the provision of the field placement, instead they have individual contract for each individual student, which threatens long-term cooperation opportunities due to occupancy of employers, especially in crisis situations.

3. Resources and Provision of the Study Programme

Analysis

[1] Resources and provisions, available for the Professional master study programme "Caritative Social Work", are described in ECA SAR (p. 115 - 121) and information obtained during the expert on-site visit, including the tour of the material technical base.

The available resources that are accessible, including books in the library, scientific support, materials onsite in the ECA and technical provision, comply with the specific features and the conditions for the implementation of the Professional master study programme "Caritative Social Work" and ensuring the achievement of learning outcomes.

The library provides students with access to literature, databases and information. The availability of educational literature is extensive, however, ECA should update the literature related to the study programme.

ECA is a private university with no state budget funding. The funding required for the implementation of the study programme is covered, among other things, by student fees, participation in international research projects and regular cooperation with European Commission organisations (SAR, p. 48). The ECA's International Support Council ensures financial sustainability and stability if the number of students decreases. It takes care of academic visits by visiting professors and associate professors from abroad, who are paid many times by their own universities. Study information is available for students. During the assessment visit it was stated that study plans and study programme course descriptions are available to students at the academy. The student familiarizes himself / herself with the content of the study plan (full time studies, part time extramural studies, distance learning) and courses of his chosen study programme. Study plans and course descriptions are adjusted to the specifics of implementation. Some courses in the study programme need to be updated. Also in the future, more attention should be paid to the development of specific distance learning materials, approaches to conducting tests, etc.

[2] N/A

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

The study provision, material, technical provision, informative provision, and financial provision comply with specific features and the conditions for the implementation of the study programme. All the resources are easily accessible to students. Scientific databases and the literature are available for students. However, ECA should consider all possibilities to ensure more literature specific to the study programme. More attention should be paid to the development of specific distance learning materials, approaches to conducting tests, etc.

STRENGTHS:

1) ECA has a good technical, material and informative base to ensure implementation of the study programme.

WEAKNESSES:

1) ECA should update the list of literature of the study programme.

4. Teaching Staff

Analysis

[1] According to the SAR (p. 161), the changes in the composition of the teaching staff since the previous assessment of the study programme were minimal. Only 3 courses are mentioned: “Social dialogue” taught by Secretary General of Latvian Free Trade Unions Confederation (LBAS; “European social model” taught by long-standing head of the Latvian Human Rights office; and “Social policy and welfare state in the 21st century” taught by long-standing Chairwoman of the Social and Employment Affairs Committee at Latvian Parliament.). New staff was identified to replace the missing ones. As some staff are undergoing doctoral studies in relevant areas connected with their course load it is assumed that they will be able to fill in positions made available, if the situation requires. Expert evaluation is that the ECA undertakes measures to fill the gaps when changes in the composition of the teaching staff occur.

[2] The teaching staff, in general, meet the conditions of the implementation of the study programme and the requirements of regulatory acts, and have qualifications similar to the courses they are teaching. “There are 14 lecturers working in the study program, 10 of whom have a Doctor’s degree: 5 are professors, including visiting professors, 2 associate professors, 6 assistant professors, 1 lecturer and practitioners in the field of social welfare.” (SAR, p. 205). However, when taking into account all the programmes, there are some teachers with a high workload. For instance, one professor has about 20 different courses, though some with similar titles; the second professor has about 10 different courses and the third professor has 17 different courses in the whole welfare education area. These situations create not only a strain for the teachers, but also a risk for the study programmes due to overreliance on a few key persons. Academically it is unlikely that a teacher has the time to properly prepare and deliver such an amount of lectures. The number of teaching staff with qualifications or practice experience in Social Work is limited and it can be difficult to teach Social Work intervention methods without practical knowledge. The involvement of former high-ranking officials can be relevant for the study programme, but their publication track is limited to national outlets with low intensity of recent academic publication. Expert evaluation is that teaching staff are prepared to achieve the aims and learning outcomes of the study programme.

[3] N/A

[4] ECA has mechanisms ensuring that teaching staff is involved in the development and achievement of the aims and objectives of the study programme. As most of the teaching staff has academic, professional and research work experience. they comply with the requirements of regulatory acts. The participation of the institution in various network organisations ensures that the teaching staff has opportunities (e.g. Erasmus+ teaching exchanges, projects, etc.) to adjust the content of their courses to the European social policies and recommendations. Good command of English language would allow more teachers to avail of the teaching opportunities (in the reporting period only 9 did).

Some of the teaching staff did not publish any article in the previous six years in peer-reviewed journals, while those who did, published more than 90% of their articles in one journal (Tiltai/Bridges) which is edited by University of Klaipėda (Lithuania), a partner university or the Scientific Proceedings of Latvian Christian Academy. This situation raises questions about the unequal distribution of publication efforts among the teaching staff. The publications of the teaching staff comprise mainly research reports, project-based reports and articles in regional/local journals. The information gained during the research projects is partially used in the study process as not always the recent publications are included in the recommended bibliography.

[5] The HEI has several mechanisms in place to promote collaboration between the teaching staff

members, such as: Regular Theoretical Seminars, participation in international research projects, ERASMUS+ teaching exchanges, collaboration of master level lecturers with experienced teachers. Expert evaluation is that these mechanisms are functional.

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

The teaching staff complies with the Law on Higher Education Institutions in Latvia and most of the 15 staff involved in the professional bachelor study programme have had research activity in the previous 6 years. The teaching staff, in general, has qualifications similar to the courses they are teaching. The participation of the institution in various network organisations ensures that the teaching staff has opportunities (e.g. Erasmus+ teaching exchanges, projects, etc.) to adjust the content of their courses to the European social policies and recommendations. Good command of English language would allow more teachers to avail of the teaching opportunities. Expert evaluation is that mutual cooperation mechanisms are functional.

STRENGTHS:

- 1) The teaching staff has academic, professional and research work experience and they comply with the requirements of regulatory acts.
- 2) Collaboration with international partners ensures opportunities for teaching staff.

WEAKNESSES:

- 1) When taking into account all the programmes, there are some teachers with a high workload (e.g. 20, 17, 10 different courses).
- 2) The publications are in low profile academic outlets.

5. Assessment of the Compliance of the Study Programme "Caritative Social Work"

Requirements

1. The sample of the diploma to be issued for the acquisition of the study programme complies with the procedure by which state-recognised documents of higher education are issued.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Annexes: SD2.līm._diploms.pdf

2. Documents confirming that the higher education institution/ college will provide the students with the options to continue the acquisition of education in another study programme or at another higher education institution/ college (a contract with another accredited higher education institution/ college), in case the implementation of the study programme is discontinued.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Annexes: Sad.Līgums(studenti)_2.līm.SOC.DARBS.pdf

3. Document confirming that the higher education institution/ college guarantees to the students a compensation for losses if the study programme is not accredited or the licence of the study programme is revoked due to the actions of the higher education institution/ college (actions or failure to act) and the student does not wish to continue the studies in another study programme.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Appendixes: Apliecinājums_zaudējumu kompensācija_2-9-49_EN.docx

- 4 4. The teaching staff members involved in the implementation of the study programme are proficient in the official language in accordance with the regulations on the level of the official language knowledge and the procedures for testing official language proficiency for performing professional duties and office duties.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Highly qualified academic staff. The study program is implemented in Latvian language. Analysis of the staff.

- 5 5. The teaching staff members to be involved in the implementation of the study programme have at least B2-level knowledge of a related foreign language, if the study programme or any part thereof is to be implemented in a foreign language.

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

- 6 6. At least five teaching staff members with a doctoral degree are among the academic staff of an academic doctoral study programme, at least three of which are experts approved by the Latvian Science Council in the respective field of science. At least five teaching staff members with a doctoral degree are among the academic staff of a professional doctoral study programme in arts.

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

- 7 7. The academic staff of the academic study programme complies with the requirements set forth in Section 55, Paragraph one, Clause 3 of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

- 8 8. The sample of the study agreement complies with the mandatory provisions to be included in the study agreement.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Appendixes: SD2.līm_Studiju līgums_EN.pdf

- 9 9. The descriptions of the study courses and the study materials have been prepared in all languages in which the study programme is implemented, and they comply with the requirements set forth in Section 56.1, Paragraph two and Section 56.2, Paragraph two of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Implementation of the study program is in Latvian language.

Implementation is in distance learning.

- 10 10. The study programme complies with the valid professional standard or the requirements for the professional qualification (if there is no professional standard required for the relevant occupation) provided that the completion of the study programme leads to a professional qualification.

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

Study programme partially comply to Leading social worker professional standard which was approved on 11.08.2021. (more detailed analyses are included in reports Chapter 2 " The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof")

- 11 11. Academic study programmes provided for less than 250 full-time students may be implemented and less than five professors and associated professors of the higher education institution may be involved in the implementation of the mandatory and limited elective part of these study programmes provided that the relevant opinion of the Council for Higher Education has been received in accordance with Section 55, Paragraph two of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

- 12 12. The study programme complies with the State Academic Education Standard or the Professional Higher Education Standard.

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

ECA' SAR p. 99-100 are the description about the standards and requirements. The expert group has analyzed the professional qualification.

The study programme "Caritative Social Work (47762)" is a Professional master study programme. Degree to be acquired is Master degree in Caritative Social Work and the qualification is Leading social worker. The content of the master's degree study program has been compared with the new "Leading social worker" professional standard. The Caritative Social Work, professional master study program corresponds to the 7th level of the Latvian qualifications framework.

The ECA must ensure that the content of the Master's degree in Caritative Social Work (47762) includes the competence in environmental protection and civil protection required by the Social Worker Regulation, if these themes have not been included in the student's previous studies.

These studies are able to admit to current studies of the students plus the degree to be acquired and professional qualification is Bachelor degree in Caritative Social work (ECA, SER, p.178).

These studies already includes the competence in environmental protection and civil protection required by the social Worker Regulations.

- 13 13. The joint study programmes comply with the requirements prescribed in Section 551, Paragraphs one, two, and seven of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education (if applicable).

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

- 14 14. Each member of the academic staff has either publications published in reviewed editions within the last six years, including international editions (if they have worked for a shorter period of time, the number of publications shall be in proportion to the work period), or artistic creation achievements (for instance, exhibitions, films, theatre performances, and concert activity), or a five-year practical work experience (except for the experience in the implementation of the study programme) in accordance with the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

At ECA the rule is that every member of the academic staff has to publish an article in two years. Some of the teaching staff did not publish any article in the previous six years in peer-reviewed journals, while those who did, published more than 90% of their articles in one journal (Tiltai/Bridges)

- 15 R5 - Overall rating

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

To ensure that requirement is assessed as compliant it is necessary to ensure the compliance of the study programme with the requirements specified in the state standard and the requirements specified in the professional standard. The results of teaching staff's scientific activity, publication should be improved.

Requirements (R6-R8)

- 1 R6 - The compliance of the study provision, scientific support (if applicable), informative provision (including libraries), material and technical provision, and financial provision with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and ensuring the achievement of the learning outcomes.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The study provision, material, technical provision, informative provision, and financial provision comply with specific features and the conditions for the implementation of the study programme. All the resources are easily accessible to students. Scientific databases and the literature are available for students. However, ECA should consider all possibilities to ensure more literature specific to the study programme.

- 2 R7 - The compliance of the qualification of the academic staff members, visiting professors, visiting associate professors, visiting docents, visiting lecturers, and visiting assistants with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and the provisions set out in the respective regulatory enactments.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

In Annexes, in every course has been named, who is teaching the course and what is the qualification of the staff member.

The teaching staff complies with the Law on Higher Education Institutions in Latvia and most of the 15 staff involved in the master programme have had research activity in the previous 6 years. The teaching staff, in general, has qualifications similar to the courses they are teaching. The participation of the institution in various network organisations ensures that the teaching staff has opportunities (e.g. Erasmus+ teaching exchanges, projects, etc.) to adjust the content of their courses to the European social policies and recommendations. However, publication efforts in international journals need to be improved.

- 3 R8 - The study programme leading to the master or doctoral degree is based on the advances and findings in the relevant field of science or artistic creation.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The contents of the studies provide expertise in holistic social work for individuals, families and groups, solving social problems in multi professional cooperation, people management, qualitative management, social work development, analysis of social processes and development strategies, study of social problems and justice issues in society, coordination and management of administrative processes in social work, and for the development of professional activities, as well as for research work in the field of social work and welfare. For this kind of expertise has been a need in the society. The ECA has founded the innovation for the study program and developed it. The students receive a high-quality education theoretically, methodologically and practically, that meets the requirements of the evolving working life of social work and is relevant for students and social work in Latvia.

