South East European Project on Policies for Academic Integrity

Final Report

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A study commissioned by Council of Europe Pan-European Platform on Ethics, Transparency and Integrity in Education (ETINED)

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Executive Summary

ES1. Background

Research was conducted between September 2016 and March 2017 to explore policies and procedures for academic integrity in higher education institutions in six countries in South Eastern Europe, Albania (AL), Bosnia & Herzegovina (BA), Croatia (HR), Montenegro (ME), Serbia (RS) and "The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia". The research was commissioned by the Council of Europe as part of the ETINED platform and associated initiatives.

The Terms of Reference for this study included the following objectives and focus:

Objectives:

i) To identify and analyse policies and practices used in SE Europe as regards plagiarism and academic integrity in general;
ii) To identify gaps and challenges but also good examples and success stories that could be shared among States Party to the European Cultural Convention;
iii) Based on the identified good examples, sketch preliminary guidelines which could serve as a reference basis for promoting capacity building in higher education institutions and/or peer-learning on plagiarism.

The study focused on:

i) Analysis of replies to specific questionnaires addressed to staff and students in higher education institutions;
ii) Review, analysis and synthesis of existing documentation of lessons learnt on factors of success or failure of the policies put in place by the universities to foster academic integrity;
iii) Presentation of concrete approaches taken by universities to address the challenge;
iv) Recommendations for action based on good practice examples on how to bridge identified gaps.

An earlier study of 27 EU member states, Impact of Policies for Plagiarism in Higher Education Across Europe (IPPHEAE), conducted in 2010-2013 by some of the same team, provided the starting point and initial resources for the new study.

Visits were made to a range of different HEIs in each of the six countries, which provided opportunities for team members to provide presentations, hold discussions and run workshops with a broad range of stakeholders about this and previous research and about policies for academic integrity in higher education.

Evidence was collected by means of on-line questionnaires for higher education students, teachers and senior managers, interviews, focus groups and analysis of documentary sources. The full report provides details of the findings from the research and makes a number of observations and recommendations appropriate to each country in the study. The main points from the report are summarised below.

ES2. Summary of Findings

As a general rule, education ministries and accreditation and quality agencies in the region do not provide strong guidance or oversight for policies relating to academic integrity. Although there is some evidence that development of procedures for doctoral studies and supervisory duties are being prioritised, there is very little evidence of rigour in policies for managing academic misconduct at bachelor and taught master's levels.

Although student responses were more negative than teachers' responses to questions on pedagogy, the predominant higher educational culture that emerged from the survey in the region appears to be a didactical approach to teaching and learning, with critical thinking and innovation not encouraged in many faculties and institutions. However, clear exceptions to this rule were identified in some faculties and occasionally applied institutionally.

Although there was a strong response to indicate that policies for addressing aspects of academic integrity exist, normally at department or faculty level, is was less clear how consistently the policies are implemented and communicated and therefore how effective they are for serving as a deterrent to academic misconduct.

Different forms of academic misconduct were identified as prevalent across the region and responses suggest that incidents were often not taken as seriously as the gravity of the offences should demand: Cheating in examinations, was often exacerbated by inadequate invigilation; Ghost-writing was reported to be very common, with companies advertising affordable services on campus; Evidence of students paying bribes to lecturers in return for favourable grades emerged independently several times in student focus groups; and plagiarism was often ignored and not seen as a serious problem.

In common with what was found in many other countries in Europe, collusion and sharing of assessed student work that was intended to be individual, appears to be seen as an acceptable practice in the region. Responses suggest this this is perceived as a legitimate way for students to support peers, learn from each other and develop knowledge and skills.

When asked about evidence of preventative measures, most respondents interpreted this in a punitive way, referring to software for detection of plagiarism or sanctions for integrity breaches rather than considering educational initiatives to encourage integrity.

Several examples of effective practice were identified across the region. Some South Eastern European institutions had developed strong ties with universities elsewhere in the world and had adopted codes of practice and ethics in common with their international partners. A strong awareness of the need for academic integrity and effective pedagogical practices were apparent across one small institution and in one faculty within a larger institution visited in the region. It would be useful if these successes could be shared with other institutions and lessons learnt built upon across countries and institutions.

It became clear that it was relatively common for training to be provided for students in academic writing, use of sources and ethical practices, but almost all respondents agreed there should be much more information and education for both students and teachers about all aspects of academic integrity. This was confirmed by questions in the survey exploring the concept of plagiarism, which showed that many students, and a few of the teacher participants, demonstrated lack of understanding of how to make use of academic sources.

On the positive side, many of the academic participants in the research from the six countries showed keen interest in this study and some were themselves engaged in international research to enhance educational practices and ethical approaches to research.

ES3. Summary of Recommendations

National governments, education ministries, accreditation and quality agencies, should proactively provide oversight for and guidance in strengthening policies and procedures for academic integrity in higher education institutions as a crucial component of quality assurance for both public and private higher education institutions. Research and development in academic integrity policies and systems should be encouraged, ideally through the provision of small grant funding.

Given the evidence from this research about the prevalence of contract cheating and ghost-writing, it is recommended that national governments consider introducing legislation to make contact cheating illegal, as a means of deterring students from using such services and sending a strong message to companies and individuals who support this very serious form of cheating.

National governments should consider engaging with (text-matching / similarity checking) software companies to negotiate an affordable nation-wide license for use across the higher education sector.

Ministries of Education in the region should facilitate communications between institutions within the country and across national borders in order to learn from positive experiences and share ideas that have proved effective in countering corruption and academic malpractice.

To address the disparity in policies and practices across different faculties in HEIs, institutional leaders should initiate an internal review of local policies and practices to coordinate the development and implementation of common institutional strategy, policies and systems and guidelines for encouraging and upholding academic integrity.

Supervision and oversight arrangements for formal examinations should be strengthened as a means of discouraging cheating. Training should be provided for academic staff, thesis supervisors and invigilators in order to improve academic integrity and professional educational skills. Potentially institutions within one area could organise shared seminars and workshops.

Each institution should take responsibility to ensure that students at all levels are suitably guided and progressively educated on matters of honesty and integrity, academic writing and appropriate use of academic sources.

Should it be possible to acquire software tools for aiding the detection of plagiarism and collusion between students, the institution needs to develop clear policies for how the tools should be deployed and guidelines for the interpretation and use of the outputs.

The institution should take all measures possible to deter cheating in whatever form it may take, including essay mills / contract cheating / ghost-writing, plagiarism and examination cheating.

Regarding pedagogical practices, the institution should discourage rote learning by aspiring to provide up-to-date learning experiences at all levels of study, where critical thinking is valued and teaching, learning and assessment are rewarding and inspirational.

The institution should mobilise representatives of the student community as valued partners in the challenge to reduce all forms of student cheating.

The institution should consider establishing procedures for “whistleblowing” to allow the reporting of cases of academic misconduct, particularly from students.

Academic staff must take responsibility for their own conduct as role models for the next generation of professionals. They should commit to integrity: fairness, consistency, honesty, transparency in both their professional and private lives.

Academic staff should ensure that all students they are teaching or supervising are aware of the value and importance of learning and scholarship and motivated to maximise their attainment fairly and honestly.

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) should be a requirement for all academic staff, in order to keep up to date with their subject, educational developments, pedagogical practices and institutional policies.

Academic staff should ensure that all suspected cases of academic misconduct are handled according to the institutional policies and procedures that ensure transparency, fairness and consistency for all students.

ES4. Concluding Remarks

Although there are clear challenges to higher education in this region, which encompass cultural, financial and organisational dimensions, the research participants provided sound evidence of an appreciation of what needs to be achieved and the will to undertake the necessary reforms.

The AIMM (Academic Integrity Maturity Model) metrics, calculated using survey responses from students, teachers, senior managers and national representatives, indicate that, despite all the challenges identified, these six countries are broadly comparable with countries within the 27 EU member states surveyed under IPPHEAE in terms of the maturity of policies for academic integrity in higher education institutions (details are in Appendices 1 and 2).

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Academic integrity is central to maintaining standards and quality of education at all levels. Recent studies in Europe and elsewhere in the world have demonstrated that more needs to be done globally to address threats to educational integrity from different forms of fraud, corruption and malpractice in higher education (IPPHEAE project reports, Lancaster & Clarke 2016, Glendinning 2016, Bretag and Mahmud 2014, Daniel 2016, QAA 2016).

In recognition of this situation, in 2015 the Council of Europe (CoE) established the Pan-European Platform on Ethics, Transparency and Integrity in Education (ETINED). One of the initiatives of ETINED is to extend the European Union (EU) funded research conducted in 2010-2013, Impact of Policies for Plagiarism in Higher Education Across Europe (IPPHEAE), of 27 EU countries to other regions in Europe.

The South East European Project on Policies for Academic Integrity (SEEPPAI) is the first of these new regional studies. The six countries included in this study are Albania (AL), Bosnia and Herzegovina (BA), Croatia (HR), Montenegro (ME), Serbia (RS) and "The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia". Key members of the team undertaking the new study were involved in the original IPPHEAE research (Dr Irene Glendinning from Coventry University, UK; Dr Tomáš Foltýnek and Ms Dita Dlabolová from Mendel University in Brno, Czech Republic).

It is notable that five of the countries in the new study were part of the former Yugoslavia, therefore can be considered to have a common historical basis. However Albania has a very different historical background to the other countries in the study, having been under a "tyrannical" communist regime, allied with China with limited contact with the other countries in the region and lack of western European influence between the early 1950s and 1992 (Lambert 2016).

1.2 Previous research

The methodology adopted for the IPPHEAE project formed the basis of this new research. The previous project and subsequent related research included a mixed methods survey that generated over 5000 survey responses from higher education institutions in 27 EU countries (excluding Croatia, which was not EU member in the data collection period). The research explored policies nationally and institutionally for deterring and detecting academic dishonesty, focusing on bachelor and masters levels rather than doctoral studies and research. The findings revealed some examples of effective practice, but also showed that there are inconsistencies in how policies are implemented, both within and between institutions, in every EU country studied (IPPHEAE results).

The analysis demonstrated weakness in policies in many of the participating institutions. Where policies were in place there was often lack of understanding and little transparency. It was recommended by the majority of participants that the provision of more information and training about policies, penalties, for both students and academic teachers would raise awareness and help to develop scholarship and encourage a culture of academic integrity (Glendinning 2013).

Although IPPHEAE was initially concerned with plagiarism at bachelor and masters levels, the scope of the final study became rather broader: it made sense to consider other forms of academic dishonesty together with plagiarism; in some countries and institutions the policies and actions were focused on doctoral studies and research level rather than expecting students to understand about academic integrity and develop scholarly skills earlier in their education; in HEIs where the

predominant form of assessment was by formal examination, the major threat to integrity was cheating in examinations, increasingly using communications technology. All such elements are central to investigations in the new study.

More recent developments in this field have exposed contract cheating as a growing lucrative commercial sector supplying custom-made assignments and essays to order for students (Clarke & Lancaster 2006, Lancaster & Clarke 2016, Bertram-Gallant 2016, QAA 2016). This represents a vast industry potentially affecting every higher education institution in every country and is a global, rapidly expanding extremely serious form of student cheating. Contract cheating is very difficult to detect and will be even harder to eradicate. Although this was reported in the earlier research results as a problem in some EU countries, the threats to educational integrity from contract cheating have grown substantially since that time. It is important to explore in this new research to what extent the South East European countries in the new study have been impacted by this phenomenon and how they are responding.

In parallel with the work of CoE in establishing ETINED, the International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP/UNESCO) has created the platform ETICO and provided training and support for countering the broad range of types of corruption in education. In conjunction with other bodies, including the USA-based Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA), several seminars and initiatives have been commissioned to raise the awareness of threats and solutions internationally. The culmination of the recent activities was the publication of an advisory report by Sir John Daniel (2016), which sets out a series of recommendations for how quality assurance and accreditation agencies could play a key part in helping to monitor and enforce measures for improving integrity and addressing corruption globally. This report is very relevant to the South East Europe study.

Other earlier relevant research concerning any of the six countries provides an important starting point and helps to direct the new research. Some of the most impactful studies in recent years have come from comparative statistics on corruption created by Transparency International (TI) (TI 2013, 2015). The 2015 TI Corruption Perception Index (CPI) scores and ranks for the six countries under study are illustrated in Table 1.

Country	Score	Rank
Croatia (HR)	51%	50th
Montenegro (ME)	44%	61st
"The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia"	42%	66th
Serbia (RS)	40%	71st
Bosnia and Herzegovina (BA)	38%	76th
Albania (AL)	36%	88th

Table 1: Transparency International Corruption Perception Index (CPI) 2015

In Table 1 CPI 100% means "very clean" and 0% means "highly corrupt". 168 counties were scored and ranked.

These scores provide evidence of a general ethos in public life in these countries with endemic nepotism, bribery, corruption and dishonesty, but to different degrees across the region. It will be interesting to compare these scores and rankings with the findings from the SEEPPAI study on

academic integrity in higher education. Two quotations from the TI report highlight problems in South Eastern Europe, including the countries that are the subject of SEEPPAI:

> *"…very worrying is the marked deterioration in countries like Hungary, FYR of Macedonia, Spain and Turkey. These are places where there was once hope for positive change. Now we're seeing corruption grow, while civil society space and democracy shrinks." (TI 2015, P13).*
>
> *"Corruption remains a huge challenge across the region, often going hand in hand with repression. In low-scorers Hungary, Poland and Turkey (which has plummeted in recent years along with Spain) politicians and their cronies are increasingly hijacking state institutions to shore up power, a worrying trend also affecting the Balkans." (TI 2015, P13).*

With reference to the TI web site, although not as recent, of specific relevance to SEEPPAI is the TI's Global Report on Education (2013). Although Bosnia and Herzegovina scores well below the global average on "Percentage of people who paid a bribe in education", this country scored the second highest with score of almost 4 on "Perceptions of corruption in education" (TI 2013, P8). Perceptions of Corruption in Education are measured on scale of 1=Not at all to 5=very; as a comparison UK scored about 2.5, global average was 3.

Several specific studies have been conducted recently on aspects of corruption in education in the Balkan region, including

> A study considering the role of the media in highlighting corrupt practices in "The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" (Hajrullai 2015).
>
> A study involving a survey conducted by the Anti-Corruption Student Network in South East Europe, which explored bribery and corruption in education and developed a toolkit for students in Macedonian (ACSN SEE 2015). The toolkit provides guidelines for students conducting research in these topics and defined the areas of corruption in need of study as:
>
> - *Cheating*
> - *Textbook Selling*
> - *Bribery*
> - *Enrolment Process*
> - *Dorm Enrolment*
> - *Student mobility*
> - *Financial flows*
>
> (ACSN SEE 2015)
>
> A publication from 2016 focusing on a specific institution in Skopje, but with a slightly broader perspective, which was openly available in English. The author categorised corrupt practices in education as:
>
> - *flagrant illegal acts of bribery and fraud (for example, public procurement fraud);*
> - *practices that provide an inflow of insignificant funds for individuals who do not receive their monthly fees on time or who receive small fees;*
> - *corrupt practices for performing activities under more difficult circumstances (for example, receiving a degree without first passing all the exams);*
> - *practices related to cultural beliefs (for example, the prevailing view that it is justified to give a present in return for a favour) and*

- *the corrupt practices that take place due to incompetence or ignorance (for example, wrongly allocated funds).*

(Zhivkovkj 2016, P17)

A collaborative international research project focusing on doctoral supervision and research funded through Erasmus+ concerning "Enhancement of HE Research Potential Contributing to Further Growth of the West Balkans Region" (Re@WBC Project), which is aiming to enhance skill of the research community in line with EU standards.

Plagiarism by high-profile people has been a regular feature in regional media. Further details are presented in 5.1. (Cultural challenges).

1.3 Scope

As the studies discussed above demonstrate, research on corruption, even when confined to higher education, is still a very broad topic. There are many dimensions that could have been included in this study, but time and budget require that constraints are defined.

The scope of the SEEPPAI study was largely determined in the terms of reference provided by the Council of Europe. The research concerns:

- Six countries in South East Europe: AL, BA, HR, ME, RS and "The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia"
- The Higher Education (HE) sector in these countries
- Strategies and policies for academic integrity and quality assurance in student assessment at all levels of education, nationally and within higher education institutions
- Specific inclusion of policies for plagiarism, cheating in examinations, contract cheating and ghost-writing
- How well the policies are operating in practice
- Perceptions of different stakeholders within higher education - students, teachers, senior management, representatives
- Generating evidence of effective practice and areas in need of reform

The research does not include all aspects within the broader definition of corruption, such as bogus degrees / degree mills, bribery in admissions, student accommodation or nepotism.

2. Objectives and Methodology

2.1 Objectives

In the Terms of Reference for this study provided by the Council of Europe the stated objectives were:

iv) To identify and analyse policies and practices used in SE Europe as regards plagiarism and academic integrity in general;
v) To identify gaps and challenges but also good examples and success stories that could be shared among States Party to the European Cultural Convention;
vi) Based on the identified good examples, sketch preliminary guidelines which could serve as a reference basis for promoting capacity building in higher education institutions and/or peer-learning on plagiarism.

The study focused on:

v) Analysis of replies to specific questionnaires addressed to higher education institutions, staff and students;
vi) Review, analysis and synthesis of existing documentation of lessons learnt on factors of success or failure of the policies put in place by the universities to foster academic integrity;
vii) Presentation of concrete approaches taken by universities to address the challenge;
viii) Recommendations for action based on good practice examples on how to bridge identified gaps.

As stated earlier, the IPPHEAE project that focused on EU countries provided the inspiration for this new study and the approach taken for SEEPPAI was based on the earlier project.

2.2 Methodology

The terms of reference specified that a survey should be conducted in order to understand strategies, policies and practices imposed nationally and within HEIs in the six countries under study. In order to determine not only what policies were in place, but how transparent they were and whether they were operating as intended, it was essential to capture perceptions of different stakeholders both nationally and within institutions.

The survey tools developed for the IPPHEAE project survey provided a suitable starting point. These consisted of separate on-line questionnaires for students, academic teachers and senior higher education managers; a set of questions for conducting semi-structured interviews useful both at national and institutional levels; and prompts for conducting student focus groups. The IPPHEAE questionnaires were made available in 14 different languages.

For this new study a thorough review was conducted of all the questions used in the IPPHEAE questionnaires, focus groups and interviews. Modifications were made in the light of the experience of the IPPHEAE survey analysis, recent developments and the nature of the new study. The revised questionnaires (in English) were uploaded to the secure Bristol On-line Surveys (BOS) platform. Copies of the questions for the students and teachers were then translated into languages relevant to each of the study countries, including providing Latin and Cyrillic alphabet versions where relevant. Each language version was uploaded to the survey platform as separate versions. In total

there were 8 different language versions available on-line for students and 8 for teachers. The decision was taken to provide the senior management questionnaire, the interview questions and the focus group prompts only in English. In the case of senior managers the expectation was that most would be able to respond in English or seek help from a local translator. For delivery of interviews and focus groups, local translators could be made available where necessary.

The main additions to questionnaires compared to the IPPHEAE survey were questions specifically about cheating in examinations and contract cheating. A question about gender was added to the personal details section. Some questions that had not generated useful data for IPPHEAE were either reformatted or removed.

For ease of analysis of responses in different languages, and also considering the expected volume of data, many of the questions were presented as Likert scale questions or sets of radio button options. This decision minimised the textual content and therefore reduced the need to translate answers. To allow triangulation of responses across different types of participants, where relevant the same or equivalent questions were included in the questionnaires for students, teachers and managers.

A few open questions were included in each questionnaire, specifically asking for additional information and suggestions and checking understanding of terminology. The open questions from students' and teachers' questionnaires were translated before being analysed thematically.

The detailed research plan was granted ethical approval after due consideration under Coventry University's research ethics procedures, before the data collection could begin.

Unfortunately the short timescale of the project did not allow for pilot runs of the questionnaires. However the different language versions of the questionnaires were sent for proof-reading and checked for clarity and consistency before they were formally opened. Since similar questionnaires were used for the IPPHEAE study, the IPPHEAE survey can be seen as a pilot for this study. The links to the on-line questionnaires were made available to participants via the project web site and also sent by email together with information about the project, designed for different participants.

The first pages of the questionnaires contained information about the project and "informed consent" information. Participants for focus groups and interviews were asked to sign a paper copy of the informed consent form and also give permission for audio recording.

Contact people in HEIs in each of the six countries were identified through lists of Erasmus+ partner institutions, previous research contacts, by checking institutional web sites and through intermediaries, including Council of Europe members and ETINED participants. Potential participants were contacted via email and given information about the project. The approach taken by the team in order to generate interest in the research was to request visits to HEIs in the study countries with the offer of academic integrity workshops for students and academic teaching staff.

The online questionnaires were used for gathering mostly quantitative data and other methods were employed to capture largely qualitative data, generally during the visits to each of the countries. These methods include structured interviews with senior management at faculty or university level, student focus groups, informal discussion meetings and workshops with staff and students. All interviews and focus groups were transcribed, analysed, compared with quantitative data and relevant findings were included into this report.

Having established contacts in each country with people who saw the project as relevant and were interested in supporting the research, it proved possible to "snowball" requests from these primary contacts to other institutions to request participation in the research.

Before analysing the questionnaire data all the coded responses were downloaded from the BOS platform as Excel worksheets. A data cleansing operation was required for the student and teacher data in order to anonymise and reorganise the 8x2 language sets into 6x2 country datasets (for example some participants from Montenegro had responded to the Serbian questionnaire).

Each coded or numeric question was analysed using statistical tools and graphical representations available within Excel, country-by-country and collectively as appropriate. Text-based answers were translated into English before being analysed, using thematic analysis. The audio files from interviews and student focus groups were transcribed and subjected to textual analysis to extract meaningful quotations on a range of key topics that emerged from the four levels of the survey.

The results from the four levels of data collected were applied to the Academic Integrity Maturity Model (AIMM) to generate a "maturity" score for each country, which was used to compare results with those generated from IPPHEAE for the EU countries studied earlier.

2.3 Limitations

Several factors about the data collection must be taken into account before interpreting the results:

- A minority of higher education institutions in each country responded to the survey
- In institutions that did participate, not all faculties were involved
- To generate interest in the research within the countries under study members of the project team made contact with researchers they or colleagues had worked with before to act as intermediaries
- Participation was entirely voluntary

The above points caution that the results can provide a useful sample to indicate the situation in these countries, but cannot be considered to be representative of all HEIs across this region. From experience of the earlier research, based on the voluntary nature of participation, it is likely that respondents, most of whom took considerable time to complete a lengthy contribution, were more likely to be interested in the subject of the research than those who chose not to participate. The results may tend to show a positive bias because institutions with stronger policies for academic integrity were more likely to participate than those with ineffective policies. However it may also be the case that people who felt strongly about the subject of the research and how their institution / country was responding (positively or negatively) were more likely to participate in the survey.

3. Review of policies and practices concerning plagiarism and academic integrity in universities

3.1 Data collection

In order to get as many responses as possible, the project team asked their contacts to participate in the survey. Some of these people invited associates from other institutions. Besides personal contacts, e-mails were also sent to all vice-deans for education and vice-deans for international affairs of all faculties of all universities in the region. These contact details were collected from publicly available resources (typically institutional web pages). Even though the project team contacted all institutions in the region, only few of them responded and even fewer agreed to participate on the project.

Several higher education institutions in the study region expressed interest in the research and very generously hosted and supported visits by SEEPPAI team members. Over 50 HEIs participated in the study and visits were arranged to 17 HEIs. Table 2 provides a summary of the number of questionnaire responses. Responses from institutions outside the study area were not included in the analysis.

Participant	Language	Alphabet	AL	BA	HR	ME	RS	"The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia"	Other country	Total
Teacher	Albanian	Latin	27			1				28
Student	Albanian	Latin	54					1		55
Teacher	Bosnian & H	Cyrillic		21						21
Student	Bosnian & H	Cyrillic		63					2	65
Teacher	Croatian	Latin			78					78
Student	Croatian	Latin			171				1	172
Teacher	Macedonian	Cyrillic						8		8
Student	Macedonian	Cyrillic						17		17
Teacher	Montenegrin	Latin				4				4
Student	Montenegrin	Latin				1				1
Teacher	Serbian	Cyrillic					18			18
Student	Serbian	Cyrillic				1	13			14
Teacher	Serbian	Latin		3		1	79			83
Student	Serbian	Latin				9	122		1	132
Teacher	English	Latin	3	3	3	3	2	1		15
Student	English	Latin	2	1			1			4
Managers	English	Latin	1	4	4	0	5	1		15
Total Questionnaire Responses			**87**	**95**	**256**	**20**	**240**	**28**	**4**	**730**
			AL	**BA**	**HR**	**ME**	**RS**	**"The former Yugosla**	**Other**	**Total**

						v Republic of Macedonia"		
Total responses from teachers	30	27	81	9	99	9	0	255
Total responses from students	56	64	171	11	136	18	4	460
Total responses from managers	1	4	4	0	5	1	0	15

Table 2: SEEPPAI – Summary of questionnaire responses in different languages

Table 3 details the activities that took place during the visits to each of the six countries during October and November 2016. Taking into account the number of participants in questionnaires, focus groups, interviews and workshops, the team estimates that well in excess of 1000 participants were involved in the research.

Type of Activity	**AL**	**BA**	**HR**	**ME**	**RS**	**"The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia"**	**TOTAL**
Institutions / campuses visited	3	3	6	2	2	1	17
Student Focus Groups	3	3	3	1	2	1	13
Senior Staff Interviews	3	2	5	1	2	2	15
Staff group discussions	3	0	0	2	1	1	7
Student workshops	4	1	0	1	0	1	6
Staff workshops	3	0	3	1	1	1	9
National interviews	0	1	0	0	0	1	2
TOTALS	19	9	17	8	8	8	69

Table 3: SEEPPAI - Summary of visits and activities during autumn 2016

Many attempts were made to engage national level participation during the visits to the region and by email and telephone, but this proved to be very challenging.

Initially at least two contacts in every country, identified using information provided by institutions and CoE, were invited by email to participate in the research, but very few responses were received. The next phase involved telephoning a number of possible contacts. Despite the continuing efforts of phone calls and emails, there were still disappointingly few responses.

3.2 National perspectives on higher education in south east Europe

In the region being studied, there seems to be a strong culture of academic autonomy in higher education with impact on quality assurance. In particular there is a lack of double marking, moderation and oversight of assessment and grading, which has implications for the opportunities to monitor cases of cheating and how they are handled. However, some institutions were found where this autonomy does not apply, particularly those institutions aligned with partners outside the region.

When asked about the predominant culture for teaching, learning and assessment, senior managers provided a range of different responses, which suggested that in their institutions students are encouraged to engage in critical thinking and are given various types of practical and challenging

assessment. However, responses from students (in focus groups and from responses to open questions in the questionnaire), gave the impression of a culture relying largely on rote learning, assessed mainly by formal examinations. Many student respondents made the point that their own views were not valued; for their assessments they were normally expected to memorise and reproduce the notes they had been given by their tutor.

Examples from student focus groups:

- Presented by a PhD student with experience with teaching: *"... they (teachers) are lazy to do good exams where students can't cheat, (…) with some kind of examples, practical, oral exams or something like that. (...) (teachers) just repeat questions through years (..) then ask 'oh, why do they cheat?'."*
- *"(…) it's a problem of teachers and the educational system not making us think. Instead we are just learning facts and just saying what has already been written (...)".*

The teaching, learning and assessment methods have strong influence on the capacity and opportunities for academic misconduct. In a didactical educational culture copying without acknowledgement (and therefore plagiarism) is the norm rather than seen as unacceptable. However several institutions in the region were identified where at least one faculty was distinctive in terms of pedagogy. These good practice examples will be discussed later.

Almost all managers from Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Serbia responding to the questionnaire disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that "national quality and standards agencies monitor plagiarism and academic dishonesty in higher education institutions, with some agreement from Croatia and "The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia". In response to the same question 29% of teachers disagreed, 40% were not sure and just 18% agreed, with a rather higher rate of agreement in Albania (35%) and "The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" (44%). This suggests that responsibility for monitoring may be under the remit of quality agencies in some countries, but no further evidence was found about this.

3.3 Policies related to academic integrity on a national and institutional level

It became apparent during interviews that some national rules affecting quality and academic integrity in higher education are being introduced in parts of the region under study.

In Albania new regulations have been made available on copyright, although these are not specific to education. According to one senior manager the people responsible for drafting the legislation are not familiar with the problems with student cheating currently faced by higher education institutions (Interview AL01). Other interview respondents said they were unclear to what extent these had been implemented and were not aware of any impact so far.

In "The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" (www.mon.gov.mk) the "*Ministry operates a plagiarism control system [that is] mandatory"* (Interview MK03) for master's and doctoral level theses, but there is no provision for students at bachelor level so far.

When deans, vice-deans or teachers at higher education institutions were asked about the policies concerning plagiarism and academic integrity, they typically mentioned these things:

- Code of Ethics
- Ethical committee
- National standards for accreditation (in some countries)

The Codes of Ethics can be set either at faculty or university level. However, the existence of a university level Code of Ethics does not exclude the existence of faculty Regulations of Ethics, which are usually more specific and oriented on particular fields of study. In some countries (Croatia), there are national recommendations on the content of the Codes of Ethics prescribed by the Agency for higher education.

In all countries in the study where the faculties said that they had high autonomy, the academic integrity policies differed by faculty. In some institutions, the policies are not defined at all. In some institutions the policies are defined, but not really followed. Also the management's awareness about academic integrity issues differs between institutions.

In one example faculty managers are convinced that student cheating is uncommon, but when it happens, it is discovered and students are punished by the teacher. Such responses suggest effective control at faculty level. However, students from the same institution provided a completely different view: they described various types of cheating that occur, including contract cheating. They also stated that teachers did not care about such conduct and that cheating is part of their culture.

In contrast, there were a few institutions where management said they were convinced about the necessity of a proactive approach to academic integrity. They described regular training of both students and staff conducted at the beginning of each academic year.

The academic regulations usually include clauses about disciplinary violations, describing what disciplinary procedures to follow when a case is reported by a teacher. A common procedure for institutions in the region is that less serious cases are resolved by the teacher who best understands the case. A typical penalty would be for the student to rewrite an assignment or award a lower mark. Survey responses suggested that some teachers are quite reluctant to report cases to avoid complex and time-consuming processes. Where just the serious cases are reported to the disciplinary committee, it is still up to the teacher to decide whether the case is serious enough and whether or not to take any action. Leaving such decisions to the discretion of individual teachers could lead to discrepancies and lack of consistency. However it emerged that in a few institutions teachers are obliged to formally report even the least severe cases.

At the institutions visited by the project team during this research, a commonly reported model was that the disciplinary committee at faculty level meets at most once per semester to hear a small number of reported cases. It is quite common that no cases are reported which means that the disciplinary committee may not meet for a long time. The sanctions can be serious including expulsion from the university. In one university in Serbia, the expelled students are blacklisted and cannot be enrolled to that university again, even to another faculty. At other universities, it was stated that expelled students are allowed to enrol again and finish their studies.

In Croatia, there is the Ethics Committee in Science and Higher Education, within the Agency for higher education (https://www.azvo.hr/en/ethics-committee-in-science-and-higher-educatio), which has adopted and published an Ethical code for science and higher education. The institutional codes of conduct come from this "central" Ethical code.

Some universities Bosnia-Herzegovina and Albania adopted their ethical rules from western universities (e.g. from their double degree partners) and therefore have a different approach to academic integrity to other institutions in the region. The Ethics Committee of one of the faculties in Croatia monitors the good examples of the practice of the European universities (e.g. University of Birmingham, UK) and it is trying to apply them in practice.

As an example of an institution taking academic integrity very seriously can be stated one particular faculty in Bosna and Herzegovina (later in this report labelled as an *institution B*). They endeavour to prevent academic misconduct, have all processes described in detail and try to handle cases of

misconduct as fairly as possible. They did not want to wait for national accreditation standards, so they asked for Austrian, European and United States accreditation. They also have many of double award degree programmes including with UK and Finland. As a result their quality assurance strategy matches international standards and includes academic integrity policies. Everything is written, all procedures are clear, they revise their policies every year.

In contrast suggestions made during some student focus groups, implied that cheating is common and goes unchallenged in private universities in their country:

- Bosnia and Herzegovina: *"The situation is really bad at private faculties. There is a common joke, that you go to town X to eat 'čevap' there and you come back with diploma."*
- Croatia (in answer to the question "Is there anything else that you think might be useful for us and our research*?"): "(…) and also go to the private universities. There, plagiarism is huge."*

All the questionnaires asked whether respondents' institutions have policies for dealing with plagiarism, academic dishonesty, exam cheating and ghost-written work. The positive responses for all six countries summarised in Table 4 indicate that most participants believe there are policies and procedures in place, although less certainty was evident among the teacher and student respondents. The differences in these responses possibly indicate poor communication inside institutions about the policies, or could suggest that policies are not being followed.

Agreement that "my institution has policies and procedures for dealing with …"	**teachers**	**students**	**managers**
Plagiarism	51%	60%	73%
Academic Dishonesty	55%	59%	94%
Exam cheating	75%	71%	94%
Ghost writing	51%	45%	73%

Table 4: Percentage of respondents who agreed or strongly agreed that their institution has policies and procedures for dealing with different forms of cheating

In comparison, several responses to an open question about what can be done to reduce academic misconduct indicated that existing procedures were not being followed in their institution. Over 28% of the open responses (combined from students, teachers and managers) called for more effective procedures and stricter, more consistently applied penalties, as a way of deterring different forms of cheating. Combining the findings discussed here implies that even where policies are in place, they are often not being applied as intended and not creating sufficient threat to students to discourage cheating.