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

Completion of the Caritative Social Work (47762) study program equips the student with a master's degree in social work and a caritative leading social worker professional qualification. The aims, objectives, professional qualifications and admission requirements of the study Caritative Social Work study program are carefully defined and they are interrelated. The main goal of the program is to "prepare highly qualified specialists in the social work field, to deepen interdisciplinary research in client-oriented social work (Caritative Social Work) and at the intersection of social, theological, anthropological and care sciences". The study program uniquely presents the standards of the human and social sciences and, at the same time, a theological and spiritual perspective. There are different study program implementation options: the form of full-time and part-time (evening) and part-time distance learning which are suitable for adult students.

The study program "Caritative Social Work (47762)" at the European Christian Academy (ECA) offers

a Professional Master's degree in Caritative Social Work, aiming to prepare highly qualified experts in social services through multidisciplinary research. Study programme applies to accredit following modes: Full time studies / latvian / 2 years, 0 months; Part time extramural studies / latvian / 2 years, 5 months; Part-time extramural studies - distance education / latvian / 2 years, 5 months; Part-time extramural studies - distance education / latvian / 2 years, 0 months; Part time extramural studies / latvian / 2 years, 0 months and Full time studies / latvian / 1 years, 5 months. As mentioned, the programme has flexible implementation options catering to adult learners. While the programme receives positive feedback from students and the labour market, there are challenges. Issues include the completion challenges faced by adult students, incorrect degree titles, small student numbers, and discrepancies in course content related to professional standards. Strengths of the programme include high-quality education, a unique blend of human and social sciences with theological perspectives, and positive student-centred teaching methods. However, weaknesses include the absence of topics such as environmental protection in the curriculum, outdated literature lists, and discrepancies in course descriptions. Additionally, the workload of some teachers is high, and publications are in low-profile academic outlets. The distance learning capacity could not be sufficiently assessed, given limited information provided by the institution. However, based on what is available, the material availability and methodology of organising those part-time study forms could be improved further and making sure that it is clear for all involved stakeholders what constitutes part-time study modes. It should be clear what kind of teaching methodology is being applied here because it could be beneficial even for potential students, for example, by making publicly institutions webpages explanation on how exactly these study modes are being implemented. Despite these challenges, the academy is committed to addressing shortcomings and maintaining the program's high standards. ECA does not have contracts with employers on the provision of the field placement, instead they have individual contract for each individual student, which threatens long-term cooperation opportunities due to occupancy of employers, especially in crisis situations.

The strengths of the study program are from their nature the basis and broad feature. The weaknesses must be seen and corrected, but they can be corrected in the short term when the study program is renewed annually. This is the reason for Good overall assessment of the study program.

STRENGTHS:

- 1) The goals, tasks and learning outcomes of the study programme have been carefully defined.
- 2) In the study program, students receive a high-quality education theoretically, methodologically and practically, that meets the requirements of the evolving working life of social work and is relevant for students and social work in Latvia.
- 3) The study program uniquely combines the standards of human and social sciences, with simultaneously theological and spiritual perspectives.
- 4) ECA has high quality academic teaching staff and a good technical, material and informative base to ensure implementation of the study programme.

WEAKNESSES:

- 1) The ECA must ensure that the content of the Master's degree in Caritative Social Work (47762) includes the competence in environmental protection and civil protection required by the Social Worker Regulation, if these themes have not been included in the student's previous studies.
- 3) According to ECA's annual study quality assurance process, it is essential to review and update the literature and study and research material related to the modules/courses of the study programme.

Evaluation of the study programme "Caritative Social Work"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Caritative Social Work"

Short-term recommendations

The ECA must ensure that the content of the Master's degree in Caritative Social Work (47762) includes the competence in environmental protection and civil protection required by the Social Worker Regulation, if these themes have not been included in the student's previous studies. Must be implemented until decision on accreditation is being made.

According to ECA's annual study quality assurance process, it is essential to review and update the literature and study and research material related to the modules/courses of the study programme.

Long-term recommendations

Consider some activities that could address timely completion of studies by adult students.

Review and update the degree title to accurately reflect the program's content and objectives, ensuring it aligns with industry standards and enhances the degree's credibility.

Standardize field placement guidelines, study plans, and course descriptions across languages, ensuring consistency and clarity, and align these documents with the social worker's professional standard for cohesive and effective learning experiences.

Align the curriculum with professional standards, emphasizing practical skills and knowledge for macro-level social work practice, and ensure theological topics are appropriately integrated without overshadowing core competencies required for the profession.

Redistribute teaching loads equitably among faculty members, ensuring a balanced workload.

Encourage faculty to publish in reputable academic outlets to enhance the visibility and impact of the institution's research, elevating its academic standing and fostering a culture of high-quality scholarly contributions.

Set contracts with employers for field placement provision.

II. "Social Entrepreneurship Management" ASSESSMENT

II. "Social Entrepreneurship Management" ASSESSMENT

1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

Analysis

[1] The study program "Social Entrepreneurship Management (47762)" is a higher education Professional Master study programme at ECA. The programme is a modern innovation of ECA and useful in a welfare society that wants to involve its citizens. The study programme is implemented in Latvian language both in full-time and part-time, and part-time distance learning form. Implementation options help students to take part in their studies. According to the SAR of ECA the

study programme ensures improvement of the qualification to a professional master degree in social entrepreneurship management, however, it is technically incorrect and a more correct version would be - Professional master degree Social Entrepreneurship Management. It is also important to indicate that the name of the degree to be awarded does not directly match the code of the study programme, which indicates that the programme corresponds to the programme group Social services. ECA should ensure that the programme code, the degree to be awarded and the content of the programme are mutually agreed.

No qualification is awarded. ECA should take into account that since 21.06.2023 a new state standard is in force (Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 305 "Regulations on the State Standard of Professional Higher Education"), which stipulates that a professional degree and qualification must be awarded after graduating from a professional master's programme. Considering that the SAR was submitted before regulation came into force, experts understand that previously it was possible to implement the programme without a qualification, at the same time, in order to ensure the compliance of the programme with the current regulatory framework, the ECA should consider the possibility of granting a professional qualification or look for other solutions, for example by transforming this programme as an academic programme where it is not necessary to issue qualification.

The goals of the professional programme is to develop research-based social entrepreneurship as a form of social work to create jobs, especially for people with partial work ability and the long-term unemployed people, to implement well-being in risk situations in the society. Social workers are perfectly familiar with the social problems of marginalised people and with the crisis clients. The social workers can organise rehabilitative work activities for disabled people in the company and to reintegrate marginalised people into society. It is precisely in these tasks that the professional skills and competence of a social worker are necessarily needed. With these starting points the programme is compliant with the welfare study field.

The study programme develops skills of students in using interdisciplinary research methods at the intersection of four fields: social work, management, theological and anthropological sciences. The aims, objectives, learning outcomes and admission requirements are interrelated. Distance teaching and learning possibilities have been created anew, therefore, it is necessary to follow up and ensure that the content of the programme helps to achieve defined learning outcomes of the study programme.

According to the Appendix no.5.2. the number of students has been 1-6 per year. The number of program graduates since 2013/14 of the study year varies from 1 to 3 graduates per year. In order to ensure the possibility of implementing several variants of the study programme, ECA should look for ways to increase the number of students. All students in the master study programme are employed in the field of social business management. The small enrollment student statistics in the study programme influence the employment and unemployment situation in Latvia and in Europe and the economic situation of small companies.

The study programme is developed annually based on feedback from students, graduates and the labour market, which ensures the quality of the study process. Any big changes to the study programme like code, place of implementation, type, forms and language have not been made during the implementation years.

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

The programme complies well with the welfare study field and is useful in a welfare society. Social enterprise is a relatively new way of working in Europe. It aims at the economic viability of operations, but it has social significance for the society. The goals of the professional programme is to develop research-based social entrepreneurship as a form of social work to create jobs, especially for people with partial work ability and the long-term unemployed people, to implement well-being

in risk situations in the society. Social workers are perfectly familiar with the social problems of marginalised people and with the crisis of clients.

Even considering the interdisciplinary nature of the programme, it should comply with the regulatory framework and align the name of the awarded degree with the programme code and content. Also, the degree should be technically specified. Completion of the programme does not confer a professional qualification, which contradicts a valid national standard. In order to ensure the compliance of the programme with the current regulatory framework, the ECA should consider the possibility of granting a professional qualification or look for other solutions, for example by transforming this programme as an academic programme where it is not necessary to issue qualification.

The programme has been enrolled at the ECA for a few years. Because of the difficult Covid years there has been some kind of a lack of students. The small enrollment student statistics in the study programme influence the employment and unemployment situation in Latvia and in Europe and the economic situation of small companies. However, considering that the programme is planned to be implemented in different options, the number of students should be increased.

Despite everything, this programme is a good innovation for the future, necessary in Latvian society and at the European level. The programme is well planned and implemented, however, its compliance with the regulatory framework should be ensured

STRENGTHS:

- 1) "Social Entrepreneurship Management (47762)", a higher education Professional Master study programme is a good innovation for the future, necessary in Latvian society and at the European level.
- 2) The programme develops skills of students in social work, management, entrepreneurship and business operations and theological and anthropological sciences.
- 3) There are full time and part time and part-time distance learning forms in the programme implementation options, which help adult students to study.
- 4) ECA has been the initiator of Social Entrepreneurship and education at the master's level.

WEAKNESSES:

- 1) Because of the difficult Covid years there has been some kind of a lack of students and also difficulties in business operations in the field of Social Entrepreneurship.
- 2) Social management entrepreneurship is acting dependent on the economic cycles in society and because of that also to the interest to study in the programme.
- 3) Completion of the study programme does not result in the award of a qualification, which contradicts the current national standard, which came into force on 13.06.2023.
- 4) The title of the degree is not technically correct.
- 5) The code of the study programme and the awarded degree are not mutually agreed.

2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

Analysis

[1] According to the ECA self-assessment report (pp. 222-243.), ECA was the initiator of the social entrepreneurship profession and master's level study programme for social workers in Latvia (2013/2014). The ECA also promoted the adoption of the Law on Social Entrepreneurship in Latvia. The study programme has been implemented and proved necessary in Latvian society in the field of wellbeing, and the study programme can also be used in a European context.

The study programme is implemented as full-time (two years, 80 CP) or part-time (2 years, 5 months 80 CP) and part-time distance studies (80 CP). And full-time (1 year, 60 CP), or part-time (2 years, 60 CP) and part-time distance. The main difference is the set admission requirements. Enrollment criteria should be revised for those who are enrolled in the 60 and 80 CP study programmes. This is

necessary to provide sufficient competencies in entrepreneurship, management and social work for those with/without a degree in a specific field. By changing the proportion of taught study courses in study programmes with both before mentioned amount of CP, it will be possible to increase competencies in management and entrepreneurship, instead of teaching study courses orienting solely on theological aspects. This will also allow to improve the inclusion of the newest findings in the field of entrepreneurship, social entrepreneurship, management and social work considering that these study courses are taught as interprofessional competencies.

Distance education and studying are suitable for them. Previous business or economics studies can be taken into account in the personal study plan. A social worker with expertise in social entrepreneurship must have high-quality and multidisciplinary expertise in research, helping people and entrepreneurship in establishing and guiding a business. A social enterprise must also meet many of the requirements of ordinary businesses, such as a sustainable economy, environmental care or questions of safety. Such knowledge and expertise is provided by the ECA "Social Entrepreneurship Management" study programme (47762).

Based on the ECA self-assessment report and related annexes, the Social Entrepreneurship Management (47762) professional master study programme in the Republic of Latvia complies with the legislation and standards of higher education in social work in the field of welfare and with the principles of the Latvian Qualifications Framework (LQF) and the European Qualifications Framework (EQF).