The focus groups also elicited mixed student responses to the issue of examination cheating. In some of the focus groups, these questions were treated with merriment, with some students laughing when asked. When students in many of the focus groups were individually asked to rate how common they believed cheating on exams was on a scale between 0 (meaning "never") and 10 (meaning "very common"), the average results all converged around 7. Very frank observations were shared by students in many cases. The implication here was that examination cheating was common in many areas or could even be considered as the norm. Students across the focus groups seemed to be largely in agreement that they regularly observed exam cheating taking place.

There was also the suggestion that students treated exam cheating like a game, with their aim being to cheat successfully and outwit the invigilators. There were also claims that obvious cheating was ignored in some cases, with invigilation proving to be very casual, or with the staff present seeming to ignore obvious cheating.

One example from a student focus group is illustrative here of the wider cultural issues that afford examination cheating: *"Some teachers are just lenient and some really don't care. We have teachers who even don't read the papers. One teacher slept on the exam!"*

On the positive side, it is clear that some institutions are looking at measures designed to reduce examination cheating. Examples collected during the SEEPPAI research include the use of cameras to observe and record the conduct of candidates and the introduction of signal jamming equipment to prevent mobile telephone communications.

Contract cheating also provoked lively discussion in student focus groups, although students were not always willing to discuss this issue. Students identified widespread knowledge of services advertising to write assignments for them. The views about whether many students used these services differed, as did opinions on how affordable the pricing of these services was. There was also the suggestion that many classes included a student who would write assignments for other members of the class, although that issue was not consistently explored across the focus groups.

Examples from focus groups:

- *"It's very common."* (multiple times, students laugh and agree). *"There are Facebook groups where you can hire someone. There are numbers in the bathroom stalls for writing seminars and… (..). My friend paid two times."*
- *"I have example of project buying. I have some friends that are at (…) faculty and there is a Facebook group for students of this faculty. And someone asked there: 'how much does it cost someone to write me all the homeworks?'. And they were bidding each other! Someone said like 35 EUR, another 30 and then 25 – and this one got it. There was like an auction offering the lowest price! And actually every homework has its own price. The price also depends on subject and the difficulty of the subject."*

Some students and teachers mentioned that using a ghost-writer was considered to be similar to plagiarism and that if caught, the penalties would be no more serious.

3.4 Student and teacher perceptions of plagiarism scenarios

One key part of the survey for IPPHEAE was designed to establish how well respondents understood the concept of plagiarism and capture their views on whether different forms of plagiarism should be penalised. These questions were also included in the SEEPPAI survey, which allows comparisons to be made between results for the new study and those from EU countries.

Students and teachers were given six scenario variations and had to judge the severity of plagiarism in each case. The scenario used for the six variations is: "*Assuming that 40% of a student's submission is from other sources and is copied into the student's work as described in (a-f) below, indicate your judgement on plagiarism by ticking one of the boxes*". Particular cases were:

A. *word for word with no quotations*
B. *word for word with no quotations, has a correct references but no in text citations*
C. *word for word with no quotations, but has correct references and in text citations*
D. *with some words changed with no quotations, references or in text citations*
E. *with some words changed with no quotations, has correct references but no in text citations*
F. *with some words changed with no quotations, but has correct references and in text citations*

Scenarios A and D are presented for comparison in Figures 1 and 2 because they are of equivalent severity, both cases of serious plagiarism, and therefore should produce the same responses.

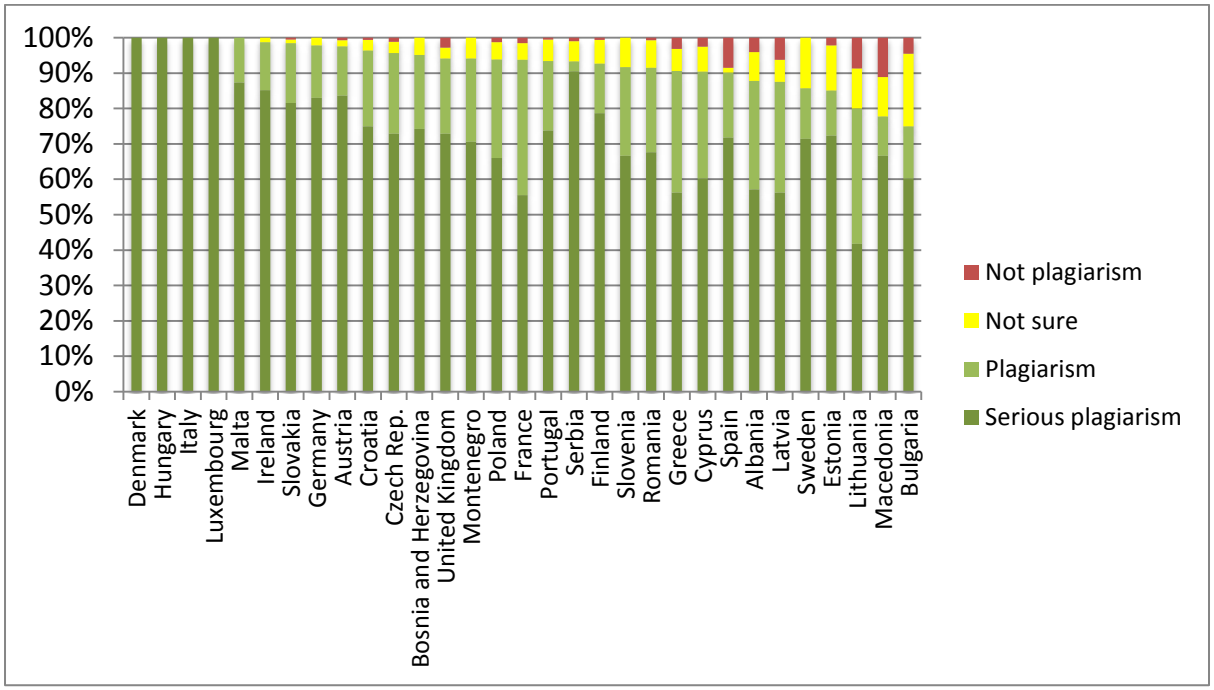

Figure 1: Students' perception of plagiarism in different European countries. 40% copied, word for word with no quotations, references or in-text citations

Figure 1 shows student responses to scenario A, where 40% of the student's submission is copied word for word without the use of quotations. As the chart indicates, the student responses to scenario A are in line with the EU average. The highest level of agreement that scenario A is an example of serious plagiarism or plagiarism, was in Croatia, followed by Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, and then Serbia and Albania. "The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" lies almost at the lowest agreement end of the EU country scale. The results lie within the range of European countries as a whole. This shows that the perceptions of the SEEPPAI sample of students do not differ significantly from results for other EU countries.

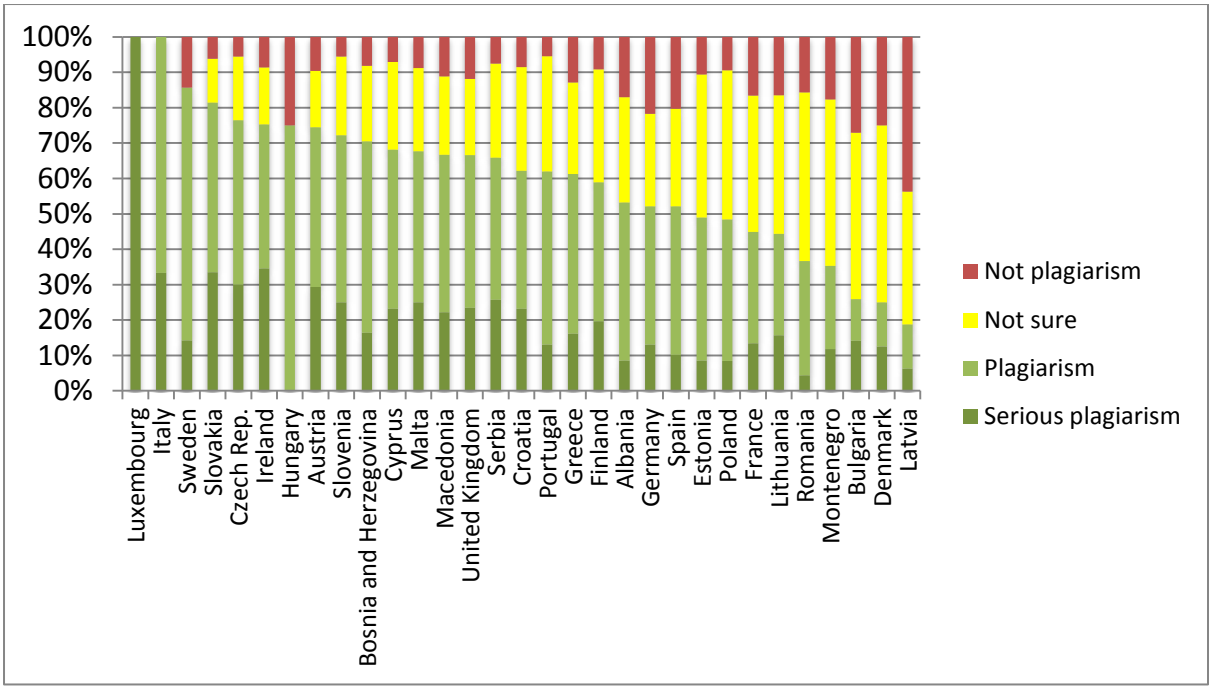

Figure 2: Students' perception of plagiarism in different European countries. 40% copied, some words changed, no quotations, references or in-text citations

Previous research has shown that most of the students from almost all European countries surveyed considered Scenario D as less serious than Scenario A. Figure 2 adds the results from South East Europe region to the previous countries, where the results fall within the previous countries. This means that it is not possible to observe any substantial difference between the countries in SEEPPAI study and Europe in general.

Within the SEEPPAI countries, Bosnia and Herzegovina saw the highest percentage of students understanding that 40% copying with words changed still represented serious plagiarism or plagiarism. The country order was followed by "The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", Serbia, Croatia, Albania. Montenegro appeared near the lower end of the European country rankings.

The results depicted in Figure 2 demonstrate that, despite claims about having had training in academic writing, 39.38% of students in the new study compared to 38.58% of students across the 27 EU countries in the original study, have a poor grasp of source use and referencing.

Responses from teachers to the same questions revealed a slightly more positive pattern in understanding, but still raise concerns. A poor understanding was apparent in a total of 11.62% of teacher respondents in the new study, compared to 17.32% of the teachers in the IPPHEAE study on 27 EU countries.

These results provide evidence that many of the students and some of the teachers in European countries have a mistaken belief that changing a few words in a copied text removes the need to acknowledge the source.

3.5 Evidence from teachers and students on skills, knowledge and training

According to the online student questionnaires responses from all six countries, there were no major difference about when students become aware of plagiarism. In general for all the countries 57% of

students agreed with the statement that *"I became aware of plagiarism before I started my undergraduate/bachelor degree"* (it is lowest in Albania with 37%, highest in Croatia with 63%). Other students become aware of this during their undergraduate/bachelor studies. Those two options together make up 91% of the responses. Less than 10% of students said that they were *"still not sure about this"*

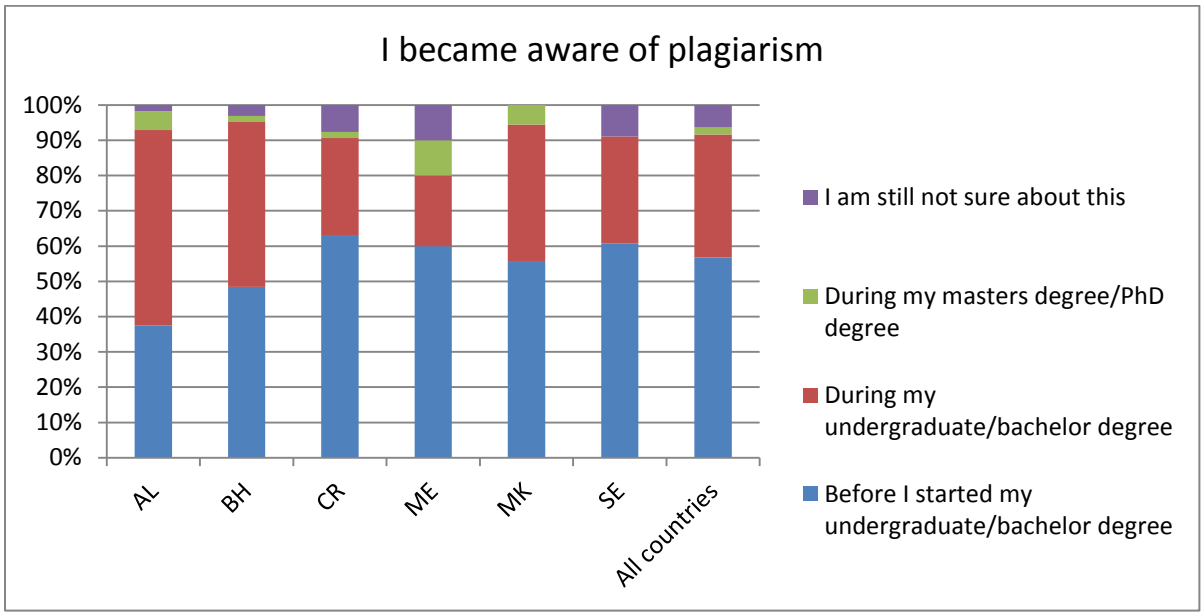

Figure 3: When students become aware of plagiarism

Less than 40% of student respondents across the six countries learned how to cite and reference before they started their undergraduate/bachelor degree, and 53% of student respondents learned this during the undergraduate/bachelor studies, with a similar response for the six countries. No students in Albania and Montenegro said they were not sure about this, which is quite remarkable because in both countries there was at least one student who was still not sure about plagiarism. In total 8% of student respondents said they were still not sure about citing and referencing.

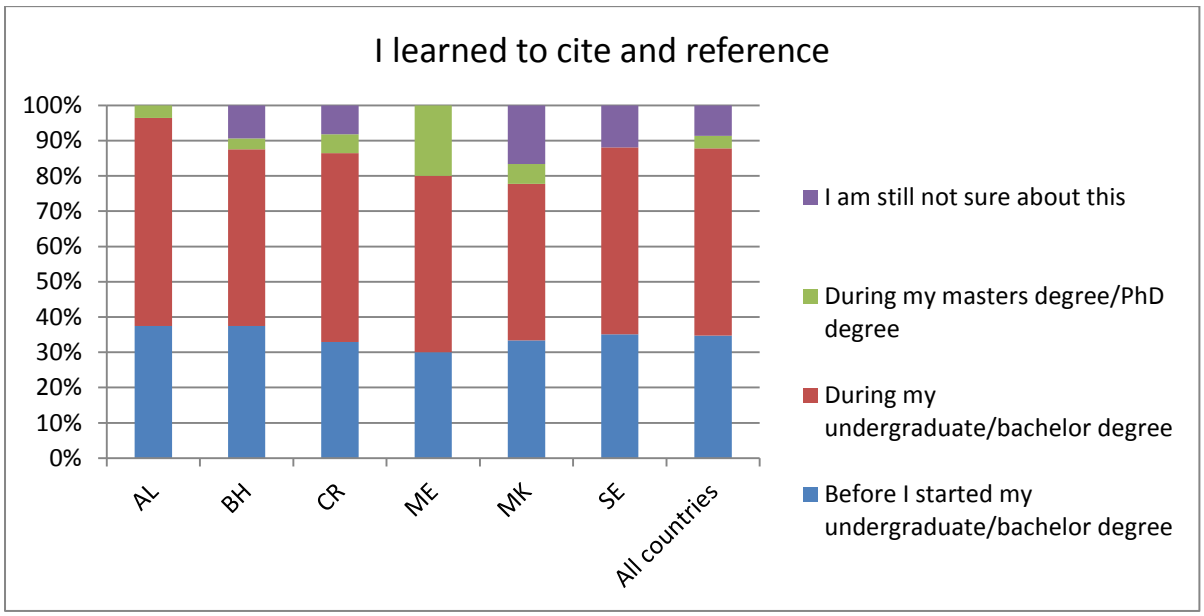

Figure 4: When students learned how to cite and reference

A similar pattern of responses on knowledge about plagiarism and about knowing how to cite and reference was observed in the student focus groups. Students were familiar with such terms as *plagiarism*, *auto-plagiarism* or *ghost-writing* and they were referring to experience from high school.

Some student focus group participants were well informed about aspects of academic integrity and said their teachers strongly encouraged academic integrity and good practice for academic writing. However the same students said that they had friends (with different teachers) who did not know how to cite properly or how to work with academic source material.