The objective, tasks and desired results of the study programme are presented in detail. The studies in the curriculum aim to achieve the objectives of the study programme and the expertise of a master's level social worker in research and professional tasks related to social entrepreneurship. According to information presented by the ECA, the study programme utilises research methods from social work, management, theology and anthropological sciences. The content of the study programme is described properly and justified in the ECA self-assessment report (pp. 231–232.) and (APPENDIX No. 9.2). The studies are organised as modules and courses. They cover the theory and practices of social entrepreneurship (14 CP), management and research (26 CP), social entrepreneurship and psychology (14 CP), Social entrepreneurship practice (6 CP) and Development and defence of the master thesis (20 CP). The ECA's self-assessment report describes even in detail the selection of thesis topics, thesis supervision, and thesis process and evaluation (pp. 235–237).

The theological aspects of the studies are strong. The modules of the curriculum include courses on patristic anthropology, integrative theology methods and caritas theology that are part of the ECA's specialty. These studies are clearly separate courses and deepen the studies of each module with Christian faith views like on leadership or caring for the weakest. ECA has to take into account the topics on entrepreneurship and management science for those students who do not have previous business or economics studies.

The descriptions of the modules and courses in the study programme give a proper idea of the entire content, high quality and special characteristics of the studies. The studies in the study programme correspond to the objectives, tasks and required competence of social entrepreneurship expertise. The studies emphasise practical orientation, but also learning interdisciplinary research skills, analytical thinking skills and argumentation, which is essential for research tasks in social work science. The study programme also enables Master's degree graduates to apply for doctoral studies in the field of social work. The competence acquired in the study programme is very necessary to ensure the social services of the welfare society as a whole for citizens, especially population groups in a weak employment position.

The study programme is implemented in accordance with:

· Minister Cabinet Regulation No. 512 "On the state standard of second-level professional higher education" (lv - <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/268761-noteikumi-par-otra-limena-profesionalas-augstakas-izglitiba-valsts-standardu>).

The courses of the professional master's study programme "Social Entrepreneurship" have been reviewed and approved in 06.09.2021, the descriptions (study course annotation and description of the study results) provide a clear idea of the skills and knowledge that are planned to be acquired. According to Minister Cabinet Regulation No. 512 ECA fulfils the requirements of mandatory included content in the professional master's study programme in terms of the minimum amount of credit points of the study programme, field placement, mandatory content, awarded degree, etc.

One aspect related to the aforementioned regulation states that a study programme must include knowledge stated in the Law on Environmental Protection and the Law on Civil Defense for those students who have not acquired this knowledge in the lower educational level. Realisation on the demanded knowledge at ECA is implemented at two stages (Annex 6.3):

1. Topics of environmental protection are included in the study course The European Social Model. However, after reviewing the content of the study course no topics on environment are included; the literature list does not reflect any of these topics; field of science of this course is mentioned Sociology; number of literature sources is excessively exaggerated - 49 in total.
2. CA provides needed knowledge on civil defense in the Caritative Social Work bachelor study programme in two study courses: Medicine in Caritative Social Work Practice and Caritative Social Work in Hospital. Study course Medicine in Caritative Social Work Practice (topics on dementia, somatic illness, work with aggressive clients, mental causes of illnesses) and Caritative Social Work in Hospital (topics on function of caritative social workers, work in multidisciplinary teams, mental care of staff, relatives, etc.).

Considering that the aforementioned study courses do not include topics on environmental protection, civil protection, ECA does not provide opportunity to reach needed knowledge in environmental protection and civil defence to those students who have not acquired it during earlier studies in bachelor study programmes.

In conclusion, division of the needed knowledge on environmental protection and on civil defense do not provide students with a needed knowledge, thus it is recommended to develop a new separate study course which would give sufficient knowledge.

In the SAR (p. 227) it is stated that the professional master's study programme "Social Entrepreneurship" has been developed in accordance with the Education Qualification of the Republic of Latvia (code 47762) which is leading social worker (sometimes translated as a senior social worker). In spite of the fact that it is stated that study courses were developed in accordance with this standard, there is a lack of justification on why such a choice was made. There is lack of information whether other professional standards were considered and if so, why specifically this standard was chosen. Especially, considering that ECA already has a master study programme "Caritative Social Work " which is developed in accordance with the aforementioned standard.

It is unclear why it was evaluated how study programme responds to Social Services And Social Benefits Law (Sociālo pakalpojumu un sociālās palīdzības likums; lv - <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/68488-socialo-pakalpojumu-un-socialas-palidzibas-likums>), especially when there is a Social Enterprise Law (Sociālā uzņēmuma likums; lv - <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/294484-sociala-uznemuma-likums>). This artificial link, which is made, is unjustified. Social work as a profession can gain from social entrepreneurs as well as social work clients, however there is no reasoning on how social work as a profession can serve as a base of the development of curricula of the study programme.

According to the information provided in the Annex 10.2 Mag study courses, the developed master's study programme includes needed knowledge and skills in business and social entrepreneurship. The specific specialization courses allow to achieve the goals of the programme.

According to Annex 9.2. Curricula SUV MAG, there are divisions of study courses for the programme in amount of 60 and 80 KP to distinguish needed knowledge for students with and without competence in entrepreneurship.

Following study courses as Philosophy of creativity, Method of Integrative Theology in social sciences research, Integrative Theology Method in Strategic Management, Principles of management in patristic anthropology, Axiology in the contexts of the social communication, Theology of Caritas in Entrepreneurship Practice tend to focus on theological aspects lacking topics on entrepreneurship, management science.

Many study courses have an excessive amount of literature, there is no indication on chapter or pages students should focus. Complement study course descriptions with the results of research in the field would be advisable.

The professional master's study programme "Social Entrepreneurship" syllabus includes field placement (6 KP). There is brief information described in SAR (p.236-237) where 5 characteristics of field placement are named. According to the study plan (Annex 9.2.) field placement is held in two parts (each 3 Cp or 4 and 2 CP). There is no difference in the total amount and content of field placement in the study programmes with and without previous knowledge in entrepreneurship. Also, field placement guidelines do not provide any differences in the aims and objectives for those who have and do not have this previous knowledge. And another aspect is that provided guidelines do not describe field placement as two separate courses but as one, thus causing the question whether and what is the difference between those two field placements.

According to SAR (p. 235), ECA has established a broad cooperation network in provision of field placement. During on-site visits it was approved by employers and students that there are several institutions who provide field placement.

By evaluating from a long-term perspective, it would be advisable to have at least a couple of contracts with some social entrepreneurs which would guarantee field placement for students. As well as guidelines for separate field placements should be developed and differences in the field placement for those with and without previous knowledge should be outlined.

The establishment of the study programme has aroused critical discussion in the expert group. This is worth bringing up in the report. It gives for ECA, if ECA wishes, consider the aspects presented and their consequences in the development of the study programme:

[2] The studies are implemented, completed and evaluated according to the course descriptions. The teaching methods are diverse and professional teaching staff determines the course requirements, study material and assessment for students at the beginning of the course. The assessment follows the Latvian rules on the assessment of professional studies and uses a 10-point scale. A wide range of different methods are used in the assessment. Students have the opportunity to apply for an increase in grade.

Based on the ECA's self-assessment report and assessment visit, it is clear that the entire ECA study process is student-oriented. The views and initiatives of students are considered important. Students have the opportunity to participate in research teams and projects of academic staff or employers, where they learn the professional and research skills required by the study programme.

Study information is available for students. During the assessment visit it was stated that study plans and study programme course descriptions are available to students at the academy. The student familiarises himself / herself with the content of the study plan (full time studies, part time extramural studies, distance learning) and courses of his chosen study programme. Study plans and course descriptions are adjusted to the specifics of implementation. Some courses in the study programme need to be updated. Also in the future, more attention should be paid to the development of specific distance learning materials, approaches to conducting tests, etc.

[3] The ECA has a quality assurance system in place. According to the quality assurance process, the curriculum is reviewed annually if legislation, official guidelines, labour market or student feedback require changes to the study programme. The above-mentioned critical points of the expert group should be dispelled in the annual development of the study programme.

According to the ECA Self-Assessment Report (p. 239), ECA regularly collects information from

students, graduates and employers on the quality of the study programme and the skills and competences attained by students. Although ECA has provided experts with the information on the results of the questionnaires, there are several inconsistencies: number of employers who have participated in the questionnaires in several study programme are not specified, thus not allowing to understand the scope of these questionnaires. Also, none of the present employers during on-site visit could identify their participation in filling the questionnaires as well as evaluation of the field placement during its defense. The number of students is small in this study programme. There are only a few stories of students to read in SAR about the feedback of students. The surveys are analysed by an external sociologist. Conclusions are drawn from the research data obtained to improve activities and studies. According to the ECA self-assessment report and its appendices, the feedback is generally positive. According to the feedback received during the evaluation visit, the students were ready to recommend ECA as a place of study to new students.

[4] ECA's ERASMUS+ department regularly informs students about mobility opportunities at universities with which ECA has cooperation agreements. Students are offered maximum approvals for studies abroad at their own university. There were no special numbers of students who have used the possibility of mobility in this study programme. Through mobility it could be possible to learn new models of Entrepreneurship management at the European level.

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

The "Social Entrepreneurship Management" study programme (47762) is originally an ECA Master's level study programme innovation for social workers. It produces high-level social entrepreneurship expertise and multidisciplinary research competence in social entrepreneurship. The competence acquired in the study programme is very necessary for ensuring the social services of the welfare society as a whole and, in particular, for the inclusion of population groups in a weak employment position in society.

The study programme has been able to combine the requirements of human, social and economic sciences with the anthropological and theological profile of ECA in a creatively balanced whole. The studies in the study programme correspond to the objectives, tasks and required competence of social entrepreneurship expertise. The study programme is implemented as full-time (two years, 80 CP) or part-time (2 years, 5 months) studies. The students are adults with previous studies and work experience, whom the distance teaching and learning is well suited.

The objective, tasks and desired results of the study programme are presented in detail. According to information presented by the ECA, the study programme utilises research methods from social work, management, theology and anthropological sciences. The content of the study programme is described properly and justified in the ECA self-assessment report (pp. 231-232.) and (APPENDIX No. 9.2). Many study courses have an excessive amount of literature, but there is no indication on chapter or pages students should focus.

The Social Entrepreneurship study programme is mapped in accordance with the senior social workers professional standard, which doubles the already existing master study programme of caritative social work lacking the sufficient competencies in entrepreneurship.

There is no difference in the total amount and content of field placement in the study programmes with and without previous knowledge in entrepreneurship. Provided guidelines do not describe field placement as two separate courses but as one, thus causing the question whether and what is the difference between those two field placements.

The studies are implemented, completed and evaluated according to the course descriptions. The teaching methods are diverse and professional teaching staff determines the course requirements, study material and assessment for students at the beginning of the course. It was told by teachers

and students by the visit of the expert group that the Academy's research projects are considered important. The ECA has a quality assurance system in place. According to the ECA Self-Assessment Report (p. 239), ECA regularly collects information from students, graduates and employers on the quality of the study programme and the skills and competences attained by students. Although ECA has provided experts with the information on the results of the questionnaires, there are several inconsistencies: number of employers who have participated in the questionnaires in several study programme are not specified, thus not allowing to understand the scope of these questionnaires. Also, none of the present employers during on-site visit could identify their participation in filling the questionnaires as well as evaluation of the field placement during its defence. The surveys are analysed by an external sociologist. According to the feedback received during the evaluation visit, the students were ready to recommend ECA as a place of study to new students.

- 1) The "Social Entrepreneurship Management" study programme (47762) is an innovation of ECA. As a study programme, it has proven its usefulness in the social services of the Latvian welfare society, especially in the inclusion of disadvantaged population groups in society.
- 2) The study programme has been able to combine the requirements of human, social, management and economic sciences with the anthropological and theological profile of ECA in a creatively balanced whole.
- 3) The Social Entrepreneurship Management (47762), Professional master study programme, complies with the legislation and standards of higher education in social work in the welfare sector in the Republic of Latvia, as well as with the principles of the Latvian Qualifications Framework (LQF) and the European Qualifications Framework (EQF).
- 4) The studies emphasise the practical orientation of social entrepreneurship, but also the learning of interdisciplinary research skills, analytical thinking skills and argumentation, which is essential for the development of social work science.
- 5) At ECA, the entire study process is carried out in a student-oriented manner, which means that students are pleased with their studies. Students' views, initiatives and participation in, for example, It was told by teachers and students by the visit of the expert group that the Academy's research projects are considered important.
- 6) ECA regularly collects feedback from students, graduates and employers on the quality of the curriculum and the skills and competencies gained by students to develop the study programme.