Examples from student focus groups:

- *"I know people who copied from another student, but I don't think that it is because they wanted to steal somebody's ideas, but they really just don't understand the importance of respecting copyright and related things."*
- *"We had something to do together, and we had another girl, and she was supposed to write an introduction to the seminar, and she literally copied the whole introduction. And I was like: 'do you understand that you cannot copy the whole book'. And I think she didn't want to copy it, but she didn't understand what she did. She copied someone else's work, and I was like: 'you have to [cite it properly]'."*

Students were asked *"How did you become aware of the seriousness and consequences of plagiarism?"* and *"How did you become aware of the seriousness and consequences of other forms of academic dishonesty (cheating)?".* To analyse the many different responses the options were thematically grouped into: *Written materials* (including web site; course booklet or student guide or handbook; leaflet or guidance notes; posters), *school education* (Workshop / class / lecture; Teacher or supervisor; Information during introductory lectures), *people outside the official education* (Social media; Friends and family; Other students), *anti-plagiarism software* and the last option *"I am not aware of any information about this"*. The last option was chosen by 9% of students from all countries when they were asked about plagiarism and 13% of students in general from all countries when they were asked about other forms of academic dishonesty. Only Montenegro had very different results - 30% of students are not aware of any information about plagiarism and 60% did not know about academic dishonesty (the high ratios from Montenegro have only slight influence on the "All Country" totals due to the low number of responses).

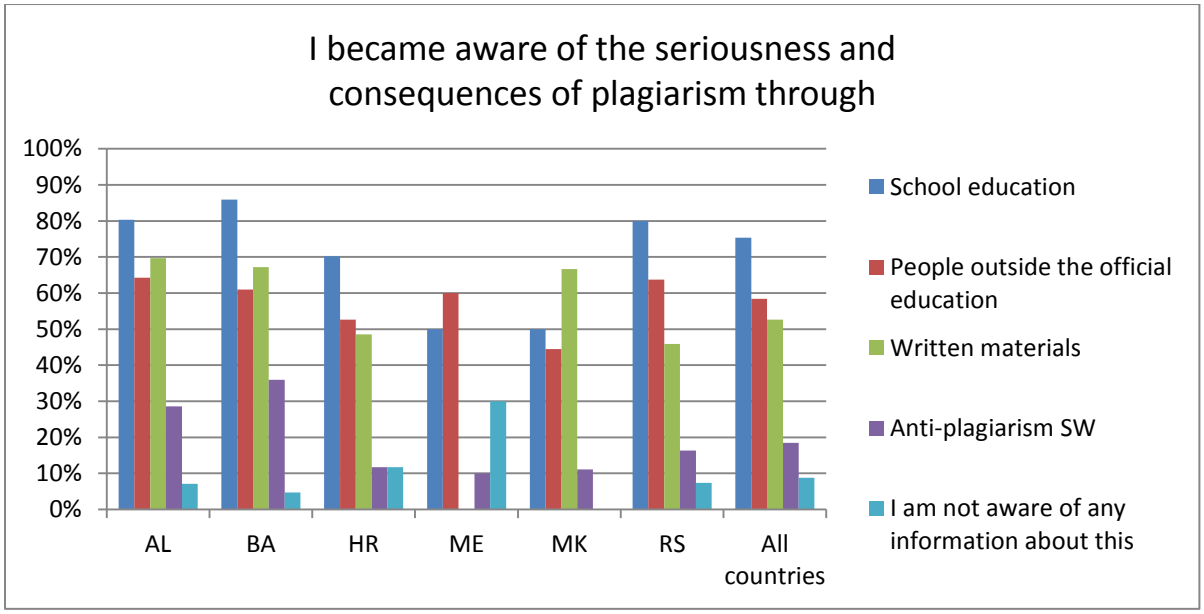

Figure 5: How students became aware of the seriousness and consequences of plagiarism

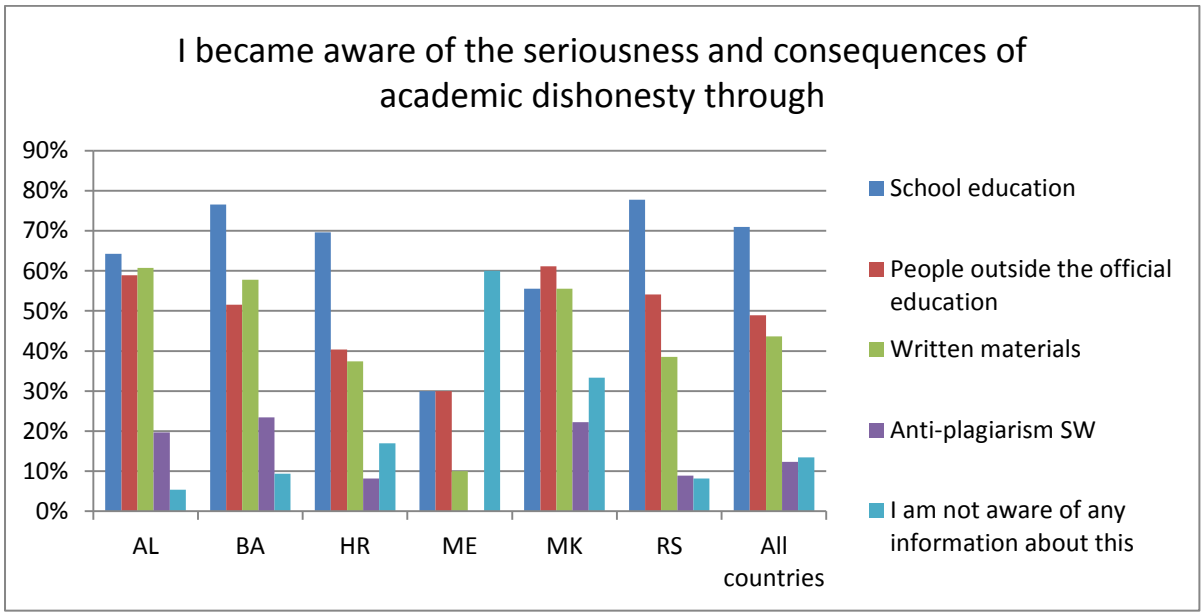

Figure 6: How students became aware of the seriousness and consequences of academic dishonesty

Figures 5 and 6 show how students surveyed in different countries responded to the questions about how they became aware of the seriousness and consequences of plagiarism and academic dishonesty. The main sources of information selected for plagiarism were *School education*, *People outside official education* and *Written materials*. The same sources were selected for academic dishonesty, but with slightly more emphasis on *School education*.

The results shown in Figures 7 and 8 are responses from teachers giving their views on where students learn and understand about plagiarism and academic dishonesty. Teachers consider *school education* to be the main source of information, almost 90% for plagiarism and 80% for academic dishonesty. Around 40% of teachers chose *written materials* and approximately 35% chose *people outside official education*.

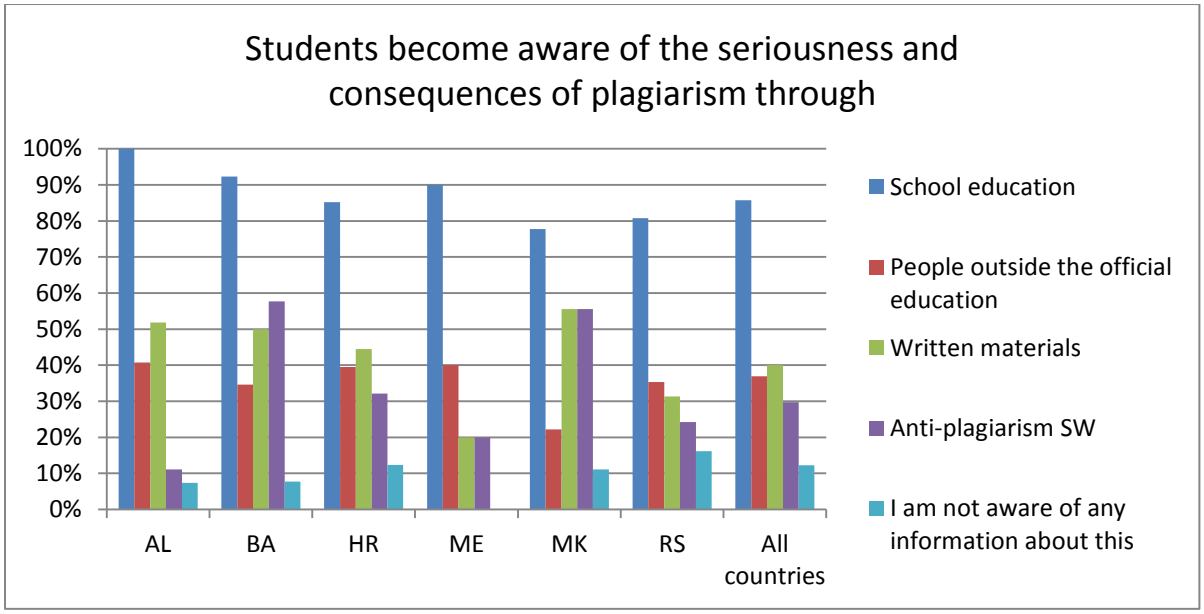

Figure 7: Teachers' point of view: how do they think students become aware of the seriousness and consequences of plagiarism

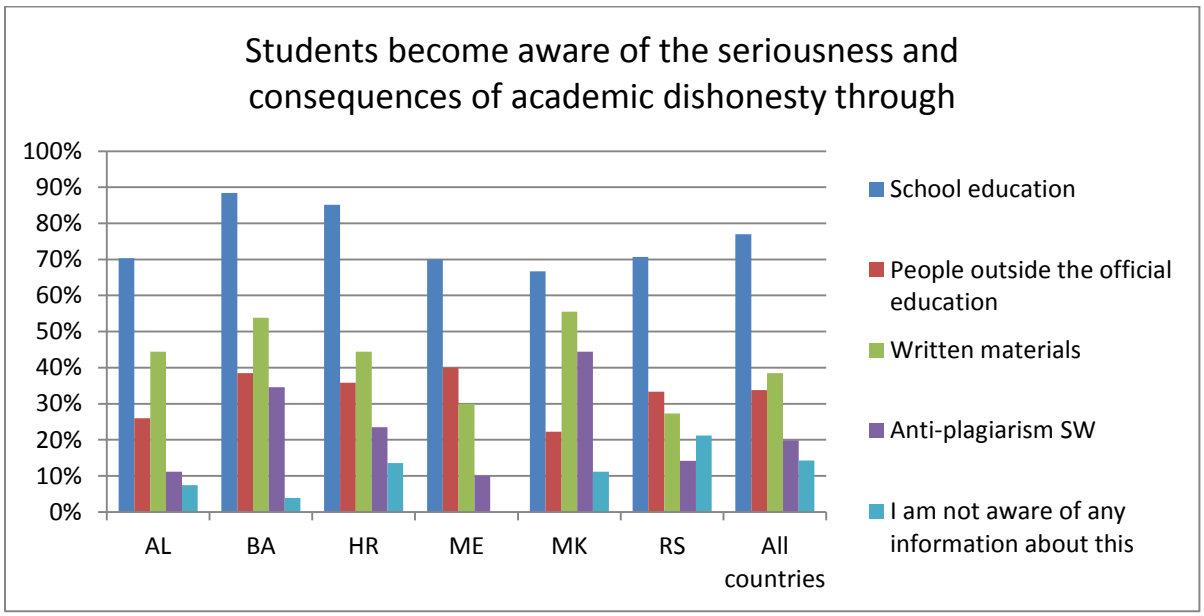

Figure 8: Teachers' point of view: how do they think students become aware of the seriousness and consequences of academic dishonesty

Comparing students' and teachers' responses in Figures 5-8 reveals that some teachers may not be aware of all the channels by which students learn about important concepts, specifically: social media, friends and family and other students.

Students in focus groups agreed that there should be more education on this topic at universities and that they would welcome more training. The same thing is visible from the online questionnaires, as shown in Figure 9. A total of 82.93% of students across the 6 countries agreed or strongly agreed with the statement *"I would like to have more training on avoidance of plagiarism and academic dishonesty"*.

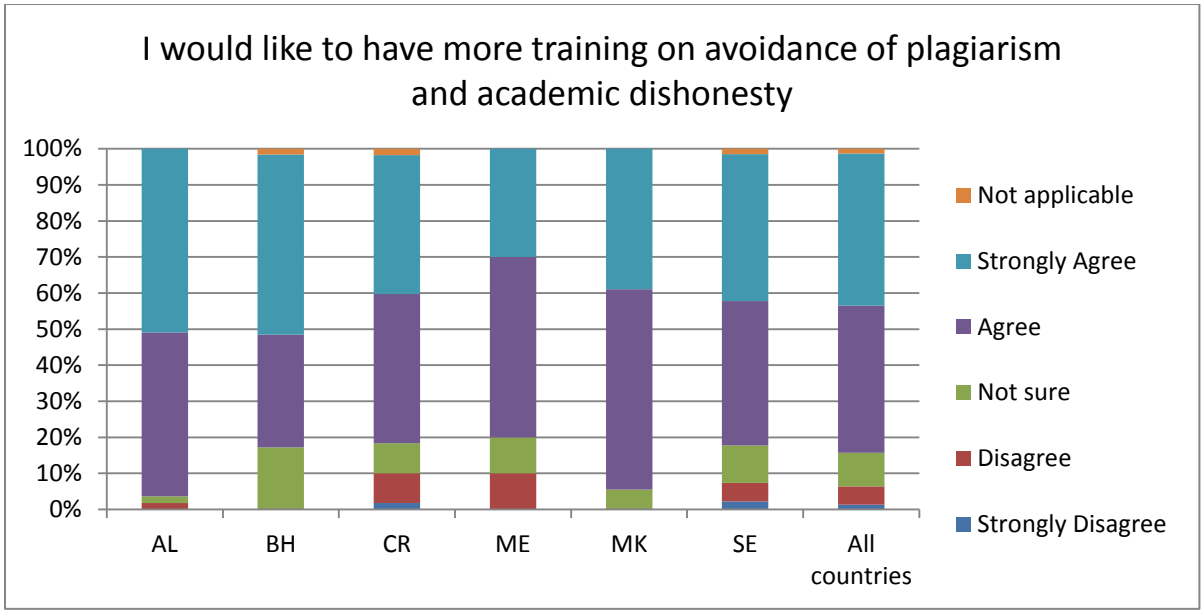

Figure 9: Students' opinion - if they would like to receive more training in academic integrity

Teachers' questionnaire responses also showed strong agreement (87.2%) about more training for students. A great majority of teacher respondents (80.32%) also agreed that there should be more training for teachers on the same subject.

Evidence of further support for training came in responses to the open question *"Please provide suggestions for reducing student cheating*. Thematic analysis of well over 600 suggestions from students, teachers and managers revealed that over 40% of the suggestions related to provision of more education, information and training for students and / or teachers.

4. Good practice examples

4.1 Good practice across the south east European region

During the team's visits to the region, several positive examples of activities and policies were identified that were considered notable as good practice. Other faculties, institutions and teachers may benefit from these examples by using them to improve their own practice or through inspiring ideas for further innovations. In the details below anonymity has been maintained unless an institution has specifically agreed to be identified.

4.2 Faculty of University A, HR

This Faculty appears to have developed effective policies due to the effort of a small team of enthusiastic people. Particular mention is given to the members of the Ethic Committee proposed by the Dean of the Faculty, as well as the Faculty Council. The Faculty has adopted regulations related to ethics according the Code of Ethics of the University A and other important guidelines for the work of Ethic Committee. The Ethics Committee follows the best practices from the European Universities (for example: the University of Birmingham, UK) with the aim to try to implement some of them into practice (for example: statement signed by students before the exams, etc.). Even though the teachers are not obliged to report cases of misconduct, some of them do. Much of the effort within the Faculty has gone into relationship building to raise the overall levels of awareness of ethical issues.

Some specific examples collected include:

- There is special web-page devoted to ethical issues
- Ethics within the faculty has its own mascot and e-mail address
- Staff members meet once per year to discuss their approach to cases, information for staff is available from the faculty web pages
- There are workshops for students organised every year as well as promotional material for the freshman students
- The Ethics Committee meets several times during the academic year depending on the number of applications and the number of other activities related to the promotion of ethics in the Faculty.

4.3 Faculty of an University B, BA

This Faculty (same as the rest of the University B) was in a difficult position because of the political situation in their country, fragmentation of competences and the fact that diplomas of their graduates were not recognised even in the neighbouring canton. To strengthen diplomas the Faculty was issuing, the Faculty decided to apply for an international recognition of their study programmes. During the process of recognition, they had to elaborate policies and procedures for all processes in place, including processes addressing ethical issues as a part of their quality assurance strategy. The effort devoted to gaining international accreditation resulted not only in significant improvement of their academic integrity policies, but also led to improvements in curricula and development of international partnerships including double-degree award study programmes.

Some specific examples of good practice are:

- The School uses Turnitin as a plagiarism detection tool. All students have to submit all their assignments and theses via Turnitin. If plagiarism is discovered, teachers are obliged to report case to a vice-dean, who decides on penalty according to very clear guidelines.
- During the orientation week, all new students are educated about plagiarism, its consequences, anti-corruption issues and are given an anti-plagiarism manual.
- Academic integrity is fully incorporated in quality assurance documents, which are regularly monitored and revised.
- To make sure that the admission process is corruption-free, the exams are anonymous. There are not students' names, but number identifier on the exam scripts.

4.4 University C, RS

The University C adopted a document for plagiarism prevention. They also want to motivate other institutions in Serbia to follow them. Disciplinary rules for all types of misconduct which are subject to this study (plagiarism, exam cheating, ghost-writing) are defined at the university level. However, it is up to each faculty to put these rules into practice.

There are three good practice examples to share:

- At one of the faculties of the University, there is an obligatory course "Academic Writing" for all students in the first year of their bachelor studies. The course provides extensive education about plagiarism and teach the students how to write a scholarly academic paper.
- Strict compliance with the rules. Teachers are obliged to report cases of misconduct and they do. Disciplinary committee resolves 10-20 cases per year.
- The faculty provides a fund for tuition fees reduction. There is a proposal for a new policy: only students with clear misconduct record may benefit from this fund. The earliest possible start of this policy is in 2017/2018.

From the student focus group it was clearly visible that the University's strategy works. Students mentioned multiple times that the teachers are very strict, the students also don't understand why people plagiarise, namely they said: *"I don't know if my friends ever plagiarise but I don't know why they would"* and *"It's easier to write the work than plagiarise and get caught"*. At the end of the interview they said *"For us it's important to be unique".*

4.5 University D, AL

This is a relatively young institution, established in 2005, which currently has approximately 7,000 students. A significant investment in infrastructure for expansion is already in evidence. A series of meetings with students, teachers and managers in the faculty of languages revealed a consistent message about a very positive approach to teaching, learning and assessment. Clearly students involved in the focus group found their learning experience rewarding and assessment tasks relevant and challenging. They had good understanding about academic writing conventions, because of a compulsory module on this subject for all students in the university. The students were strongly committed to honesty, integrity and scholarship. The good news is that most of these students are planning to follow a career in teaching, therefore their excellent experience as students will have every chance of being passed on to the next generation.

4.6 Faculty of University E, “The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”

A meeting with the senior team in this Faculty, followed by a visit to learning spaces, revealed a studio-based project approach to teaching and learning, with very practical assessment. The team explained that there is no opportunity for plagiarism with this form of assessment, in which students are required to share their ideas and present evidence of their progress on architectural design at every phase of their project.

The Faculty also discussed their guest speaker programme. There are also prestigious speakers invited to present at summer schools. This is intended to motivate and enrich the student experience as well as to allow teachers to engage with wider developments in the architecture field.

4.7 Institution F

The teachers who participated in the discussion came from multiple faculties of the university and were based across two different sites. Multi-site teaching was identified as a problem for those involved, with travel taking around an hour, leaving little time to support students. Teachers also said that a lack of access to plagiarism detection was an issue, although one senior member of the university said that negotiations were ongoing at a national level.

Some teachers did identify access to plagiarism detection software as being good practice and had found innovative ways to access this. One teacher had purchased their own subscription to a web service which they used to check student work and to improve their own academic research papers.

Another teacher had formed links with a university in another country and put student assessments through their plagiarism detection software but only after first checking the text using Google to avoid submitting assignments to their contact where a student had cheated.

Specific examples that staff and students spoke about intended to represent good practice included:

- The use of a spoken examination in one area to check that students understood the subject.
- A lecture on how to write and structure an essay specific for one subject (this was identified by students who would have liked other subjects to also include similar tuition).
- The inclusion of a statement about plagiarism on the university website to make it clear that this was not an activity that students should be engaging with.
- Changing the layout of the room used for examinations so that students could no longer see other students answers. Some students were said to have complained about the change and how they could no longer cheat.
- Sending some PhD students also working as teaching assistants abroad to other universities, helping them to improve their own teaching and bring new ideas and practices back with them.

4.8 Other examples of good practice

In addition to the above mentioned institutions further examples of good practice were identified during personal visits and from the questionnaire responses. Some of these ideas can be easily transferred to more institutions and would have the potential to bring significant improvements.

Designated exam rooms equipped with cameras. Copying or cheat-sheets are recorded.

The possibility of anonymous reporting of academic misconduct. Students are able to report misconduct by other students or their teachers if necessary.

Rule books or guidelines for students about good citation practice and plagiarism.

Research conducted in all countries within the study to investigate corruption in education the region or to initiate reforms to educational practices, (as defined in section 2).

Use of US-style honour codes in at least one institution to encourage a culture of integrity.

Occurrence of enthusiastic people amongst staff (or even faculty management), whose enthusiasm can be transferred to their colleagues.

Students across the focus groups independently agreed, that it is important to inform students about academic integrity and teach students about academic writing conventions as early as possible.

5. Challenges and deficits

5.1 Introduction

This research study has identified many examples of good practice across the SE Europe region, but such good practice does not apply across the higher education sector in the region. Many of the examples outlined in Chapter 4 appear to be the results of sustained effort by individuals. Sometimes these efforts have been supported by the individual's faculty or institution. In other cases, good practice has happened even without this support.

In this section the main challenges that were observed across the region are highlighted. The focus is on the recurrent themes that emerged during the research and where future effort could perhaps best be placed to address any weaknesses in academic integrity. It has to be noted that there are clear exceptions to many of these challenges, often in the form of individual good practice. Where such good practice exists, whether or not it was identified during this research, the recommendation is for this to be discussed, promoted and ideally implemented on a wider scale.

During the interviews and focus groups, the concept of a "culture of corruption" was raised many times.

- RS (student focus group): *"(attitude of students to cheating is positive). I think that the cheating in schools resembles the state in the entire country – cheating on political and structure level, that's kind of part of our culture."*

Participants sometimes cautioned that this culture is so deeply embedded that efforts for improvements in academic integrity are futile. The notion of the "culture of corruption" is supported by the Corruption Perception Index, as shown in Table 1. The six countries in this study were ranked below most other European countries (TI 2015). On the other hand some people were optimistic that the education may change the situation, concretely the teachers in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the questionnaires often share this opinion.

Although the underlying reasons for the CPI rankings put these countries at a disadvantage, the significance of studies like SEEPPAI is that identifying the challenges can help to bring about change. Academia has the capacity to influence the overall culture of a country by educating the next generation of leaders of industry, commerce and government. By changing the values and aspirations of young people, academia can help to cut the cycle of corruption.

5.2 Cultural challenges

Very little evidence was found of leadership from the top or investment, either at government or institutional level, for addressing aspects of corruption in higher education. There is a challenge in convincing people of influence that education is a very good place to start in the difficult journey to cleaning up wider society.

Many students reported cases of teachers, politician and other high profile people found to have plagiarised. The evidence about these cases is often reported through local media, for example a series of cases in 2014 were published by Pescanik (BBC, 2014). Pecsanik (2014) together with Robinson (2014) described the case of the Serbian minister of interior, Nebojsa Stefanovic who was accused of plagiarising their PhD thesis. Stefanovic's mentor, Mica Jovanovic, rector of the private Megatrend University, was previously accused of falsely claiming to have a PhD degree from the London School of Economics (Miletic, 2014). Other cases include the President of Belgrade

municipality of New Belgrade Aleksandar Sapic (InSerbia, 2014a) and the Mayor of Belgrade, Sinisa Mali (InSerbia, 2014b).

There are also cases described in the Croatian media. Pavo Barisic, the Croatian Minister of Science rejected calls to resign even though the parliamentary committee confirmed that Barisic had committed plagiarism (Talatovic & Dauenhauer, 2017). Croatian academics mentioned also the case of Milijan Brkic, who was the secretary of Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ). Brkic's graduation thesis was found to be plagiarised and the Police Academy in Zagreb revoked it. The decision was later reversed by an appeal court hearing due to procedural mistakes (EBLNews, 2016).

During a visit in Albania, a workshop about academic integrity was conducted with a class of master's level students, with teachers and senior staff also attending. One of the student participants made the observation that they understood the motivation behind the research, but believed Albania was so steeped in corruption that it would never change. The challenge they described is finding ways to effect radical changes to educational practice, to develop a culture of honesty and integrity in a country where corruption drives the whole of civil society and the economy. As the work of Transparency International demonstrates, the same challenge applies to different extents in all six countries in this study and also in many other countries across the world.

A clear message came from the questionnaire responses of Serbian teachers: their suggestion is that the way to improve the current state of academic misconduct in higher education is to have more intensive control and stricter penalties. This approach is in contradiction with recommendations from ETINED (Pan-European Platform on Ethics, Transparency and Integrity in Education of the Council of Europe) that a positive approach should be adopted.

5.3 Challenges in policies

Although there was evidence that policies and procedures were in place for handling various forms of academic misconduct in some institutions, very few examples were found of policies that had been effectively and consistently applied at institutional level. Where penalties were applied they appeared to have no lasting consequences and were not seen as a deterrent by students.

Participants in student focus groups said that they were unhappy that students who cheated, perhaps by acquiring a piece of work or cheating in their examinations, were often awarded higher marks than honest students. This problem arises due to the failure of academic staff to identify cases of cheating and failure of those responsible to apply a suitable penalty that serves to correct or discourage poor practice.

- An example from a student focus group: *"Last year we had a course which was difficult and where many students didn't know a lot of stuff. Then at the exams they cheat and they passed the course. Me and a friend, we studied hard and we had good grade in the course, we got 95% on the test. But the people who cheated, they were even better – there were twenty of them!"*

Conduct of some academic staff, as reported by student respondents in both focus groups and questionnaire responses, sets a very poor example and presents a major impediment to academic integrity. According to student responses, some staff is accepting bribes to influence grades, ignoring blatant cheating in examinations, plagiarising or not acknowledging sources in course notes given to students and not reading work students have submitted for grading.

- Plagiarism of teachers, BA (student focus group): *"When professors do it (plagiarism), so also the students do it."*

- Teachers not reading student work, BA (student focus group): *"We have teachers who even don't read the papers."*

Little evidence was found of a culture of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for academic teachers and researchers in this region, which is similar to what was discovered earlier in parts of the EU, for example in Germany, France and Belgium. In particular no training was provided for those responsible for taking decisions about student academic misconduct and applying penalties.

Although many teachers and managers responding to the survey denied there was an issue with pedagogy, many student respondents complained about the didactic teaching style and uninspiring assessment, which was often the same every year, typically relying on memorising notes.

At many institutions, teachers and managers denied even the fact that students were cheating. The research team have been told that students are motivated, they are unlikely to cheat and if they do, the teacher recognizes it and punishes the student. In the same time, students were describing the extent and methods of exam cheating and ghost-writing which was either not noticed or not addressed by teachers.

To illustrate this point, Table 5 provides a list of responses from different participants in the same institution. A student focus group was held at the same time as an interview with a senior manager (who was also a teacher), in separate rooms conducted by different facilitators.

Issue	**Higher management**	**Students**
Plagiarism	*"It's not a practice here*."	*"Plagiarism is normal, very normal."*
Ghost writing	"*Professor would recognize it during the reading. It's not a practice here*."	*"It's very common."* (everybody agreeing and laughing) *"We have FB pages and sites where you can order a paper work, or any other work. Everything, you can pay everything."*
Exam cheating	*"Exam cheating usually solved by professor. Fail exam term, possibly twice."*	*"They can give your warning – if they see somebody, first they warn and then they may take away the test. But it is very rare."*

Table 5: Comparison of views - higher management and students from the same institution

It is difficult to see how progress can be made in improving academic integrity in an institution unless the senior management team has more awareness of what is happening with teachers and within the student community.

Although there is evidence that some training has been provided for students on academic integrity, consequences of cheating and conventions for academic writing and use of sources, it is abundantly clear from the feedback that much more information, education and personal development would benefit the student populations (see chart on Figure 9, almost 90% of students would like to receive more training on this topic). However this effort would be wasted unless it was in parallel with policy reform and staff commitment to set a good example and consistently apply fair and proportional measures to address student cheating.

A lack of effective sanctions was identified in some institutions, especially in Montenegro. Even if the most severe sanction (expulsion from an institution) is applied, a student can come back and enrol in the same university next year.

5.4 Financial challenges

One of the major obstacles to any form of change is lack of resources and funding. It is difficult to see how improving quality and integrity in education could be seen as a priority when so much of the infrastructure seriously needs investment.

It is positive to discover that systems and software tools are in place in parts of the region, either nationally, institutionally or within faculties, for checking work for plagiarism. However these services are currently restricted to higher levels of education, specifically used for checking scientific papers and doctoral theses, occasionally for master's or bachelor's theses. A worthwhile application of such tools is in formative development of writing and research skills in bachelor students and even earlier in secondary education, but this would require considerably more funding than is needed checking for the higher level work.

The different languages and alphabets used across the region create complexities for software tools when submitting and comparing work, but the problems are not insurmountable.

In "The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" and Montenegro, over 80% of young people progress directly from school to university. For some students this is seen as an alternative to unemployment, but not all the freshers are fully committed to learning therefore they are more likely to resort to cheating than the more motivated students.

5.5 Security of assessment

Although normal practice in many universities outside the SE Europe region now requires the assessment tasks to be changed regularly, in the whole, this did not seem to have filtered through to the countries studied. Examples were given of the same assessments being used for several years in succession, whether these assessments were in the form of coursework assignments or examination papers.

With the limited use of plagiarism detection software, combined with the problem of large classes, this means that a student could hand in work written by someone in a previous year and it would be very unlikely to be detected as unoriginal. Likewise, students knowing the exam questions from previous papers would have an unfair advantage of those who did not know of the questions.

These few examples indicate immediate ways that opportunities for unfair practices can be curtailed. If not addressed, this form of academic misconduct can seriously undermine the authenticity and reliability of student assessments.

5.6 Exam cheating

Methods used to cheat in exams were well-known by both students and staff. However, in some faculties staff and senior management did not share information about the extent of student cheating.

In several institutions visited exams were used as the main method of assessment. Staff described occasions when a large number of students take exams seated very close together, where it can be impossible to monitor for cheating.

Where students could be monitored, the technology available for cheating was also said to cause a problem, with both students and staff talking about the widespread use of hidden earpieces. These earpieces were easily available to hire across the region, allowing an exam taker to receive communications from an outside party, also using a mobile phone or hidden camera to communicate about questions. There were some reports that students using these devices had been caught, but this did not appear to be a common view.

At a few institutions, jamming equipment is used to prevent mobile phone communications during examinations. Although staff presented this as an example of good practice and were using it as a way to reduce the impact of technology on exam cheating, this approach can be problematic. Some European countries ban the use of mobile communication jamming equipment due to the disruption of legitimate communication nearby. For instance, this can interrupt communication systems used by emergency services. A more general consideration of alternative approaches is needed to address the lapses in security of assessment within a culture where different forms of cheating, including hidden earpieces, student crib sheets and mobile phone communications, appear to be commonly used.

5.7 Contract cheating

Throughout the research, students regularly reported that they knew how they could get a third party to complete their work for them. Although students did not necessarily say that they were contract cheating themselves, they identified a culture where they knew other students who were not completing their own work. Despite some universities in the region introducing text matching software to aid plagiarism detection, the use of ghost-writing services poses a problem, because the detection systems are unable to detect this type of misconduct.

The survey data indicates that both teachers and students are aware of cases of ghost writing / contract cheating. As figures 10 and 11 show, 57% of teachers said that they were aware of at least one case of contract cheating committed by a student at their institution. 27% of student respondents knew at least one student who had an assessment ghost-written for them.