WEAKNESSES:

- 1) Study programme is mapped in accordance with the senior social worker professional standard, it doubles the already existing master study programme of social work and lacks sufficient competencies in entrepreneurship.
- 2) Lack of a study course which would provide knowledge and skills on environmental protection and civil defence.
- 3) Excessive number of literature in most of the study courses.
- 4) Not justified study programme compliance with the Social Services and Social Benefits Law when there is Social Enterprise Law.
- 5) Only one field placement regulation instead of two, where according to the study plan there are two field placements.
- 6) No differences in field placement for students with and without previous knowledge in entrepreneurship.
- 7) The e-platform appendices do not include a comparison of the programme with the professional standard, although it was indicated this in the text.

3. Resources and Provision of the Study Programme

Analysis

[1] Resources and provisions, available for the Professional master study programme "Social Entrepreneurship Management", are described in ECA SAR (p. 243 - 249) and information obtained during the expert on-site visit, including the tour of the material technical base.

All the resources that are accessible, books in the library, materials onsite in the academy and technical provision, scientific support, comply with the specific features and the conditions for the implementation of the Professional master study programme "Social Entrepreneurship Management" and ensuring the achievement of learning outcomes. The library provides students with the necessary study literature. The study literature and study material included in the studies require updating. Scientific databases are available.

The financial provision is according to the needs of the amount of the students. The funding for the study programme "Social Entrepreneurship Management" is dependent on the tuition fee. According to SAR (p. 247) the source of funding for the ECA study programme is the tuition fee.

One of the factors that determines the long-term life of the study programme, is the number of students in the particular programme. In the study programme "Social Entrepreneurship Management" 2020/2021 there were enrolled 2 students and in 2021/2022 - only 1 student (Annex 5.2).

During the assessment visit, ECA management has stated - considering that Academy has developed a strategy for increasing the number of students in the study direction, the Academy pays less attention to the number of students in each individual programme from a financial point of view, because the strategy for increasing the number of students must be modeled separately for each study year, taking into account the financial difficulties of those living in Latvia.

ECA develops the social welfare study field as a whole and if there are fewer students in a study programme in the relevant study year, to ensure the programme's profitability, ECA uses so-called cross-financing from other study programmes with more students, thus equalizing the costs of the programme.

ECA has also developed distance learning possibilities for students. ECA indicated that Zoom, MS Teams or Google Meet communication tools are used for the distance learning process. For students an e-system for learning courses is available in the Moodle system ("E-Studies")(SAR p. 54). In the future, more attention should be paid to the development of specific distance learning materials, approaches to conducting tests, etc.

Study information is available for students. During the assessment visit it was stated that study plans and study programme course descriptions are available to students at the academy. The student familiarizes himself / herself with the content of the study plan (full time studies, part time extramural studies, distance learning) and courses of his chosen study programme. Study plans and course descriptions should be reviewed.

[2] N/A

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

The study provision, material, technical provision, informative provision, and financial provision comply with specific features and the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and ensuring the achievement of learning outcomes. The resources are easily accessible to students. Scientific databases are available. The academy should update the literature related to the study programme. ECA has a strategy for increasing the number of students in the study programme and the Academy should implement it. More attention should be paid to the development of specific distance learning materials, approaches to conducting tests, etc.

STRENGTHS:

1) The academy has a good technical, material and informative base to ensure implementation of the study programme.

WEAKNESSES:

1) The study literature and study material included in the studies require updating.

4. Teaching Staff

Analysis

[1] According to the SAR (p. 161), the changes in the composition of the teaching staff since the previous assessment of the study programme were minimal and new staff was identified to replace the missing ones. As some staff are undergoing doctoral studies in relevant areas connected with their course load it is assumed that they will be able to fill in positions made available, if the situation requires. Expert evaluation is that the HEI undertakes measures to fill the gaps when changes in the composition of the teaching staff occur.

[2] The teaching staff, in general, meet the conditions of the implementation of the study programme and the requirements of regulatory acts and have qualifications similar to the courses they are teaching. "There are 16 teaching staff. The programme is implemented only by teaching staff elected by ECA, with the exception of 2 visiting professors.." (SAR, p. 263). The number of teaching staff with qualifications or practice experience in Social Work is limited and it can be difficult to teach Social Work intervention methods without practical knowledge. Some teachers have 4 or 6 courses within the programme, which creates not only a strain for the teachers, but also a risk for the study programmes due to overreliance on a few key persons. Academically it is unlikely that a teacher has the time to properly prepare and deliver such an amount of lectures. The involvement of former high-ranking officials can be relevant for the study programme, but their publication track is limited to national outlets with low intensity of recent academic publication. Expert evaluation is that teaching staff are prepared to achieve the aims and learning outcomes of the study programme.

[3] N/A

[4] The HEI has mechanisms ensuring that teaching staff is involved in the development and achievement of the aims and objectives of the study programme. As most of the teaching staff has academic, professional and research work experience. they comply with the requirements of regulatory acts. The participation of the institution in various network organisations ensures that the teaching staff has opportunities (e.g. Erasmus+ teaching exchanges, projects, etc.) to adjust the content of their courses to the European social policies and recommendations. Good command of English language would allow more teachers to avail of the teaching opportunities (in the reporting period only 4 did, according to SAR).

Some of the teaching staff did not publish any article in the previous six years in peer-reviewed journals, while those who did, published more than 90% of their articles in one journal (Tiltai/Bridges) which is edited by University of Klaipėda (Lithuania), a partner university or the Scientific Proceedings of Latvian Christian Academy. This situation raises questions about the unequal distribution of publication efforts among the teaching staff. The publications of the teaching staff comprise mainly research reports, articles in regional/local journals. The information gained during the research projects is partially used in the study process as not always the recent publications are included in the recommended bibliography.

[5] The HEI has several mechanisms in place to promote collaboration between the teaching staff members, such as: Regular Theoretical Seminars, participation in international research projects, ERASMUS+ teaching exchanges, collaboration of master level lecturers with experienced teachers. Expert evaluation is that these mechanisms are functional.

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

The teaching staff complies with the Law on Higher Education Institutions in Latvia and most of the 16 staff involved in the master programme have had research activity in the previous 6 years. However, publication efforts in international journals need to be improved. The teaching staff, in general, has qualifications similar to the courses they are teaching. The participation of the institution in various network organisations ensures that the teaching staff has opportunities (e.g. Erasmus+ teaching exchanges, projects, etc.) to adjust the content of their courses to the European social policies and recommendations. Good command of English language would allow more teachers to avail of the teaching opportunities.

STRENGTHS:

- 1) The teaching staff has academic, professional and research work experience and they mainly comply with the requirements of regulatory acts.
- 2) Collaboration with international partners ensures opportunities for teaching staff.

WEAKNESSES:

- 1) When taking into account all the social welfare study programmes, there are some teachers with a high workload (e.g. 3-4 different courses only in this programme).
- 2) The number of teaching staff with qualifications or practice experience in Social Work is limited and it can be difficult to teach Social Work intervention methods without practical knowledge.
- 3) Some teaching staff did not publish any article in the previous six years in peer-reviewed journals, while those who did, published more than 90% of their articles in 2 journals.

5. Assessment of the Compliance of the Study Programme "Social Entrepreneurship Management"

Requirements

1. The sample of the diploma to be issued for the acquisition of the study programme complies with the procedure by which state-recognised documents of higher education are issued.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Appendixes: SUV Mag_diploms.pdf

2. Documents confirming that the higher education institution/ college will provide the students with the options to continue the acquisition of education in another study programme or at another higher education institution/ college (a contract with another accredited higher education institution/ college), in case the implementation of the study programme is discontinued.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Appendixes: Sad.Līgums(studenti)_SOC.UZŅ_RISEBA_EN.pdf

3. Document confirming that the higher education institution/ college guarantees to the students a compensation for losses if the study programme is not accredited or the licence of the study programme is revoked due to the actions of the higher education institution/ college (actions or failure to act) and the student does not wish to continue the studies in another study programme.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Appendixes: Apliecinājums_zaudējumu kompensācija_2-9-49_EN.docx

4. The teaching staff members involved in the implementation of the study programme are proficient in the official language in accordance with the regulations on the level of the official language knowledge and the procedures for testing official language proficiency for performing professional duties and office duties.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Highly qualified teachers.

Implementation is in Latvian language.

- 5 5. The teaching staff members to be involved in the implementation of the study programme have at least B2-level knowledge of a related foreign language, if the study programme or any part thereof is to be implemented in a foreign language.

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

- 6 6. At least five teaching staff members with a doctoral degree are among the academic staff of an academic doctoral study programme, at least three of which are experts approved by the Latvian Science Council in the respective field of science. At least five teaching staff members with a doctoral degree are among the academic staff of a professional doctoral study programme in arts.

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

- 7 7. The academic staff of the academic study programme complies with the requirements set forth in Section 55, Paragraph one, Clause 3 of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

- 8 8. The sample of the study agreement complies with the mandatory provisions to be included in the study agreement.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Appendixes: SUV_Studiju līgums_EN.pdf

- 9 9. The descriptions of the study courses and the study materials have been prepared in all languages in which the study programme is implemented, and they comply with the requirements set forth in Section 56.1, Paragraph two and Section 56.2, Paragraph two of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The program is implemented in Latvian language.

The program is implemented in distance learning.

- 10 10. The study programme complies with the valid professional standard or the requirements for the professional qualification (if there is no professional standard required for the relevant occupation) provided that the completion of the study programme leads to a professional qualification.

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

Completion of the study programme does not result in the award of a qualification, which contradicts the current national standard, which came into force on 13.06.2023.

- 11 11. Academic study programmes provided for less than 250 full-time students may be implemented and less than five professors and associated professors of the higher education institution may be involved in the implementation of the mandatory and limited elective part of these study programmes provided that the relevant opinion of the Council for Higher Education has been received in accordance with Section 55, Paragraph two of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

- 12 12. The study programme complies with the State Academic Education Standard or the Professional Higher Education Standard.

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

ECA's SAR p. 227 is described, how the study programme complies with the named Standards. The study programme is implemented in accordance with: Minister Cabinet Regulation No. 512 "On the state standard of second-level professional higher education" (lv - <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/268761-noteikumi-par-otra-limena-profesionalas-augstakas-izglitiba-valsts-standartu>).

The ECA must ensure that the content of the "Social Entrepreneurship Management" study programme includes the environmental protection and civil protection competence required by the Social Worker Regulation, unless it is part of the student's previous studies. The ECA must also verify the student's competence in legislation on social services and benefits. Before studying in Social Entrepreneurship Management Master study program the students have the 2nd level professional higher education in caritative social work, social work, social pedagogy or social sciences. The points mentioned above belong fortunately to these studies. In that case the studies can be included to the current studies.

- 13 13. The joint study programmes comply with the requirements prescribed in Section 551, Paragraphs one, two, and seven of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education (if applicable).

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

- 14 14. Each member of the academic staff has either publications published in reviewed editions within the last six years, including international editions (if they have worked for a shorter period of time, the number of publications shall be in proportion to the work period), or artistic creation achievements (for instance, exhibitions, films, theatre performances, and concert activity), or a five-year practical work experience (except for the experience in the implementation of the study programme) in accordance with the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

ECA has the rule that every member of the academic staff has to publish a scientific article at least once in two years.

The teaching staff complies with the Law on Higher Education Institutions in Latvia and most of the 16 staff involved in the master programme have had research activity in the previous 6 years. The teaching staff, in general, has qualifications similar to the courses they are teaching. Some teaching staff did not publish any article in the previous six years in peer-reviewed journals, while those who did, published more than 90% of their articles in 2 journals.

- 15 R5 - Overall rating

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

To ensure that requirement is assessed as compliant it is necessary to ensure the compliance of the study programme with the requirements specified in the state standard and the requirements specified in the professional standard. The results of teaching staff's scientific activity, publication should be improved.

Requirements (R6-R8)

- 1 R6 - The compliance of the study provision, scientific support (if applicable), informative provision (including libraries), material and technical provision, and financial provision with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and ensuring the achievement of the learning outcomes.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The study provision, material, technical provision, informative provision, and financial provision comply with specific features and the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and ensuring the achievement of learning outcomes. The resources are easily accessible to students. Scientific databases are available.

Shortly: All the provisions of the study programme, including scientific, informative, material and technical and financial, are compliant.