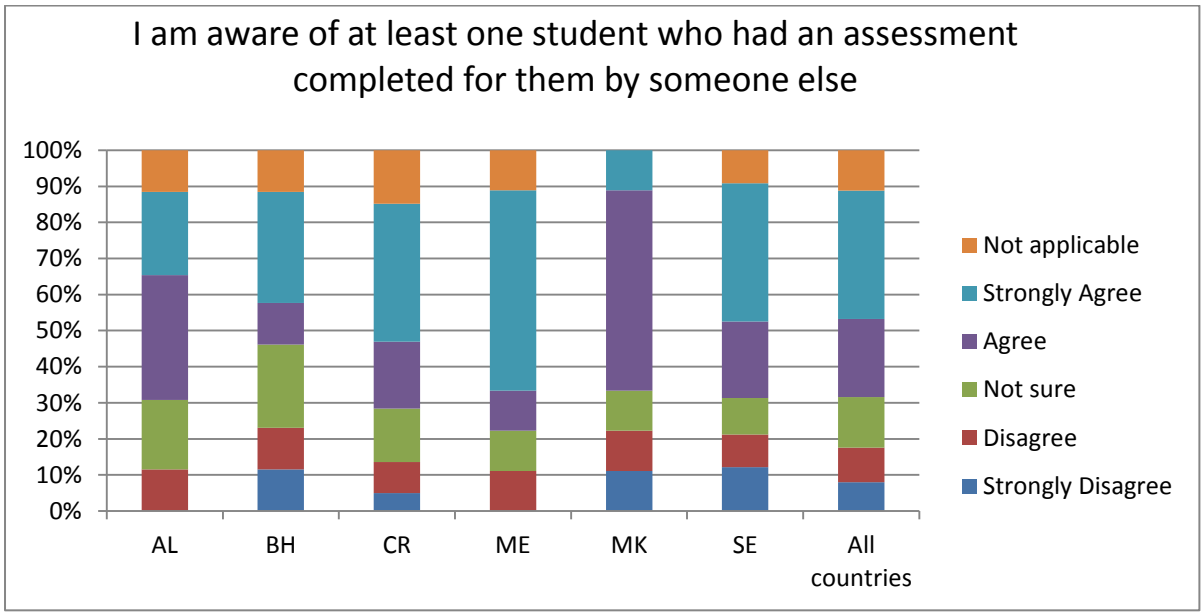

Figure 10: Teacher perspectives on contract cheating in SE Europe

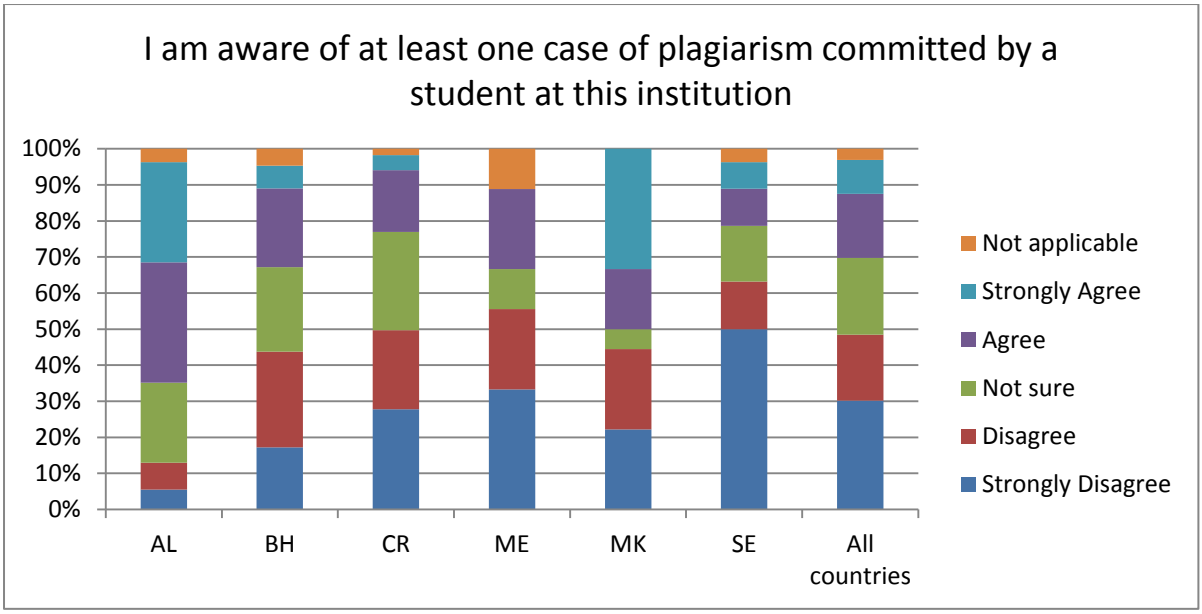

Figure 11: Student perspectives on contract cheating in SE Europe

It has been claimed that a contract cheating industry is operating in Albania, "The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" and in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Manasiev & Mujkic, 2016). It has also been indicated that this contract cheating industry is operating semi-legally and that ghost-writers for student work can be easily found. The ghost-writers say that they are not operating illegally and are therefore not doing anything wrong. One ghost-writer has publicly claimed that they have written many master theses and PhD theses for people who work in large companies and for the government.

The pricing of work acquired through contract cheating is also of interest. It is claimed that ghost-written PhD dissertations can be purchased in "The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" and in Bosnia and Herzegovina for 2000 euros each (Manasiev & Mujkic, 2016). During the focus groups, several students mentioned the prices at which they believed they could buy ghost-written work. In Bosnia and Herzegovina the price students mentioned for an assignment was 10 euros, although this was said to vary according to the particular assignment, the difficulty level and the academic discipline. Examples of prices given in Croatia by students varied, with one student suggesting 40 euros per assignment and another mentioning 100 euros. In general, students seemed to think that contract cheating was "affordable".

The focus group research supported the view that it was easy for students to find people to complete their assignments for them. The advertising of ghost-writing services were said to be widespread in the region, with examples given of noticeboard requests by students to hire writers, as well as adverts placed by writers encouraging students to spend money. Although some teachers indicated that they would quiz students on the content of their work if they were not convinced that they had written it themselves, this was not a commonly expressed view. When the issue of contract cheating was raised during discussions with teachers, opinions varied from a reluctance to acknowledge or address the problem, to a belief that this was widespread.

5.8 Bribery

Previous research in the region identified students paying for results, directly giving money to teachers to receive results and advantages. That view was echoed by students, sometimes when teachers were present, but not often acknowledged by staff. In some of the visited countries both

teachers and students did not mention bribery at all during the interviews (of course the reasons might be various, not presuming the bribery doesn't exist in the countries).

Where students did talk about bribery, this was generally in relation to other students that they'd heard about, or particular staff who were known to be open to taking bribes. At student focus groups in two separate institutions in Albania it was suggested by participants that the first target for overcoming corruption in education should be to focus on lecturers taking bribes from students to secure a good pass mark. Students could also relate newspaper and media stories from where corrupt teachers had been identified.

More subtle forms of required payments were also identified during the research. One example from a focus group involved students being required to buy a set textbook from their teacher which was needed to pass the subject. Although perhaps not such as extreme as the first example, the teacher was using a form of influence to extort money from their class of students.

Although it was uncommon to find responses about bribery in the IPPHEAE study, a few examples were recorded in Eastern Europe. It would be difficult to ascertain how widespread this problem is in other countries in Europe and beyond.

It is unlikely that this type of corruption is going to be resolved by just educating students. It requires a mind-set change in the academic community and quality assurance procedures and practices, such as oversight and moderation of assessment.

5.9 Types of penalty

The discussions of penalties across the SE Europe region revealed that it is almost impossible for a student to be permanently expelled from their course even for the most serious forms of cheating. Most penalties were said to be relatively minor, with the heaviest penalty being a period of suspension.

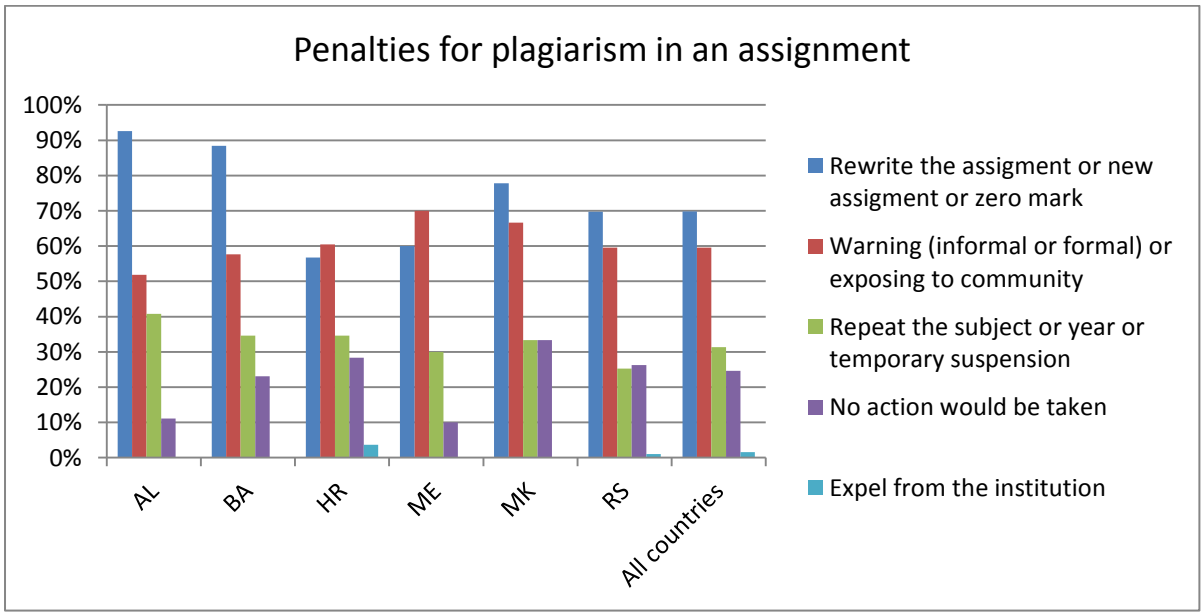

Figure 12: Teachers' perception on penalties for plagiarism in an assignment

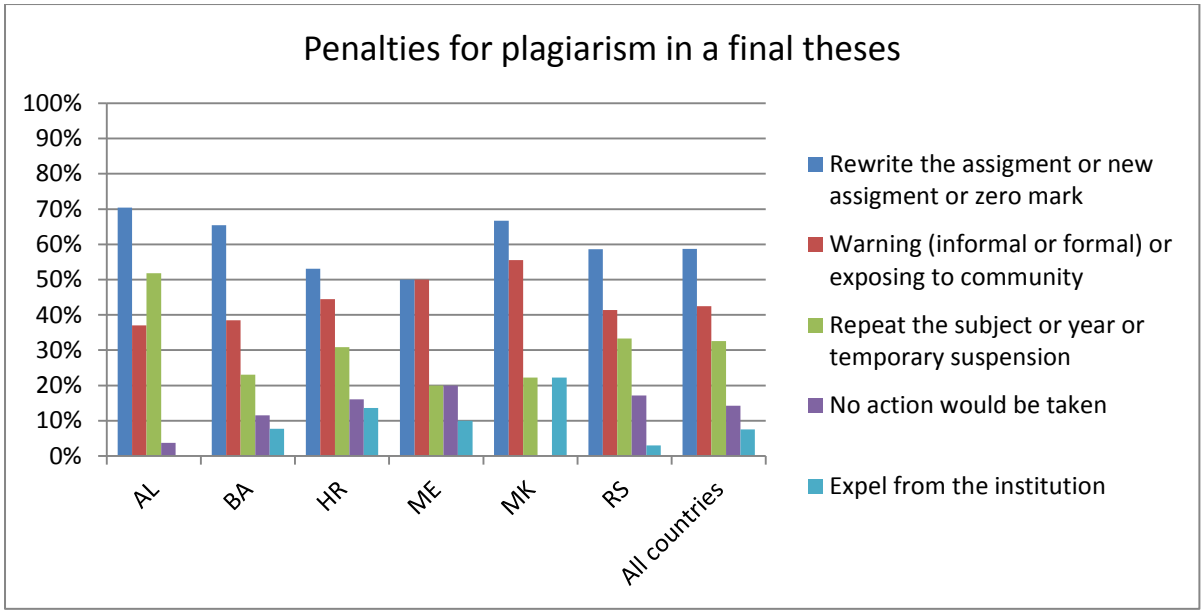

Figure 13: Teachers' perception on penalties for plagiarism in a thesis

70% of teacher respondents said that if plagiarism was found in an assignment the student would have to do the assignment again or would receive zero mark. When asked about plagiarism in the final thesis, 60% of teachers believed that the same penalty would apply. 25% of teachers responded that no action would be taken for plagiarism in an assignment, and 14% said that nothing would happen even in case of plagiarism in a final thesis. These results are shown in Figures 12 and 13.

The student respondents were asked the same question, their responses indicated that some students expected the penalties to be more severe than the teachers described.

The relatively minor penalties may mean that students are willing to take the risk of cheating, particularly as cheating seems to be so much a part of local custom and practice. The risk of them being caught seems very low. Even when students are caught, they are likely to get a small penalty that will not otherwise cause them any problems. If the highest are a period of suspension of no more than six months or one year, apart from a delay with course completion and the potential loss of financial support in some cases, there are little in the way disincentives to discourage academic misconduct.

Relaxed attitudes to cheating were observed throughout the study from both students and staff. Although that view was not so clearly expressed by staff, there did seem to be an overall view presented that certain staff would turn a blind eye to cheating, but other teachers were known to be strict.

Where university processes did exist, there was a consensus across both staff and students that these were often not followed, with staff making their own judgement over appropriate penalties. Student respondents suggested that teachers could make more effort to discourage students from cheating.

6. Lessons learned and recommendations

6.1 Summary

Despite the good practice examples, it is likely that the journey towards educational integrity in these countries is going to be long and difficult. However most of the academic contacts established by the SEEPPAI team members demonstrated a sound appreciation of where the problems lie and what needs to be achieved to address the challenges identified in educational practices and policies. In addition, the volume, variety and complexity of positive suggestions from students and teachers, in response to the question about how to discourage cheating / academic misconduct, provides confidence that the issue is well understood and that there is buy-in for a more mature way forward.

In common with many of the EU countries surveyed during previous research, to begin to make progress on improving the situation there is a need to convince and motivate people who can make a difference to take action, particularly higher education sector advisors, institutional leaders and the Ministries of Education.

Where progress has already been made, the practices are often not shared within and across institutions and national borders, which would be a cost-effective way to begin the process of change and development.

Providing lessons for students on academic writing and avoiding plagiarism much earlier in education, preferably before students start university, would be a positive step. Academic teachers should be prepared to set a good example and provide activities that allow students to develop skills in academic writing when they arrive at university and throughout their higher education experience.

6.2 Recommendations to national governments and quality agencies

National governments, through their education ministries and accreditation and quality agencies, should proactively provide oversight for, and guidance in, strengthening policies and procedures for academic integrity in higher education institutions as a crucial component of quality assurance. Where institutional policies are deficient, the accreditation should be conditional on their continuing development. Accreditation and quality agencies should be empowered to monitor the quality of education and academic integrity in both public and private higher education institutions. Research and development in academic integrity strategies, policies and systems should be encouraged, preferably through the provision of small grant funding.

Recent consultations by the UK's Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) about the problems of contract cheating, which a member of the SEEPPAI team Dr Thomas Lancaster directly contributed to, have resulted in an important report (QAA 2016) and on-going discussions about introducing legislation to make such companies illegal under UK law. A legislative approach has been achieved already elsewhere, including New Zealand and some USA and Canadian states. Given the evidence from SEEPPAI of the prevalence of contract cheating and ghost-writing, particularly in Albania, Montenegro and "The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", it is recommended that national governments consider following these examples as a means of deterring students from using such services and sending a strong message to companies and individuals who support this serious form of cheating.

National governments should consider engaging with (text-matching / similarity checking) software companies to negotiate an affordable nation-wide license. It would make sense to open discussions with these companies about possible complexities connected with processing documents in the local languages and how these can be overcome.

Ministries of Education in the region should facilitate communications between institutions within the country and across national borders in order to learn from positive experiences and share ideas that have proved effective for countering corruption and academic malpractice.

6.3 Recommendations to institutions

To address the disparity in policies and practices across different faculties within HEIs, institutional leaders should initiate an internal review of local policies and practices with a view to establishing an institution-wide working group that will coordinate the development and implementation of common institutional strategy, policies and systems for academic integrity.

Institutions should develop a standard set of sanctions for plagiarism, exam cheating, ghost writing and other forms of academic dishonesty. These sanctions should be made to be known to academic teachers and students and procedures put in place to ensure they are applied fairly and consistently for each violation.

Supervision and oversight arrangements for formal examinations should be strengthened as a means of discouraging cheating, by increasing the number of invigilators and clarifying and strengthening their responsibilities.

Training should be provided for academic staff, thesis supervisors and invigilators to ensure all procedures and understood and consistently followed. Potentially, institutions within the same geographic area could organise shared seminars and workshops.

Each institution should take responsibility to ensure that students at all levels are suitably informed and progressively educated on matters of honesty and integrity, academic writing and use of materials and sources. The initial information should be provided as early as possible in the higher education process, preferably in good time before students complete their first assessment.

Institutions need to develop guidelines for students, academic teachers and decision-takers about issues relating to academic integrity. Institutions also need to put guidelines to practice and enforce the rules defined.

Should it be possible to acquire software tools for aiding the detection of plagiarism and collusion between students, the institution needs to develop clear policies for how the tools should be deployed and guidelines for the interpretation and use of the outputs from them.

The institution should take all measures possible to deter cheating, in whatever form it may take, including essay mills / contract cheating / ghost-writing, plagiarism, collusion and examination cheating.

Regarding pedagogical practices, the institution should discourage rote learning by aspiring to provision up-to-date learning experiences at all levels of study, where critical thinking is valued and teaching, learning and assessment are rewarding and inspirational. To transition from didacticism to participative learning, a radical shift in institutional and individual practices and thinking, will require carefully planned change management involving the entire academic community.

The institution should mobilise representatives of the student community as valued partners in the challenge to reduce all forms of student cheating.

The institution should consider establishing procedures for “whistleblowing” to allow the reporting of cases of academic misconduct by either students or teachers, particularly from students.

6.4 Recommendations to individuals

Academic staff must take responsibility for their own conduct as role models for the next generation of professionals. They should commit to integrity: fairness, consistency, honesty, transparency, in both their professional and private lives.

Academic staff should ensure that all students they are teaching or supervising are aware of the value and importance of learning and scholarship and motivated to maximise their attainment.

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) should be a requirement for all academic staff, in order to keep up to date with their subject, educational developments, pedagogical practices and institutional policies.

Academic staff should ensure that all suspected cases of academic misconduct are handled according to the institutional policies and procedures that ensure fairness and consistency for all students.

7. Conclusions

7.1 Comparison between countries

As a means of summarising the results for the six countries, the Academic Integrity Maturity Model (AIMM) has been applied to each of the six countries in this study, based on the survey data collected. This tool provides a means of comparing "maturity" of policies and processes observed in the six countries, but also for comparing all 33 counties studied to date (Glendinning 2013). The SEEPPAI results are shown in Figures 14 and 15, fully detailed results are in Appendices 1 and 2.

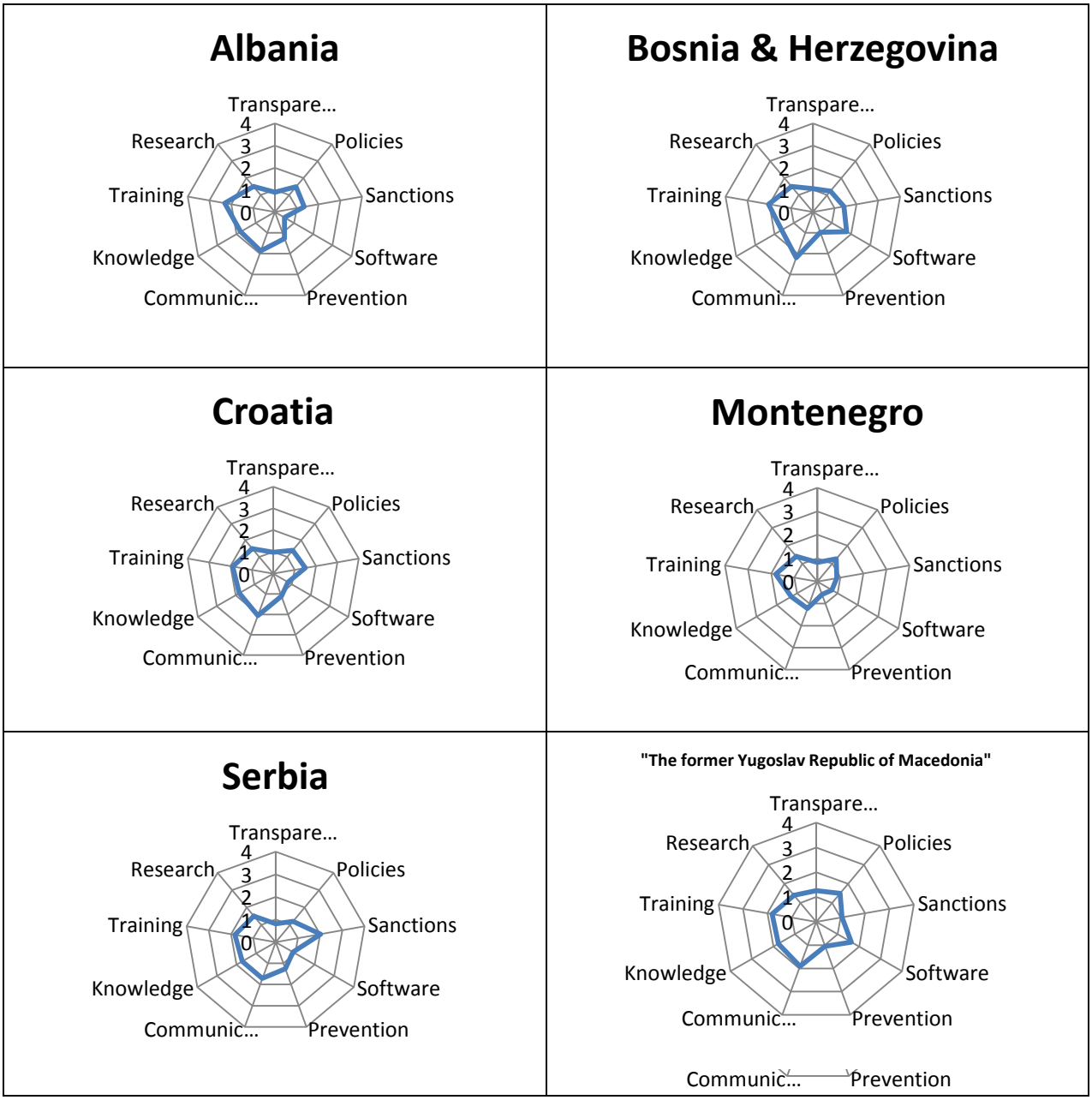

Figure 14: AIMM results for the six countries

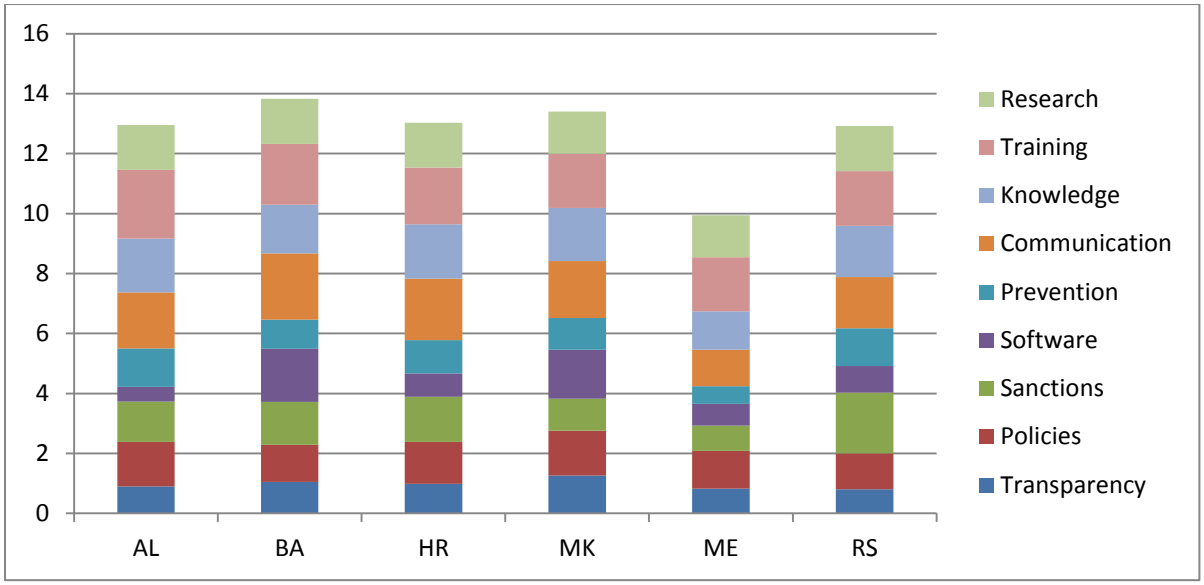

Figure 15: AIMM results for the six countries

The radar charts in figure 14 depict the scores (out of 4) for the nine AIMM categories for each country. The same data is shown as a stacked bar chart in figure 15. All six countries show relative strength in training provision with scores between 1.8 and 2.3 out of a possible maximum score of 4. Use of software varies between countries, with BA scoring the highest and "The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" second, but with very low scores in the other countries. Even where available the software use is generally restricted to detection of misconduct rather than the more mature application of formative learning and development seen in some EU countries. Two other categories that scored reasonably well in most of these countries are communication and knowledge, which provides optimism for success in future developments. Transparency was found to be weak in all six countries.

The AIMM scores are comparable with those captured for the 27 EU countries in the IPPHEAE survey (Appendix 1, figure 16). However it must be noted that the survey questions have been updated and reformatted for this survey, which allowed data from more questions to be included in the AIMM analysis for SEEPPAI countries.

These results provide a useful guide to what his happening in each country and help to prioritise where attention is needed most. However it must also be acknowledged that self-selection of institutions for participation, combined with low volumes of data for a minority of countries, in both IPPHEAE and SEEPPAI (particularly Montenegro), mean that these results cannot be taken to represent the full picture in every country. Since the IPPHEAE data was collected 4-5 years ago, we must also factor in that the datasets are not all contemporaneous.

However, considering all the above limitations, it is interesting to note that when the IPPHEAE AIMM results are merged with the SEEPPAI results, most of the SE Europe countries fall in the middle to lower half of the table for maturity. From 33 countries (see Appendix 1, Figure 16):

- Bosnia & Herzegovina 14th
- "The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" 18th
- Croatia 19th
- Albania 21st
- Serbia 24th
- Montenegro 32nd

One of the distinguishing factors for all six countries in these rankings, when compared to many of the EU countries previously surveyed, was evidence for very recent educational research. Researchers from this region are exploring aspects of academic integrity and innovative practices that should soon begin to influence teaching, learning and assessment (for example ACSN SEE 2015, Harjrulla 2015, Manasjey & Mujkic 2016, Zhivkoviki 2016).

7.2 Research challenges

Although a large amount of information was collected during this study about educational academic integrity in SE Europe, this process was not without challenges.

Many participants were very interested and engaged with the research, but some participants experienced difficulties talking about academic integrity and the associated policy and processes. There was also a sense that sometimes participants for focus groups had been carefully selected, and perhaps pre-briefed, by their teachers. There were occasions where lecturers were unwilling to leave the room while student focus groups were conducted, which sometimes, but not always, restricted what students were willing or able to say.

Although some very full and frank discussions took place in student focus groups, where students were open and excited to discuss the topic, in several institutions it proved impossible to run a focus group because students were unwilling to participate. In a few cases students seemed reluctant to provide detailed information in answer to the focus group questions. It seemed that some student participants were offended at being asked to talk about academic misconduct.

The number of completed and usable questionnaire responses varied greatly for different countries, despite great efforts by the project team to encourage participation in all six countries. It is difficult to know what could be done to encourage more engagement with academic integrity research and development in this region. Reducing the number of questions on the questionnaires could help to encourage more responses, but that would restrict the richness of the information captured.

Lack of English language proficiency was a problem encountered several times when conducting interviews with senior managers, but local contacts were often on hand to translate. The ability to communicate in English was often better in students than teachers and managers.

The experience of this project team can serve to guide future studies of this kind, especially when estimating how much usable data will be collected. It is important to be aware of the culture of the institutions and countries that are the focus of the study and use local knowledge to gain access. When planning a visit, clear expectations need to be communicated to the host institutions about what is needed in terms of access to lecturers, students and other parties. Above all, a mutual trust needs to be established between the researchers and participants, especially about anonymity and confidentiality.

7.3 Summary and future research

The SEEPPAI team is grateful to the Council of Europe for providing the funding and the opportunity to extend the earlier study to six more European countries. This report includes many of the remarkable findings from the study. Conference and journal papers are already being prepared by team members that will focus in detail on specific elements of the research. These follow-up publications will serve to disseminate the findings and recommendations to a wide audience of interested parties, in Europe and further afield.

In a very short timeframe the team has managed to conduct a deep investigation of the region, which revealed some exemplary practices and some areas that are urgently in need of attention. The composition of research team also helped to conduct the study. According to AIMM, UK is the most developed European countries in terms of academic integrity. Czech Republic is both geographically and culturally closer to the region. This combination provided good base for survey tool design, interpretation of results and understanding of other circumstances.

One of the most rewarding aspects of the research has been the commitment and enthusiasm of the hosting institutions in the region, helping with the research, providing information that was needed, listening attentively to the project team messages and contributing to valuable discussions about how the community can improve academic integrity, not just in south-eastern Europe, but across the world. There is no doubt that conducting the research itself contributed to improvement. At one institution, we were told that *"your questions made us to think about the issues we have never thought before, but are definitely worth addressing"*. Also workshops for students and staff helped to spread the motivation for change.

The reason members of the SEEPPAI team are so passionate about promoting academic integrity is because of the importance they place in quality and standards in higher education. Corruption, in whatever form it takes, undermines educational quality and standards. If cheating is widespread and becomes normalised behaviour within an institution, then the whole educational system, including the academic qualifications offered by an institution, becomes insecure.

SEEPPAI team members are concurrently part of a longer Erasmus+ funded project, also concerning Academic Integrity: the European Network for Academic Integrity (ENAI) 2017-2020. This project provides a valuable forum for disseminating this report, together with in-depth findings from SEEPPAI, to a wide audience, e.g. an international conference in Brno in May 2017 (visit www.plagiarism.cz for details). Also, a platform has been established as part of ENAI that will be used to disseminate results from previous, current and future research, not only for south-east Europe.

The team sincerely hopes that these investigations and contributions will generate a new positive vision in the region. Ideally the project recommendations will encourage changes to enhance integrity, not just in educational systems, but also in wider society.

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Appendix 1: The Academic Integrity Maturity Model (AIMM) 33 countries

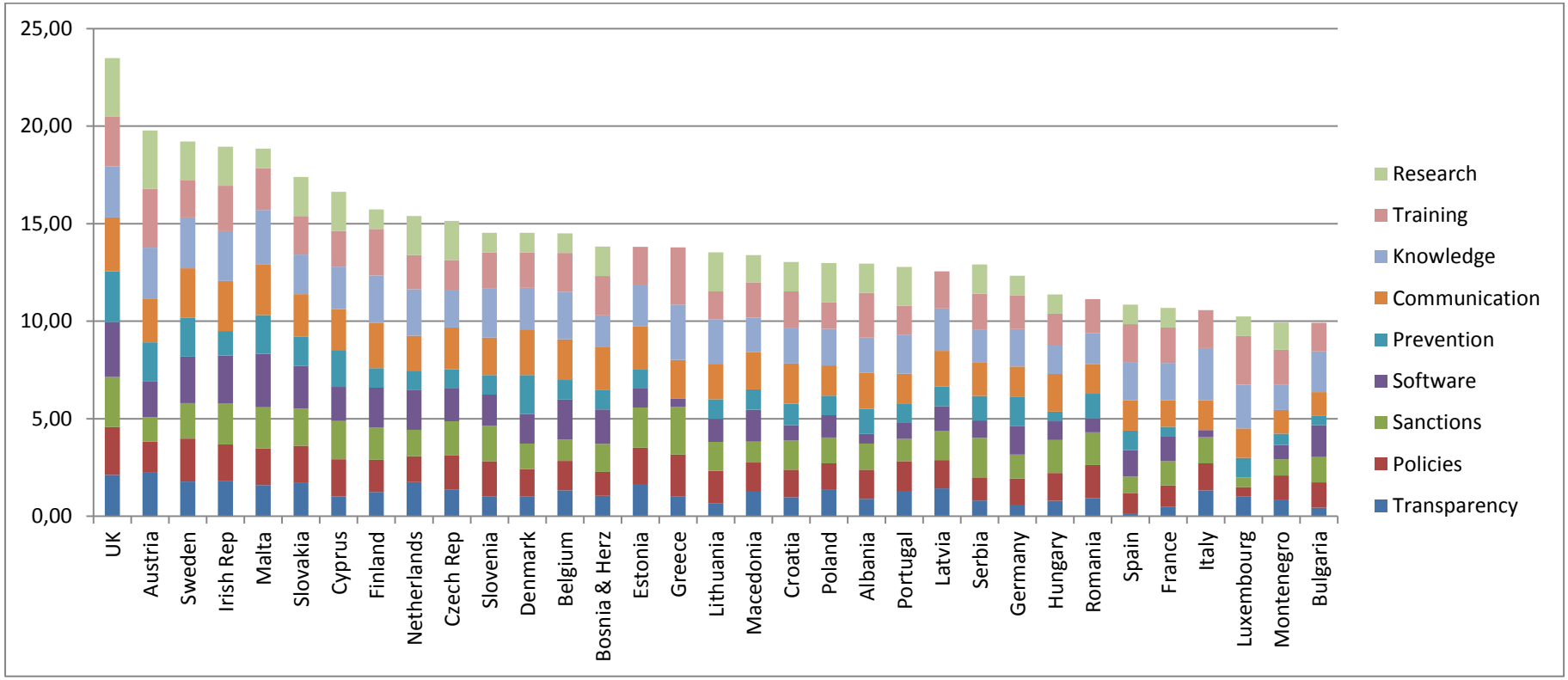

Figure 16: AIMM results for 33 European countries, IPPHEAE and SEEPPAI analysis combined

Appendix 2: Academic Integrity Maturity Model (AIMM) results for South-Eastern Europe 2016

Strengths and Opportunities applying to all six countries in the study

- There is a keen awareness in academic communities that more needs to be done to address academic misconduct by strengthening policies, practices, skills and knowledge in secondary and higher education.
- A few institutions in the region are already strengthening pedagogical practices and policies in order to encourage a culture of academic integrity.
- Some academics from across the region are currently partners in international research projects on education, including a study into ethics and integrity in doctoral studies and research.

Weaknesses and Threats applying to all six countries in the study

- The national accreditation agency for higher education does not currently include policies for academic integrity as a routine part of institutional audits.
- The SEEPPAI survey results suggest that ghost writing, contract cheating, cheating in examinations and bribery of lecturers to influence grades appear to be very common practices in higher education.
- Penalties for academic misconduct are generally lenient, inconsistently applied and generally do not serve as a deterrent.
- It is uncommon for academic staff to regularly take part in professional development to improve skills for teaching and learning.
- Rote learning and setting the same assignments year after year are common practices in higher education. This type of practice discourages original and critical thinking and encourages collusion and plagiarism by students.
- Teachers are not fully aware about sources of information used by students to understand academic integrity, including social media and other students.
- Not enough guidance and education is provided for either students or teachers on issues surrounding academic integrity.
- In general there is a focus on penalising and detecting academic misconduct rather than exploring ways of encouraging ethical values and academic integrity.