- 2 R7 - The compliance of the qualification of the academic staff members, visiting professors, visiting associate professors, visiting docents, visiting lecturers, and visiting assistants with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and the provisions set out in the respective regulatory enactments.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The teaching staff has academic, professional and research work experience and they comply with the requirements of regulatory acts. The teaching staff complies with the Law on Higher Education Institutions in Latvia and most of the 16 staff involved in the master programme have had research activity in the previous 6 years. The teaching staff, in general, has qualifications similar to the courses they are teaching. The participation of the institution in various network organisations ensures that the teaching staff has opportunities (e.g. Erasmus+ teaching exchanges, projects, etc.) to adjust the content of their courses to the European social policies and recommendations. However, publication efforts in international journals need to be improved.

- 3 R8 - The study programme leading to the master or doctoral degree is based on the advances and findings in the relevant field of science or artistic creation.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The expert group has analyzed the program. The program is based on the interdisciplinary research. The highly qualified members of the academic staff are planing and teaching in the study program.

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

According to the self assessment report (pp. 222-243.) ECA has been the initiator of the Social Entrepreneurship Professional master study program in Latvia. The "Social Entrepreneurship Management" study program (47762) has proven its usefulness in the social services of the Latvian welfare society. The study program is implemented in Latvian language both in full-time and part-time, and part-time distance learning form. Implementation options help students to take part to the studies.

The study program produces high-level social entrepreneurship expertise and multidisciplinary research competence in social entrepreneurship. The competence acquired in the study program is very necessary for ensuring the social services of the welfare society as a whole and, in particular, for the inclusion of population groups in a weak employment position in society. The innovation of the studies is in the way to combine the requirements of human, social and economic sciences with the anthropological and theological profile of ECA in a creatively balanced whole.

The objective, tasks and desired results of the study program are presented in detail. The study program utilises research methods from social work, management, theology and anthropological sciences. The content of the study program is described and justified in the ECA self-assessment report (pp. 231-232.) and (APPENDIX No. 9.2).

The program complies well with the welfare study field and is useful in a welfare society. Social enterprise is a relatively new way of working in Europe. It aims at the economic viability of operations, but it has social significance for the society. The goals of the professional qualification is to develop research-based social entrepreneurship as a form of social work to create jobs, especially for people with partial work ability and the long-term unemployed people, to implement well-being in risk situations in the society. Social workers are perfectly familiar with the social problems of marginalised people and with the crisis of clients.

The "Social Entrepreneurship Management (47762)" programme at the European Christian Academy (ECA) aims to develop research-based social entrepreneurship skills, focusing on job creation for individuals. Programme applies to accreditation following modes: Full time studies / latvian / 1 years, 6 months; Part-time extramural studies - distance education / latvian / 2 years, 0 months; Part time extramural studies / latvian / 2 years, 0 months; Full time studies / latvian / 2 years, 0 months; Part time extramural studies / latvian / 2 years, 5 months and Part-time extramural studies - distance education / latvian / 2 years, 5 months. The distance learning capacity could not be sufficiently assessed, given limited information provided by the institution. However, based on what is available, the material availability and methodology of organising those part-time study forms could be improved further and making sure that it is clear for all involved stakeholders what constitutes part-time study modes. It should be clear what kind of teaching methodology is being applied here because it could be beneficial even for potential students, for example, by making publicly institutions webpages explanation on how exactly these study modes are being implemented. However, there are several weaknesses that need to be addressed. These include the program's response to COVID-related challenges, low enrollment due to economic cycles, lack of professional qualification upon completion, and discrepancies in the program's name and content. Additionally, the program lacks specific courses on environmental protection and civil defense, and the literature and study materials need updating. While the teaching staff mostly complies with regulations, there are challenges related to workload, limited qualifications in Social Work, and a lack of recent publications in peer-reviewed journals. Despite these weaknesses, the program's innovative approach and interdisciplinary nature are noteworthy, contributing positively to Latvian society. The academy should focus on updating materials, addressing the qualification issue, and ensuring a balanced workload for teachers to enhance the program's overall effectiveness. There are also issues regarding recent development of the regulatory framework stipulating that professional qualification must be awarded in professional programmes, which is not the case here. Given that overall analysis points out that the study programme complies with the study field, there are some concerns regarding this aspect. Based on mentioned aspects, overall evaluation of the study programme as of now is "average", however it can be upgraded to "good" if issues regarding compliance with regulatory enactments are sufficiently and substantially addressed.

STRENGTHS:

- 1) The study program has been able to combine the requirements of human, social, management and economic sciences with the anthropological and theological profile of ECA in a creatively balanced whole.
- 2) The Social Entrepreneurship Management (47762), Professional master study program, complies with the legislation and standards of higher education in social work in the welfare sector in the Republic of Latvia, as well as with the principles of the Latvian Qualifications Framework (LQF) and the European Qualifications Framework (EQF).
- 3) The studies emphasise the practical orientation of social entrepreneurship, but also the learning of interdisciplinary research skills, analytical thinking skills and argumentation, which is essential for the development of social work science.
- 4) The academy has a qualified academic staff and a good technical, material and informative base to ensure implementation of the study program.

5) The feedback from students is good. The students are actively developing their studies.

WEAKNESSES:

- 1) The ECA must ensure that the content of the "Social Entrepreneurship Management" study program includes the environmental protection and civil protection competence required by the Social Worker Regulation, unless it is part of the student's previous studies.
- 2) The ECA must also verify the student's competence in legislation on social services and benefits.
- 3) The presented study literature and study material included in the studies require updating and course-specific specification according to the ECA's quality process.
- 4) The marketing of the study program for new students and their mobility needs action.
- 5) Attention should be paid to the nature / type of field placements, if the student has no previous knowledge of social entrepreneurship.

Evaluation of the study programme "Social Entrepreneurship Management"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Average

6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Social Entrepreneurship Management"

Short-term recommendations

The ECA must ensure that the content of the "Social Entrepreneurship Management" study programme includes the environmental protection and civil protection competence required by the Social Worker Regulation, unless it is part of the student's previous studies. Must be implemented until decision on accreditation is being made.
Address the issue regarding changes in the regulatory framework for the awarding of professional degrees. Must be implemented until decision on accreditation is being made.
The ECA must also verify the student's competence in legislation on social services and benefits.
The presented study literature and study material included in the studies require updating and course-specific specification according to the ECA's quality process.
The marketing of the study programme for new students and their mobility needs action.
Attention should be paid to the nature / type of field placements, if the student has no previous knowledge of social entrepreneurship.

Long-term recommendations

Revise the degree title to accurately represent the program's content, ensuring it adheres to technical correctness
Establish mutual agreement between the study programme code and the awarded degree
Enhance the study programme by integrating entrepreneurship competencies, addressing the gap and ensuring graduates are equipped with diverse skills, catering to market demands and providing a comprehensive education.

Reevaluate the study programme's compliance with relevant laws, ensuring alignment with the Social Services and Social Benefits Law as well as the Social Enterprise Law, fostering legal adherence and clarity.

Develop and implement clear regulations for both field placements stated in the study plan.

Redistribute teaching loads equitably among faculty members, ensuring a balanced workload.

Encourage faculty to publish in reputable academic outlets to enhance the visibility and impact of the institution's research, elevating its academic standing and fostering a culture of high-quality scholarly contributions.

II. "Supervision" ASSESSMENT

II. "Supervision" ASSESSMENT

1. Indicators Describing the Study Programme

Analysis

[1] The study programme "Supervision (47762)" is a Professional master study programme. The aims of the programme are to prepare specialists for professional and high quality organisation, management and reflection of the supervision process in the helping professions and organisations of various fields and to develop skills to use interdisciplinary and supervision-appropriate research methods at the intersection of humanities and social sciences. Nowadays supervision is seen as an important consultative support in all tasks in the welfare sector. It is clear that the study programme supervision is compliant with the welfare study field.

According to the ECA's SAR (p. 268) the higher education master's study programme "Supervision" has been developed in accordance with the Law on Higher Education Institutions of the Republic of Latvia; in accordance with the Educational Qualification of the Republic of Latvia (code No. 47762), the State Standard of second-level professional higher education; according to the Classifier of Professions of the Republic of Latvia, as well as the renewed standard of the profession of Supervisor (approved on 12.06.2019. by PINTSA). The title of the Professional master study programme "Supervision", the degree to be obtained, the goals and objectives, as well as the admission requirements are relevant and interconnected. However the Master degree in Supervision is technically incorrect and the more correct version would be - Professional bachelor Master degree in Supervision.

The professional master study programme "Supervision" is implemented in two years in full-time studies (80 CP) and 2,5 years part-time studies (80 CP). The programme is well suited for adult students and the profession Supervisor is possible to reach.

The aims, tasks, knowledge, skills and competences of the study programme Supervision are described carefully and are interrelated. According to the SAR of ECA the programme is the innovation of ECA in Latvia and it complies very well with the welfare study field and social services.

The programme gives for students the Master degree in Supervision and professional qualification is Supervisor. The number of students according to the APPENDIX No. 5.3. is 3-10 pro year and graduates approximate 3 supervisor pro year. The students are adult, working people, many times with families, but there are no dropouts in the study programme.

By the site-visit we only heard positive feedback from the study programme, studies and also qualification of the graduates. It is possible for all ECA students to study abroad; it is supported and guided.

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

The study programme "Supervision (47762)" is a Professional master study programme which prepares high quality specialists for the welfare sector. The programme is the innovation of ECA in Latvia and it complies very well with the welfare study field and is necessary in the future in all social services. The aims, tasks, knowledge, skills and competences of the study programme are described carefully. The programme gives for students the Master degree in Supervision and professional qualification is Supervisor. However, the degree title should be technically specified.

STRENGTHS:

- 1) The "Supervision (47762)", the Professional master study programme is an innovation of ECA in Latvia and it is needed in the welfare sector necessary in the future.
- 2) The aims, tasks, knowledge, skills and competences of the study programme are described carefully.
- 3) By the site-visit we only heard positive feedback from the study programme, studies and also qualification of the graduates.

WEAKNESSES:

- 1) The number of students is small..
- 2) The formulation of the degree does not comply with the regulatory framework

2. The Content of Studies and Implementation Thereof

Analysis

[1] In the end of 2013 the Latvian Ministry of Welfare declared, and the Cabinet of Ministers issued Regulations that the profession "Supervisor" can be included in the Classifier of Professions. ECA has been the initiator of the "Supervisor" profession in Latvia and has been implementing the Supervision study programme since 2013. In ECA's self-assessment report, the need for a master's program in Supervision (80 CP) is well justified and its high-quality implementation is well presented. The self assessment report of ECA clearly defines the objectives, tasks and required knowledge, skills, and competences of the master's degree programme in Supervision, the modules and study courses included in the programme and their evaluation. Supervisors have competence in organising and managing the supervision process individually, in groups and in organisations. According to one German Professor's statement, which was obtained during the evaluation visit, "supervisory offers will remain indispensable for all social services in the future." Supervision will be a broad task, even legal, in welfare areas in the whole Europe.

According to the SAR of ECA the admission requirements to the Supervision study programme are: Complete higher education (at bachelor's and master's level) in a state-accredited study programme in social and human sciences or health care, or social welfare, or teacher education and educational sciences, or humanitarian sciences; and at least 4 years of professional work experience (according to the requirements of the Association of National Organizations for Supervision in Europe (ANSE). This means that students have a lot of previous studies and skills. Therefore, it is possible for ECA to prepare a personal study plan for students and to recognize and acknowledge their previous competence. The curriculum can not be then just the same for all students.

ECA has wanted to emphasise scientific, practical supervision skills and research skills in the Supervision study programme. The course contents have been developed according to student feedback, feedback from graduates, the requirements of the labour market and also European requirements.

The study programme is implemented in accordance with:

- Minister Cabinet Regulation No. 512 "On the state standard of second-level professional higher education" (lv - <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/268761-noteikumi-par-otra-limena-profesionalas-augstakas-izglitiba-valsts-standardu>).
- Study courses are structured in compliance with the supervisor's professional standard which was

approved on 12.06.2019. (Annex 7C) (lv - <https://registri.visc.gov.lv/profizglitiba/dokumenti/standarti/2017/PS-109.pdf>).

· Content of the study programme corresponds to international tendencies defined by the Association of National Organisations for Supervision in Europe ANSE (SAR p. 271).

The courses of the professional master's study programme "Supervision" have been reviewed and approved in 2021, the descriptions (study course annotation and description of the study results) provide a clear idea of the skills and knowledge that are planned to be acquired.

According to Minister Cabinet Regulation No. 512 ECA fulfils the requirements of mandatory included content in the professional master's study programme in terms of the minimum amount of credit points of the study programme, field placement, mandatory content, awarded degree, etc.

One aspect related to the aforementioned regulation states that a study programme must include knowledge stated in the Law on Environmental Protection and the Law on Civil Defense for those students who have not acquired this knowledge in the lower educational level. Realisation on the demanded knowledge at ECA is implemented at two stages (Annex 6.3):

1. Topics of environmental protection are included in the study course The European Social Model. However, after reviewing the content of the study course no topics on environment are included; the literature list does not reflect any of these topics; field of science of this course is mentioned Sociology; number of literature sources is excessively exaggerated – 49 in total.

2. CA provides needed knowledge on civil defense in the Caritative Social Work bachelor study programme in two study courses: Medicine in Caritative Social Work Practice and Caritative Social Work in Hospital. Study course Medicine in Caritative Social Work Practice (topics on dementia, somatic illness, work with aggressive clients, mental causes of illnesses) and Caritative Social Work in Hospital (topics on function of caritative social workers, work in multidisciplinary teams, mental care of staff, relatives, etc.).

Considering that the aforementioned study courses do not include topics on environmental protection, civil protection, ECA does not provide opportunity to reach needed knowledge in environmental protection and civil defence to those students who have not acquired it during earlier studies in bachelor study programmes.

In conclusion, division of the needed knowledge on environmental protection and on civil defense do not provide students with a needed knowledge, thus it is recommended to develop a new separate study course which would give sufficient knowledge.

One of the essential activities in the development of the study programme is its compliance with the professional standard, which gives a clear idea on needed skills and knowledge. By reviewing the study course descriptions and judging from what is written in SAR on the idea of the study programme there is controversial idea that supervisions is based on the need for integrative theological methodology in research, knowledge of the anthropological approach, including knowledge of patristic anthropology as stated by ECA (SAR p. 272), although nothing in the professional standard would allow to gain such an idea. Another controversial idea is that in a person-centered approach it is necessary to abandon the psychological discourse and the use of humanistic psychology (SAR p. 272) when in the professional standard it is stated that at the level of understanding psychotherapy, mentoring, coaching, personality psychology and mediation (topics are included in the study course Supervision Methods - II Conflict Management and Mediation Method) knowledge should be present. This main idea of ECA on knowledge which should be included in the curricula creates the situation where many study courses and their content focuses on topics which are not covered in the professional standard, like the concept of spiritual supervision, historical proto-forms of supervision in the study course Development of the Supervision Concept I - the Tradition of Spiritual Supervision. Although topics include the word "supervision", in this case it is crucial to mention how it is translated. In Latvian version the word "pārraudzība" is used, however in the English version ECA choose to use "supervision" instead of

“monitoring”, thus creating an idea that topics focus on supervision as such which might be misleading.

In the study course Caritative Supervision Practicum it is not clear from where caritative supervision as a term is derived. Study course focuses on the anthropology of the Jewish and patristic Orthodox Church, the tradition of spiritual oversight, operationalisation of the God’s Word of Revelation in the Holy Scriptures, etc. There is no link between these topics and the supervisor’s professional standard.

It is ambiguous how mutuality as a method can be used in the supervision which is covered in the study course Mutuality as a Method in Supervision.

Study course Theology of Caritas in Supervision Practice focuses on such topics as the pre-Christian worldview, patristic anthropology’s understanding of man, the development of Caritative Theology which cannot be linked with the professional standard.

Other study courses where curricula are not directly linked with the professional standard are: Orthodox Anthropology as a Methodological Instrument in Social Work Supervisions, Process of Holistic Personality Healing in the Orthodox Psychotherapy, Universal Communication, Mental Pathologies of a Person.

As a positive aspect to be mentioned is that there are many study courses which correspond to the stated professional competencies: Development of the Supervision Concept II – History of Social Work Supervision, Theory and Practice of Supervision – I Supervision Ethical and Knowledge Standards For Practice, Theory and Practice of Supervision – II Individual Supervision, Theory and Practice of Supervision – III Supervision in Groups and Team Supervision, etc.

List of literature in all of the study courses should be revised as they sometimes include even dozen number of literature sources; there is no specification on units or pages students should focus on; it is advised to strive to include literature in different languages because knowledge of Russian might be very low or none if these are non-Russian speaking students who must use it and as witnessed during on-site visits only few students can communicate in English and reading professional literature might be extremely challenging.

Another issue is that literature sources are outdated. It would be recommended to update the sources of literature and include newest findings on different researches.

Minister Cabinet Regulation No. 512 requires a minimum amount of 6 KP field placement for professional master study programmes. Even though Regulations state that at least 20 KP should be provided in academic study programmes, ECA in this case provides 26 KP. The only information on field placement is briefly described in SAR (p. 277-278) – there are briefly described three field placements but from the study plan (Annex 9.4) it is visible that study programme offers 4 field placements: 1) 1st field placement in the amount of 6 KP; 2) 2nd – 6 KP; 3) 3rd – 8 KP; 4) 4th – 6 KP (full time studies). During part time studies division of the CP between field placement differs from full time studies, it is not clear whether it impacts aims and objectives of each field placement.

ECA has provided an expert team with field placement regulations for each internship. It is also not clear how many hours a student should spend during each field placement. Although, Learning supervision: introductory (observation practice specialty) (6 CP) is devoted to observation of supervision, in the diary student must lead and later describe one intervention lead by him/herself. Another ambiguity is that it is not how student to fit in group and individual supervision in the frame of field placement tasks whereas institution/profession which/who provides field placement work with very specific teams while providing supervision. Later on, in SAR (p. 277 - 278) and in field placement guidelines provided by ECA on request two field placements are described: Supervision practice: learning forms of supervision (individual supervision) (10 CP) and Supervision practice: learning forms of supervision (group, team, organization supervision) (10 CP). According to the study plan (Annex 9.4) four field placement are included (for full and part time studies). Since in the field placement guidelines document it is mentioned that the amount of CP for both aforementioned field

placements are 10 CP, it is not clear why fourth field placement in guidelines is not described. In SAR it is mentioned that students should submit Practice implementation diaries to the Study department (p. 277).

A positive aspect to be mentioned is that in the SAR it is stated that ECA has 20 cooperation agreements with different institutions in the provision of the field placement, although, none of these agreements were provided to the expert group nor as annexes, nor during on-site visit. It is not clear whether these agreements are signed for cooperation with one particular student or these are general agreements with the institutions on the provision of a field placement.

[2] The ECA uses different methods in implementation of studies for developing supervision skills to the maximum extent possible and using epistemologically proven methods for working with a person, groups and organisations in theory and practice. Study methods are diverse. There are lessons of teaching staff, presentations prepared by students, comparison of opinions, panel discussions and narrative analyses. The students work for example in different kinds of workshops, they practise communication and interaction skills, self-confidence and teamwork. They study logical thinking and argumentation, methods of "mutual recognition" or problem solving holistically. ECA uses representatives of the helping profession from other countries to introduce the supervision profession into the unified European Social Programme and students can see supervision in the bed of European social problems.

Knowledge and skills are acquired and evaluated following the 10-point scale adopted in the Republic of Latvia. The evaluation is based on the cumulative system. The development and defence of the students' research work is carried out in accordance with the methodological instructions of "ECA methodical instructions for the development of study works and final theses". The results of exams and tests are analysed twice a year after the test results have been collected. Students have done well in their studies. It is possible for students to increase their grade.

During the evaluation visit to ECA, it became abundantly clear that teaching and learning there is student-centred, often even individual. Students' voices and views are heard. The aim is to rectify any shortcomings quickly. Students are also represented in ECA bodies. Students appreciate their university and are ready to come there for further education. They also recommend ECA to new students.

During the evaluation visit, students expressed their satisfaction with the support received during their study programme and the communication with teaching and administrative staff.

[3] ECA makes surveys about the satisfaction of the students, employers and graduates. comments are taken into account and all comments and repairs will be handled by ECA as soon as possible. The results of the surveys can be seen as good. By the site-visit we only heard positive feedback from the study programme, studies and also qualification of the graduates.

[4] It is possible for all ECA students to study abroad; it is supported and guided. ECA also organises seminars where students tell about their experiences from their studies abroad. Lately, mobility has been challenging, especially due to the Covid pandemic.

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

ECA has developed and implemented a study programme with a special profile, Supervision (47762). It is a master's level study programme for social workers. In the Supervision study programme, ECA has been able to innovatively combine human and social sciences standards and open spiritual and theological perspectives at the same time. Supervisors achieve competence in organising and managing the supervision process individually, in groups and in organisations.

There is lack of proof that supervision is based on the need for integrative theological methodology

in research, knowledge of the anthropological approach, including knowledge of patristic anthropology as professional standard do not require such competencies and justify this statement. Not only aforementioned statements are not included in the professional standard but also questions the change of the direction of the professional standard competencies by stating that it is necessary to abandon the psychological discourse and the use of humanistic psychology in supervision.

The literature sources are outdated, study course description includes dozens of literature without specifying chapter or pages students should focus on. The CP between field placement differs from full time studies, it is not clear whether it impacts aims and objectives of each field placement. Since in the field placement guidelines document it is mentioned that the amount of CP for both aforementioned field placements are 10 CP, it is not clear why fourth field placement in guidelines is not described.

The self assessment report of ECA clearly defines the objectives, tasks and required knowledge, skills, and competences of the master's degree programme in Supervision, the modules and study courses included in the programme and their evaluation.

The ECA uses different methods in implementation of studies. Teaching and learning at the ECA is student-centred, often even individual. Students' voices and views are heard. The aim is to rectify any shortcomings quickly. Students are represented in ECA bodies. They have the possibility to study abroad.

STRENGTHS:

- 1) In the ECA self assessment report and material ECA clearly defines the objectives, tasks and required knowledge, skills, and competences of the master's degree program in Supervision (47762), the modules and study courses included and their evaluation as well.
- 2) ECA emphasises scientific and practical supervision skills and research skills in the Supervision study program.
- 3) The study program opens possibilities for students to continue their studies at doctoral level.do doctoral studies
- 4) The study process in ECA is student-centred. Students' voices and views are heard in the study process and in the life of the Academy.
- 5) In the study program Supervision is a holistic approach of social work and supervision and the emphasis on persona.

WEAKNESSES:

- 1) Lack of a study course which would provide knowledge and skills on environmental protection and civil defence.
- 2) Controversial statement on the needed competencies for supervisors contradicts requirements stated in the supervisor's professional standard and sufficiently changes focus of acquired competencies needed for supervisors in the study programme.
- 3) The guidelines for the field placement are unclear for full time and part time students.

3. Resources and Provision of the Study Programme

Analysis

[1] Resources and provisions, available for the Professional master study programme "Supervision", are described in ECA SAR (p. 284 - 290) and information obtained during the expert on-site visit, including the tour of the material technical base.

The resources that are accessible, including books in the library, materials onsite in the academy and technical provision, scientific support, comply with the specific features and the conditions for the implementation of the Professional master study programme "Supervision" and ensuring the achievement of learning outcomes. The financial provision is in place and according to the needs of the amount of the students. According to SAR (p. 288) the source of funding for the ECA study

programme is the tuition fee. The library provides students with the necessary study literature. The availability of educational literature is good, however, it should be concluded that the literature and other study material related to the study programme need to be updated. Scientific databases are available.

Study information is available for students. During the assessment visit it was stated that study plans and study programme course descriptions are available to students at the academy. The student familiarizes himself / herself with the content of the study plan (full time studies and part time extramural studies) and courses of his chosen study programme. Study plans and course descriptions should be updated.

[2] N/A

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

The study provision, material, technical provision, informative provision, and financial provision comply with specific features and the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and ensuring the achievement of learning outcomes. The resources are easily accessible to students. Scientific databases are available. The academy should consider all possibilities to update the literature related to the study programme "Supervision".

STRENGTHS:

1) ECA has a good infrastructure and material provision required for a successful study process.

WEAKNESSES:

1) The academy should update the literature related to the study programme.