A2.1 AIMM results for Albania

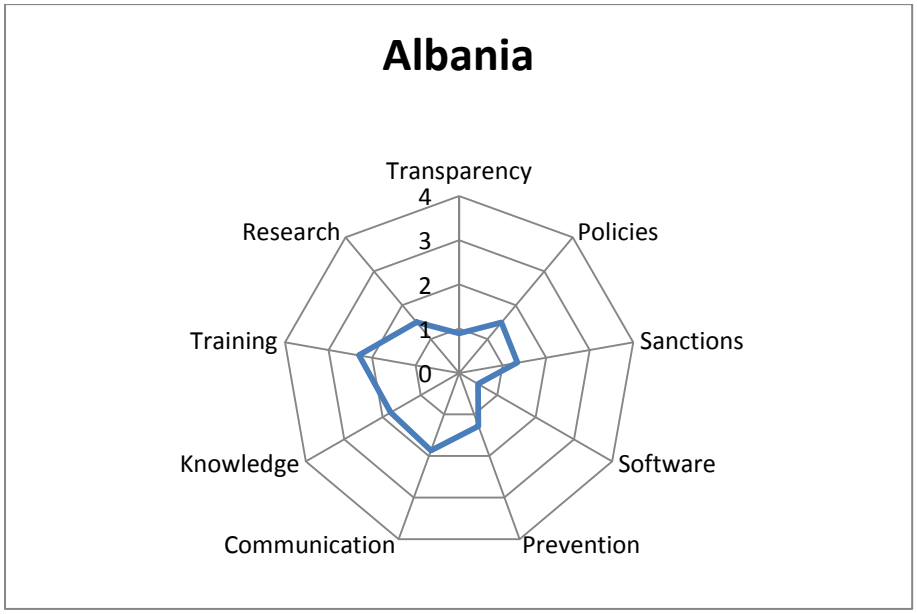

Figure 17: AIMM Radar Chart for Albania

Strengths and Opportunities specific to Albania

- The national government has recently introduced legislation to strengthen copyright laws, but not specifically targeting education.
- It is relatively common for students to receiving training in techniques for academic writing.

Weaknesses and Threats specific to Albania

- In civil society and business there is a high rate of corrupt practices, with Albania ranking 88th out of 168 countries on the current Transparency International Corruption Perception Index.
- It is unusual for software tools to be available within institutions for helping to detect plagiarism and there is currently no national corpus of academic sources available in the Albania language to use for text matching.

AIMM score: 12.96 out of 36, ranking 21st out of 33 countries.

Notes: these results are based on Survey responses from 9 HEIs, 56 Students, 30 Teachers, 4 Managers, combined with responses based on 7 student focus groups and workshops and 7 workshops and group discussions with academic staff.

A2.2 AIMM results for Bosnia and Herzegovina

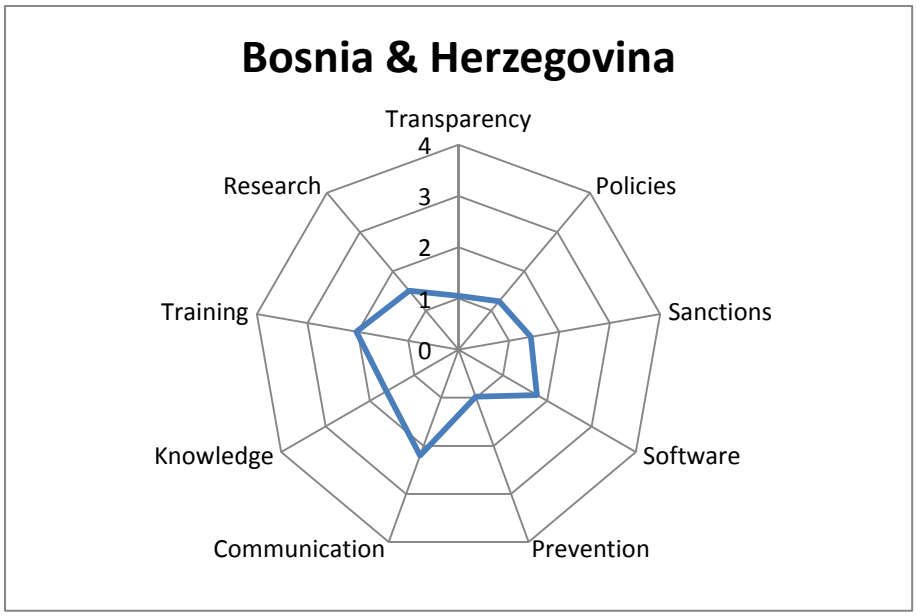

Figure 18: AIMM Radar Chart for Bosnia and Herzegovina

Strengths and Opportunities specific to Bosnia and Herzegovina

- It is common for students to receiving training in techniques for academic writing.
- Teachers believe that plagiarism and academic misconduct may be reduced through more training for students.

Weaknesses and Threats specific to Bosnia and Herzegovina

- Bosnia and Herzegovina is currently ranked 76th of 168 countries in Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index 2015.
- Bosnia and Herzegovina is divided into three entities, one of them is further divided to cantons with their own ministries of education. This fragmentation makes implementation of any common policy very difficult.
- General pessimism in academic communities - both students and teachers believe that cheating is part of the national culture, which will be difficult to change.
- Academic dishonesty of teachers and politicians discourages students to study with integrity.

AIMM score: 13.84 out of 36, with ranking 14th out of 33 countries.

Notes: these results are based on Survey responses from 5 HEIs, 64 Students, 27 Teachers, 6 Managers, combined with responses from 3 student focus groups and 1 national level interview.

A2.3 AIMM results for Croatia

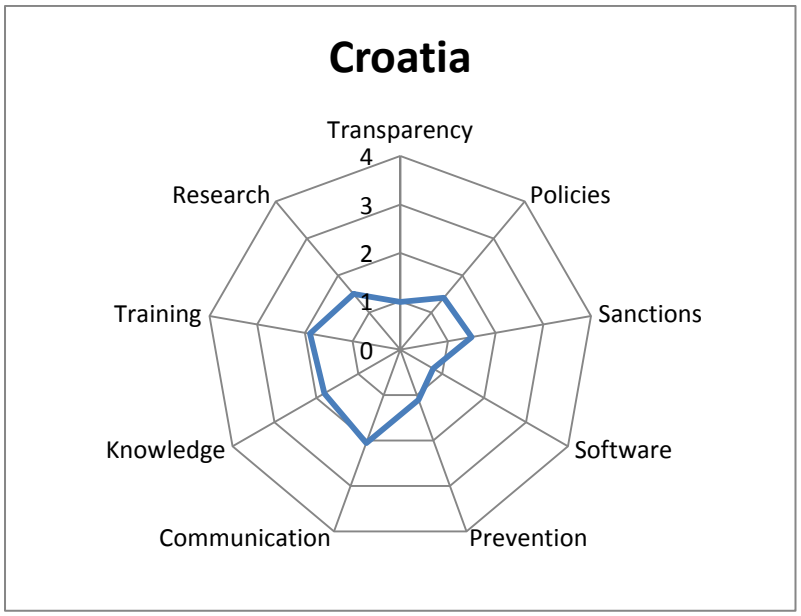

Figure 19: AIMM Radar Chart for Croatia

Strengths and Opportunities specific to Croatia

- Agency for Science and Higher Education (national accreditation agency) requires Ethical Codes of institutions to be updated every five years for re-accreditation
- According to questionnaire responses, it is more common that decisions on penalties are made by a panel rather than individual teachers.
- According to questionnaire responses, more than 60% of students become aware of plagiarism before they enter a university.

Weaknesses and Threats specific to Croatia

- Croatia is currently ranked 50th of 168 countries in Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index 2015.
- General pessimism in academic communities - both students and teachers thinks that cheating is part of the national culture which will be difficult to change.
- Students and teachers see cases of plagiarism committed by high profile people (deans, rectors, ministers) without any penalties.
- Apart from the updated ethical codex, no policies for academic integrity are required by the accreditation agencies or national government.

AIMM score: 13.03 out of 36, ranking 19th out of 33 countries.

Notes: these results are based on Survey responses from 15 HEIs, 171 Students, 81 Teachers, 9 Managers, combined with 3 student focus groups and 3 group discussions with academic staff.

A2.4 AIMM results for Montenegro

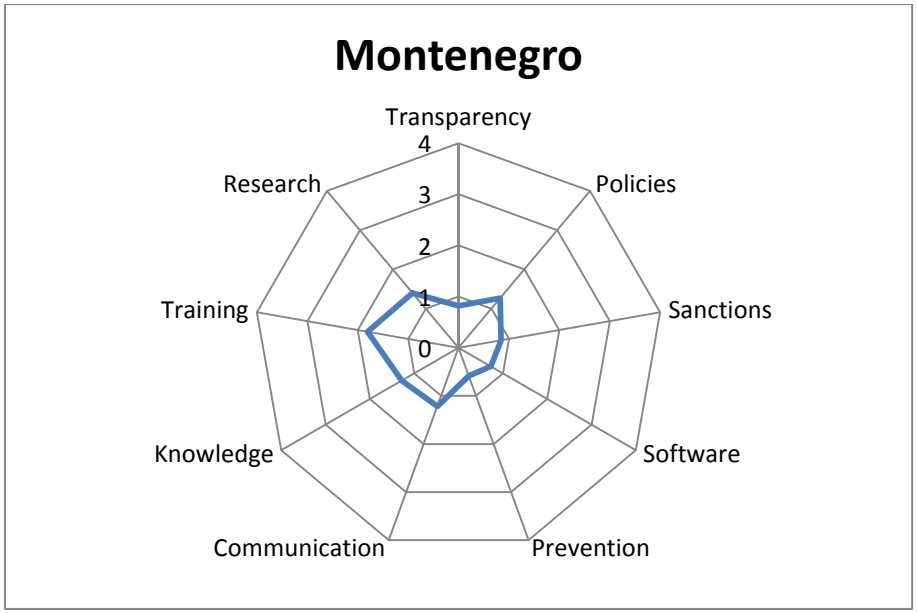

Figure 20: AIMM Radar Chart for Montenegro

Strengths and Opportunities specific to Montenegro

- The Ministry of Education is exploring options to purchase text matching software to help with detecting plagiarism.
- Students appear to be aware and supportive of the move to improve academic integrity, but not confident to discuss the issues due to wider feelings of shame.
- Where an ethics committee was used to identify issues of academic dishonesty, students were encouraged to bring an advocate with them, such as a Student Union representative.

Weaknesses and Threats specific to Montenegro

- Montenegro is currently ranked 61st of 168 countries in Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index 2015.
- Daily articles on plagiarism and corruption in newspapers, provide a cultural model suggesting that these activities are acceptable.
- Low job prospects for students without a Bachelor's degree and Master's degree push most young people into higher education and perhaps necessitating some to cheat.
- Staff encouraged not to penalise students for plagiarism in many areas. For example, over half of the students were said to have plagiarised in an assessment, but all still passed.
- Pressure on teaching staff to publish academic research papers, but without access to research databases and journal publications, prompting staff to suspend their own academic integrity by pirating these or accessing them through international colleagues.

AIMM score: 9.94 out of 36, ranked 32nd out of 33 countries
Notes: these results are based on Survey responses from 3 HEIs, 11 Students, 9 Teachers, 1 Manager, combined with responses from 2 student focus groups and workshops, 3 group discussions and workshops with academic staff. This result is based on a very limited dataset.

A2.5 AIMM results for Serbia

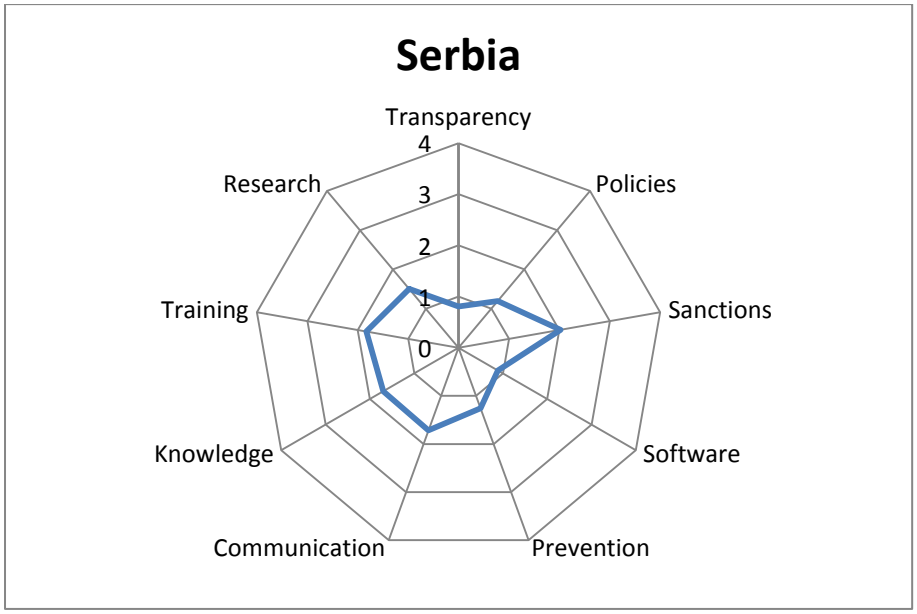

Figure 21: AIMM Radar Chart for Serbia

Strengths and Opportunities specific to Serbia

- According to questionnaire responses, more than 60% of students are aware of plagiarism before they enter university.

Weaknesses and Threats specific to Serbia

- Serbia is ranked 71st of 168 countries in Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index 2015.
- There is clear mismatch in students' and teachers' opinions on how to improve academic integrity: Students believe in education, whereas teachers prefer sanctions.

AIMM score: 12.92 out of 36, ranking 24th out of 33 countries

Notes: these results are based on Survey responses from 11 HEIs, 136 Students, 99 Teachers, 7 Managers, combined with responses from 2 student focus groups and 2 group discussions and workshops with academic staff.

A2.6 AIMM Results for “The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”

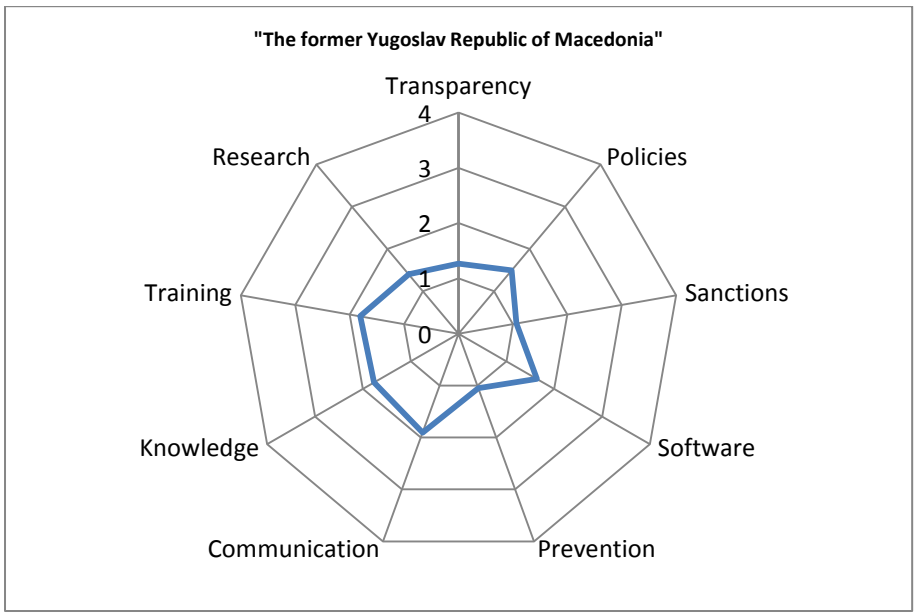

Figure 22: AIMM Radar Chart for “The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”

Strengths and Opportunities specific to “The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”

- All masters and doctoral theses are required to be deposited in a national database with software tools that can be used to check the originality of theses.
- Evidence was found of academics and a student group initiating research to counter corruption and misconduct in education.
- In conversations during a visit to “The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, students, academic staff and managers in higher education institutions were open about corrupt practices in the country and expressed interest in ideas for improving the situation both in education and more widely.

Weaknesses and Threats specific to “The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”

- “The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” is currently ranked 66th of 168 countries in Transparency International’s Corruption Perception Index 2015.
- Low job prospects for students without a Bachelor’s degree and Master’s degree push most young people into higher education and perhaps necessitating some to cheat.

AIMM score: 13.40 out of 36, ranking 18th out of 33 countries

Notes: these results are based on Survey responses from 5 HEIs, 18 Students, 9 Teachers, 3 Managers, combined with responses from 2 student focus groups and workshops, 2 group discussions and workshops with academic staff and 1 National level interview.