4. Teaching Staff

Analysis

[1] According to the SAR (p. 291), the changes in the composition of the teaching staff since the previous assessment of the study programme were minimal: "one visiting associate professor has been elected as a professor; the "Social change management" course is taught by a visiting professor from Klaipeda University (Lithuania), currently this course is also taught by a professor from Latvia; in the "Business management" module an expert from the European Commission for Social and Economic Affairs, a long-time general secretary of LBAS (Latvian Free Trade Union Confederation)." New staff was identified to replace the missing ones. As some staff are undergoing doctoral studies in relevant areas connected with their course load it is assumed that they will be able to fill in positions made available, if the situation requires. Expert evaluation is that the HEI undertakes measures to fill the gaps when changes in the composition of the teaching staff occur.

[2] The teaching staff, in general, meet the conditions of the implementation of the study programme and the requirements of regulatory acts. and have qualifications similar to the courses they are teaching. There are 14 teachers in the Supervision study programme, many of them involved with the association of supervisors (SAR, p. 306). However, the publication track of practitioners is limited. Expert evaluation is that teaching staff are well prepared to achieve the aims and learning outcomes of the study programme.

[3] N/A

[4] The HEI has mechanisms ensuring that teaching staff is involved in the development and achievement of the aims and objectives of the study programme. As most of the teaching staff has

academic, professional and research work experience. they comply with the requirements of regulatory acts. The participation of the institution in various network organisations ensures that the teaching staff has opportunities (e.g. Erasmus+ teaching exchanges, projects, etc.) to adjust the content of their courses to the European social policies and recommendations. Good command of English language would allow more teachers to avail of the teaching opportunities (in the reporting period only 4 did). There is solid collaboration with the association of supervisors as some of the teaching staff are members of the association as well.

Some of the teaching staff did not publish any article in the previous six years in peer-reviewed journals, while those who did, published more than 90% of their articles in one journal (Tiltai/Bridges) which is edited by University of Klaipėda (Lithuania), a partner university or the Scientific Proceedings of Latvian Christian Academy. This situation raises questions about the unequal distribution of publication efforts among the teaching staff. The publications of the teaching staff comprise mainly research reports, articles in regional/local journals.

[5] The HEI has several mechanisms in place to promote collaboration between the teaching staff members, such as: Regular Theoretical Seminars, participation in international research projects, ERASMUS+ teaching exchanges, collaboration of master level lecturers with experienced teachers. Expert evaluation is that these mechanisms are functional.

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

The teaching staff complies with the Law on Higher Education Institutions in Latvia and most of the staff involved in the programme have had research activity in the previous 6 years. However, publication efforts in international journals need to be improved. The teaching staff, in general, has qualifications similar to the courses they are teaching. The participation of the institution in various network organisations ensures that the teaching staff has opportunities (e.g. Erasmus+ teaching exchanges, projects, etc.) to adjust the content of their courses to the European social policies and recommendations. Good command of English language would allow more teachers to avail of the teaching opportunities.

STRENGTHS:

- 1) The teaching staff has academic, professional and research work experience and they comply with the requirements of regulatory acts.
- 2) Collaboration with international partners ensures opportunities for teaching staff.
- 3) Collaboration with the association of supervisors

WEAKNESSES:

- 1) When taking into account all the programmes, there are some teachers with a high workload.
- 2) Some teaching staff did not publish any article in the previous six years in peer-reviewed journals, while those who did, published more than 90% of their articles in 2 journals.
- 3) In the reporting period only 9 teaching staff taught at EU universities

5. Assessment of the Compliance of the Study Programme "Supervision"

Requirements

1. The sample of the diploma to be issued for the acquisition of the study programme complies with the procedure by which state-recognised documents of higher education are issued.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Appendixes: SUPERVĪZIJA Mag_diploms.pdf

2. Documents confirming that the higher education institution/ college will provide the students with the options to continue the acquisition of education in another study programme or at another higher education institution/ college (a contract with another accredited higher education institution/ college), in case the implementation of the study programme is discontinued.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Appendixes: Sad.Līgums(studenti)_SUPERVĪZIJA_RISEBA_EN.pdf

- 3 3. Document confirming that the higher education institution/ college guarantees to the students a compensation for losses if the study programme is not accredited or the licence of the study programme is revoked due to the actions of the higher education institution/ college (actions or failure to act) and the student does not wish to continue the studies in another study programme.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Appendixes: Apliecinājums_zaudējumu kompensācija_2-9-49_EN.docx

- 4 4. The teaching staff members involved in the implementation of the study programme are proficient in the official language in accordance with the regulations on the level of the official language knowledge and the procedures for testing official language proficiency for performing professional duties and office duties.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

High educated academic staff. The study program is implemented in Latvian language.

- 5 5. The teaching staff members to be involved in the implementation of the study programme have at least B2-level knowledge of a related foreign language, if the study programme or any part thereof is to be implemented in a foreign language.

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

- 6 6. At least five teaching staff members with a doctoral degree are among the academic staff of an academic doctoral study programme, at least three of which are experts approved by the Latvian Science Council in the respective field of science. At least five teaching staff members with a doctoral degree are among the academic staff of a professional doctoral study programme in arts.

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

- 7 7. The academic staff of the academic study programme complies with the requirements set forth in Section 55, Paragraph one, Clause 3 of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

- 8 8. The sample of the study agreement complies with the mandatory provisions to be included in the study agreement.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

Appendixes: SUP_Studiju līgums_EN.pdf

- 9 9. The descriptions of the study courses and the study materials have been prepared in all languages in which the study programme is implemented, and they comply with the requirements set forth in Section 56.1, Paragraph two and Section 56.2, Paragraph two of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The program is implemented in Latvian language.

- 10 10. The study programme complies with the valid professional standard or the requirements for the professional qualification (if there is no professional standard required for the relevant occupation) provided that the completion of the study programme leads to a professional qualification.

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

Study programme is mapped in accordance with the professional standard Supervisor (approved on 12.06.2019), some non-compliances were identified : 1) lack of proof that supervision is based on the need for integrative theological methodology in research, knowledge of the anthropological approach, including knowledge of patristic anthropology as professional standard do not require such competencies and justify this statement; 2) ECA statement that it is necessary to abandon the psychological discourse and the use of humanistic psychology in supervision, despite the fact that professional standard requires this competence. Thus, it is strongly advised that study courses would include only competencies stated in the professional standard by reviewing what is taught in the study programme in order to avoid teaching unnecessary competencies.

- 11 11. Academic study programmes provided for less than 250 full-time students may be implemented and less than five professors and associated professors of the higher education institution may be involved in the implementation of the mandatory and limited elective part of these study programmes provided that the relevant opinion of the Council for Higher Education has been received in accordance with Section 55, Paragraph two of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

- 12 12. The study programme complies with the State Academic Education Standard or the Professional Higher Education Standard.

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

ECA´s SAR p. 268 describes the standards. The expert group has analysed the standards according to the study program.

The Supervision study program is implemented in accordance with Minister Cabinet Regulation No. 512 "On the state standard of second-level professional higher education" (lv - <https://likumi.lv/ta/id/268761-noteikumi-par-otra-limena-profesionalas-augstakas-izglitiba-valsts-standartu>).

ECA must make sure in the Supervision study program, that for those students, who have not acquired the knowledge in environmental protection and civil defense during earlier studies, they must get it in this program (the Law on Environmental Protection and the Law on Civil Defense in Latvia). The knowledges of the environmental protection and civil defense are required mostly in the previously studies of the students, because the admission requirements to the Supervision study program are (ECA, SAR, p.267): Complete higher education (at bachelor's and master's level) in a state-accredited study program in social and human sciences or health care, or social welfare, or teacher education and educational sciences, or humanitarian sciences; and at least 4 years of professional work experience (according to the requirements of the Association of National Organisations for Supervision in Europe (ANSE)). Completed professional further education program in supervision, caritative supervision, or comparable experience to it in supervision, or completed professional higher education with a specialization in supervision. In these cases the required knowledges should include to the current studies.

- 13 13. The joint study programmes comply with the requirements prescribed in Section 551, Paragraphs one, two, and seven of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education (if applicable).

Assessment of compliance: Not relevant

- 14 14. Each member of the academic staff has either publications published in reviewed editions within the last six years, including international editions (if they have worked for a shorter period of time, the number of publications shall be in proportion to the work period), or artistic creation achievements (for instance, exhibitions, films, theatre performances, and concert activity), or a five-year practical work experience (except for the experience in the implementation of the study programme) in accordance with the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

The ECA has a rule that every member of the staff has to write one scientific article pro two years.

Some teaching staff did not publish any article in the previous six years in peer-reviewed journals, while those who did, published more than 90% of their articles in 2 journals.

- 15 R5 - Overall rating

Assessment of compliance: Partially compliant

To ensure that requirement is assessed as compliant it is necessary to ensure the compliance of the study programme with the requirements specified in the state standard and the requirements specified in the professional standard. The results of teaching staff's scientific activity, publication should be improved.

Requirements (R6-R8)

- 1 R6 - The compliance of the study provision, scientific support (if applicable), informative provision (including libraries), material and technical provision, and financial provision with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and ensuring the achievement of the learning outcomes.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

The study provision, material, technical provision, informative provision, and financial provision comply with specific features and the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and ensuring the achievement of learning outcomes. The resources are easily accessible to students. Scientific databases are available.

All the provisions of the study programme, including scientific, informative, material and technical and financial, are compliant.

- 2 R7 - The compliance of the qualification of the academic staff members, visiting professors, visiting associate professors, visiting docents, visiting lecturers, and visiting assistants with the conditions for the implementation of the study programme and the provisions set out in the respective regulatory enactments.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

ECA has high qualified academic staff. The teaching staff, in general, fully meet the conditions of the implementation of the study program and the requirements of regulatory acts and have qualifications similar to the courses they are teaching. There are 14 teachers in the Supervision study programme, many of them involved with the association of supervisors (SAR, p. 306).

The teaching staff has academic, professional and research work experience and they comply with the requirements of regulatory acts. ECA's collaboration with international partners ensures opportunities for teaching staff. There is collaboration with the association of supervisors.

- 3 R8 - The study programme leading to the master or doctoral degree is based on the advances and findings in the relevant field of science or artistic creation.

Assessment of compliance: Fully compliant

ECA's SAR (p.268-269) states: "The study program ensures the improvement of the professional master degree in social work and the professional qualification "Supervisor", and the acquisition of the acquired knowledge and research skills ensure the ability to work effectively in various social welfare structures, to work in research and in an academic environment. The master study program "Supervision" is developing following the social policy of the European Commission, increasing demand in the labor market for supervisor services."

The scientific base is one of the main points in ECA study programs and education. The ECA has a good network with the Universities on the European level for the scientific cooperation.

Conclusions by specifying the strengths and weaknesses

ECA has developed and implemented a study master's level program with a special profile for social workers, Supervision (47762). In the Supervision study program, ECA has been able to innovatively combine human and social sciences standards and open spiritual and theological perspectives at the same time.

According to the SAR of ECA the program is the innovation of ECA in Latvia and it complies very well with the welfare study field and social services. The program gives for students the Master degree in Supervision and professional qualification is Supervisor. Supervisors have competence in organising and managing the supervision process individually, in groups and in organisations. In the future, supervision will be absolutely essential in the entire welfare sector and in all social services.

As a whole, ECA offers high-quality study programs for supervisors in terms of content and implementation. The self assessment report of ECA clearly defines the objectives, tasks and required knowledge, skills, and competences of the master's degree program in Supervision, the modules and study courses included in the program and their evaluation.

The ECA use different methods in implementation of studies for developing supervision skills to the maximum extent possible using epistemologically proven methods for studying in theory and practice. Teaching and learning at the ECA is student-centred, often even individual. Students' voices and views are heard. The aim is to rectify any shortcomings quickly.

The strengths of the study program are from their nature, the basis and broad features. The weaknesses must be seen and corrected, but they can be corrected in the short term when the study program is renewed annually. This is the reason for Good overall assessment of the study program. ECA has a strategy for increasing the number of students. The Academy should implement it.

The "Supervision (47762)" program at the European Christian Academy (ECA) is a Professional Master's study program designed to prepare specialists for the welfare sector, emphasizing social work and supervision skills. Study programme apply for accreditation following modes: Full time studies / latvian / 2 years, 0 months and Part time extramural studies / latvian / 2 years, 5 months. The distance learning capacity could not be sufficiently assessed, given limited information provided by the institution. However, based on what is available, the material availability and methodology of organising those part-time study forms could be improved further and making sure that it is clear for all involved stakeholders what constitutes part-time study modes. It should be clear what kind of teaching methodology is being applied here because it could be beneficial even for potential students, for example, by making publicly institutions webpages explanation on how exactly these study modes are being implemented. Despite its innovative nature and alignment with societal

needs, the program faces several challenges. These include a small student enrollment, discrepancies in degree formulation, outdated literature sources, and unclear guidelines for field placements. Supervision's need for theological and anthropological methodologies lacks evidence. These competencies, including patristic anthropology, aren't mandated by the professional standard. The teaching staff, while generally qualified, lacks sufficient international publications. Collaboration with international partners and supervisory associations is a strength, but workload disparities and limited publication efforts pose challenges. To enhance the program, ECA needs to address these weaknesses, update study materials, clarify field placement guidelines, and encourage more research publications among its teaching staff.

STRENGTHS:

- 1) ECA has been able to innovatively combine human and social sciences standards and open spiritual and theological perspectives at the same time in the Supervision study program.
- 2) The ECA self assessment report and material clearly defines the objectives, tasks and required knowledge, skills and competences, the modules and study courses included in the program and their evaluation as well.
- 3) ECA has a highly qualified academic staff, a good infrastructure and material provision required for a successful study process.
- 4) The study process in ECA is student-centred. Students' voices and views are heard in the study process and in the life of the whole Academy.

WEAKNESSES:

- 1) ECA must make sure in the Supervision study program, that for those students, who have not acquired the knowledge in environmental protection and civil defence during earlier studies, they must get it in this program (the Law on Environmental Protection and the Law on Civil Defense in Latvia).
- 2) The literature and other study material related to the study program need to be updated. It should be done anyway at the beginning of each course when the teacher determines the requirements for completing the course, according to the ECA quality insurance program.
- 3) This study program needs more students, also from abroad.

Evaluation of the study programme "Supervision"

Evaluation of the study programme:

Good

6. Recommendations for the Study Programme "Supervision"

Short-term recommendations

ECA must make sure in the Supervision study program, that for those students, who have not acquired the knowledge in environmental protection and civil defense during earlier studies, they must get it in this program (the Law on Environmental Protection and the Law on Civil Defense in Latvia). Must be implemented until decision on accreditation is being made.

The literature and other study material related to the study program need to be updated. It should be done anyway at the beginning of each course when the teacher determines the requirements for completing the course, according to the ECA quality insurance program.

We recommend that ECA update the written field placement guidelines.

Revise the degree formulation to align precisely with the regulatory framework, ensuring compliance with the standards set forth by relevant authorities.

Review and update the statement on needed competencies for supervisors to align closely with the supervisor's professional standard, ensuring consistency and accuracy, and preserving the program's focus on essential competencies for effective supervision.

Long-term recommendations

Redistribute teaching loads equitably among faculty members, ensuring a balanced workload.

Encourage faculty to publish in reputable academic outlets to enhance the visibility and impact of the institution's research, elevating its academic standing and fostering a culture of high-quality scholarly contributions.

III. Assessment of the Requirements for the Study Field and the Relevant Study Programmes

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Assessment of the Requirements for the Study Field

Requirements	Requirement Evaluation		Comment
R1 - Pursuant to Section 5, Paragraph 21 of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education, the higher education institution/ college shall ensure continuous improvement, development, and efficient performance of the study direction whilst implementing their internal quality assurance systems:		Partially compliant	ECA has been working on development of internal quality system, however identified shortcomings regarding compliance with regulatory framework in study programmes indicates that internal quality system have no sufficient capacity to timely identify and address those issues. The feedback collection from the employers could be strengthened.
R2 - The cooperation with different organisations from Latvia and abroad implemented within the study direction ensures the achievement of the aims of the study direction.	Fully compliant		ECA has a cooperation with other national and international level organisations and institutions regarding the field of social work.

Requirements	Requirement Evaluation		Comment
R3 - Compliance of scientific research and artistic creation with the development level thereof (if applicable).		Partially compliant	Low international profile of publications. For example, no member of the teaching staff published an article in a journal indexed in Web of Science. In general, the research output could be higher especially regarding publishing in peer-reviewed and indexed journals.
R4 - Elimination of the shortcomings and deficiencies identified during the previous assessment of the study direction, if it has been conducted, or the implementation of the provided recommendations.	Fully compliant		Identified shortcomings during previous procedures have been addressed.

Assessment of the Requirements for the Relevant Study Programmes of the Study Field

No.	Study programme	R5	R6	R7	R8	Evaluation of the study programme (excellent, good, average, poor)
1	Caritative Social Work (42762)	Partially compliant	Fully compliant	Partially compliant	Not relevant	Average
2	Social Work (44762)	Partially compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Not relevant	Average
3	Caritative Social Work (47762)	Partially compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Good
4	Social Entrepreneurship Management (47762)	Partially compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Average
5	Supervision (47762)	Partially compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Fully compliant	Good

The Dissenting Opinions of the Experts

Dissenting opinion 27.12.2023 Terttu Pohjolainen

I am very disappointed that, despite working for too long, the Expert group was not able to create a unanimous joint report on ECA's higher education in the field of Welfare. As chairman of the expert group, I have not been able to accept the unnecessary fundamental criticism of the rationale and content of ECA's Welfare study programs. My own expertise is based on the development of diaconal study programs, teaching work and the administration of education at the University of Applied Sciences in the field, as well as international work in the diaconal field (caritative social and health care work). This has given me a strong understanding of the nature of ECA's study programs and their implementation. I feel compelled to submit my next dissenting opinion on the Joint Report of the Group of Experts.

1. ECA's Welfare study programs are innovative and of high quality in terms of content and implementation. The all five study programs deserve at least "good" overall rating. The first joint overall evaluation of the study programs was carried out in July, when the members of the Expert Group were approving the first version of the Joint Report. Most points in the assessments of the study programs at the E-platform were "fully compliant" with the requirements. All five study programs were evaluated as "good" after the vote. As chairman, I had proposed an overall assessment based on the analyses carried out by the members of the Expert group as follows:

- Caritative social work - bachelor study program (42762): excellent
- Social work - professional study program (44762): good
- Caritative social work - master study program (47762): excellent
- Management of social entrepreneurship - master study program (47762): good
- Supervision - master study program (47762): excellent.

The three study programs mentioned above were changed assessment from the "excellent" into "good" in the vote, primarily because members of the group familiar with Latvian law assured that all the programs lacked the content of environmental protection and civil protection legislation. The proposal of the chairman was based on the view that the ECA would be able to add the content of these laws to its programs and teaching in the short term according to the feedback. - A later version of the expert group was completed in October 2023. In it, the overall rating changed in a new vote, from my experience, under the leadership and introduction of the coordinator of AIKA. To this version of October 2023, the ECA responded. According to the ECA's response, the study programs include the studies required by the Environmental Protection and the Civil Defense Law and the study programs are compliance with the requirements specified in the state legislation and standards and the requirements specified in the professional standards.

2. ECA has been successfully developing its Welfare study programs for 30 years, monitoring and implementing Latvian legislation and guidelines in its study programs. Education in the field of welfare and the programs at ECA will be also further developed in accordance with the state laws and requirements of the welfare sector and the profile of the ECA. ECA has also contributed its own expertise to the development of legislation in the field of welfare. In its self-assessment report and in its response to the Joint Report of the Expert group, ECA has thoroughly described how all study programs fully comply in all respects or after the transition period (in 2023) will comply with the State standards of Higher education and Professional standards of social workers. It is stated that ECA fulfils requirements of the Minister Cabinet Regulation No. 512 which include knowledge stated in the Law on Environmental Protection and the Law on Civil Defense. The Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers Nr. 305 "Regulations for the state standard of professional higher education" are in use from 13.06.2023. ECA states that the directors of study programs at ECA are working on changes in study courses for their compliance with topical regulations. The new courses will cover the topics on

organization and establishment of companies, management methods, and the basics of business economics. Requirements of the Law of higher education regarding ECA as University of Applied sciences, fully complies the qualification of teachers at ECA with regulatory norms (representatives of social field are 55%). The Law of Social services and social assistance will be implemented. ECA has proven true that Practical training guidelines are set out in detail, aims and objectives correspond to the professional standards. Study courses are structured in compliance with the social worker's professional standard, which was approved on 14.10.2020. After the ECA's response, there is not the slightest reason to doubt the legislative basis for the content or implementation of the study programs in the field of Welfare or compliance with the guidelines issued by the state. I consider it irresponsible and incompetent for the Expert Group to write that the study programs at ECA would not meet the legal requirements.

3. I have to say, with great humility and honesty, that I am extremely disappointed in my work as the Chairperson of the Experts Group. During the summer, I was unable to get the Expert group to work towards a consensus or common understanding of the Joint report. The report became an illogical and contradictory entity. The assessment period was unreasonably long. It created extra work for AIKA, undue concern for ECA, and far too much work for the members of the Expert Group. We received proper feedback from AIKA and started making corrections to the first version. On that occasion, apparently with good intentions, the coordinator began strongly steer the work of the expert group and its content, changed the roles of its members, and led the implementation of the new overall evaluation of the study programs. The chairperson was the underdog and pressured to give up many of own views on the content of the study programs. On this way the criticism could carry more weight in the Joint report. Because of the haste, the chairperson had to accept the diverse and extensive criticisms contained in the Joint Report, which the chairperson (me) largely never wanted to sign. But we had to give out the new Joint opinion (in October). Now I find it perfectly understandable, and I accept, that the ECA responded to 218 paragraphs in the Joint Report. In my opinion, the ECA's response complements the ECA's self-assessment report in many respects and it is a very important document to describe the ECA's Welfare study programs.

4. Within the expert group, strong criticism was directed at ECA's anthropological and multidisciplinary scientific and practical teaching of welfare studies. In the Joint report is said that ECA has been able to combine the standards of the human and social sciences in the study programs and at the same time open the theological perspective as an innovative source of social work science and practice. However, there was strong criticism of this view. It was even claimed that Welfare study programs would not meet the professional requirements of social workers if they were accompanied by studies referring to theology. It was seen as a "significant risk that certain necessary competencies required by professional standards have not been adequately addressed". ECA in contrast states that the study programs include theology because it supports pluralism of sciences, it builds meaningful bridges between results of social sciences and humanities and that theological courses fully comply to necessary knowledge, skills and competences mentioned in the Professional standards. In its response, ECA has been able to describe the importance of practical theology in teaching of client-oriented social work theory and practice in various study programs. And the competence produced by the study programs is undeniably good based on feedback from students, graduates and working life.

5. The Academy has founded innovations which are systemic and methodologically approved approach to the social work professions. ECA practices an anthropological approach to a client and social workers professionally activates clients. At ECA ethical questions are discussed in several study courses. ECA states that Ethics is not just a formal code in the Welfare study programs. It supports caring and supportive understanding of human personality and respect for human beings. The ethical foundation of the Welfare studies at ECA combines Christian anthropology with the starting points of social work. The study course "Patristic anthropology" as a methodological tool in working with the client with "charity", helps a social worker to solve client's problems creatively. The

methodology supports the learning of scientific knowledge and professional skills. ECA states that the Research education in social work science is multidisciplinary, guiding critical thinking, analysis, and argumentation. At the side visit at ECA the students and graduates were satisfied, even proud with the education they received. From working life, experts received at side visit only positive feedback on the competence and abilities of the social workers educated at ECA, how good they can help people who are living in various difficulties.

6. In its response, ECA has also described the diverse research of teaching staff, international student and teacher mobility, a European network of 70 organizations for a research partnership, internal quality assurance, cooperation with working life or practical training of students. From these activities the members of Expert group, who were present, had many experiences. Educational activities and their administration are well organized at ECA. However, this does not detract from the fact that ECA always want to develop its operations based on feedback. ECA's diverse cooperation in Europe also aims to create new study programs and enable doctoral studies for students. ECA has stated that the development work is planned and carried out and taken forward systematically.

7. Following feedback from the ECA, the Expert Group voted on whether it had made "Factual errors" in the Joint Report. The voting was technical. It did not change the overall ratings levels of the study programs. Finally, I believe that the above told, as well as the ECA's self-assessment and ECA's response to the Expert Group's Joint Report, require that all ECA's study programs in the field of welfare must have the Overall rating at least the level "good".

Sincerely Terttu Pohjolainen