KAZIMIERO SIMONAVIČIAUS UNIVERSITETO VEIKLOS VERTINIMO IŠVADOS

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW REPORT OF KAZIMIERAS SIMONAVIČIUS UNIVERSITY

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CONTENT

I hereby certify that this is the final text of the institutional review report of *Kazimieras Simonavičius University*

Dr. Ana Tecilazić

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The purpose of the external review is to determine the quality of the performance of a higher education institution based on the findings of the external review, to create prerequisites for improvement of the performance of a higher education institution, to promote a culture of quality, and to inform founders, academic community, and the society about the quality of higher education institutions.

2. This review report is based on the evidence given in the self-evaluation report, additional evidence requested by the Panel, information provided by the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (hereinafter – Centre, SKVC) and a site visit, where meetings with a wide range of audiences were held.

3. The Panel was composed of the reviewers, following the Experts Selection Procedure approved by the Director of Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education on 31 December 2019 Order No. V-149 and included the following members:

   – Dr. Ana Tecilazić - Panel chairperson
   – Prof. Dr. Simona Lache - Review secretary
   – Dr. Natalie Aleksandra Gurvits-Suits - Panel member (academic)
   – Assoc. Prof. Peter Gjørtle - Panel member (academic)
   – Dr. Saulius Olencevičius - Panel member (social partner)
   – Mr. Jakub Bakonyi - Panel member (student)

4. As a result of external review **Kazimieras Simonavičius University** is given a **positive evaluation**.

5. Evaluation areas:

Area	Assessment with points*
MANAGEMENT	2
QUALITY ASSURANCE	2
STUDIES AND RESEARCH (ART)	2
IMPACT ON REGIONAL AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT	3

*5 points - **excellent**– the area is rated exceptionally well in the national context and internationally;

4 points – **very good** – the area is rated very well in the national context and internationally, without any drawbacks;

3 points – **good** – the area is being developed systematically, without any major drawbacks;

2 points – **satisfactory** – the area meets the minimum requirements, and there are drawbacks that must be addressed;

1 point - **unsatisfactory** – the area does not meet the minimum requirements, there are fundamental drawbacks.

6. **4** examples of good practice were found; **25** recommendations are made.

II. INTRODUCTION

2.1. Background of the review process

7. The external review of *Kazimieras Simonavičius University* (hereafter referred to as KSU or the University) was organised by the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education and carried out in October 2023 by an Expert Panel of international experts (hereinafter – the Panel). It was conducted in accordance with the Procedure for the External Evaluation and Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions and Branches of Foreign Higher Education Institutions, Evaluation Areas and Indicators approved by the Minister of Education, Science and Sport of the Republic of Lithuania (hereinafter – the Procedure) on 19 of December 2019 Order No. V-1529 and the Methodology for Conducting an Institutional Review in Higher Education approved by the Director of SKVC on 9 of March 2020 Order No V-32 (hereinafter – the Methodology).

8. According to the Procedure the external review consists of the following stages: submission of a self-evaluation report prepared by the higher education institution to the Centre; formation of an expert panel and analysis of the self-evaluation report; expert panel visit to the higher education institution; the preparation of the external review report, decision-making on the external review as well as accreditation and publication thereof; follow-up activities aimed at improving the performance of the higher education institution, taking into account the external review report.

9. At the preparatory stage of the external review, the Panel received a Self-Evaluation Report (hereinafter – SER) with annexes. The Review coordinator from SKVC provided to the Panel additional information about the University, as set in the Methodology (Chapter 26), including statistical data on students and staff; financial data; findings from the ex-post study field reviews, institutional reviews and evaluations of research and development activities; information on violations of academic ethics from the Office of the Ombudsperson for Academic Ethics and Procedures of the Republic of Lithuania. The Panel requested additional information, such as: KSU Quality Guide; Regulations/ procedures mentioned in the Quality Guide (e.g., related to Admission, Alumni Relations Management, Career Planning, Monitoring, Communication and Public Relations Management, Examination session organisation and study results evaluation procedure, External Programme Evaluation and Accreditation, Finance Management, Student Affairs Management, Human Resources Qualification Enhancement Programme, Internal Audit processes, Internal Monitoring and Evaluation of Study Programme Quality, Internal Study Programme Quality Monitoring and Evaluation, International Relations Management, Organising and Implementing the Study Process, Personnel Management Process, Procedure for the recognition of foreign qualifications, Procurement and Infrastructure Management processes, Study Process Organisation and Implementation Procedure, Study Regulations governing the study process); Current number of students enrolled at KSU; Graduates survey results; List of academic staff employed by KSU and their FTE; List of publications of KSU academic staff; Examples of annual reports elaborated by administrative and academic departments.

10. The site visit was undertaken after a training session organised by SKVC staff and preparatory Panel meetings, held on 21 September 2023 and 12 October 2023. The Panel visited the university during 17-19 October 2023, where it had meetings with different internal and external stakeholders, as follows:

- Owner, Rector and Vice-rectors;

- Staff responsible for preparation of the Self-Evaluation Report
- Members of the University Council
- Members of the University Senate
- Heads of Academic Units (Deans of Faculties, Heads of Academic Departments)
- Students and Representatives of Students Union
- Representatives of Quality Department
- Teaching and Research Staff
- Graduates
- Social Partners
- Administrative Staff (including responsible for the infrastructure and IT)

Subsequently, the Panel met both in-person and virtually to review and agree conclusions and recommendations. The review report was finalised by correspondence and submitted to the SKVC.

11. In line with the Procedure the external review focused on four areas covered by the evaluation indicators and related criteria: **Management**, **Quality Assurance**, **Studies and Research (Art)** and **Impact on Regional and National Development**. In analysing the evidence collected, the Panel also gave due consideration to the recommendations of the previous review, which took place in 2015.

12. The review of a higher education institution assesses each of the evaluation areas with one of five ratings: **excellent** – 5 points – the area is rated exceptionally well in the national context and internationally; **very good** – 4 points – the area is rated very well in the national context and internationally, without any drawbacks; **good** – 3 points – the area is being developed systematically, without any major drawbacks; **satisfactory** – 2 points – the area meets the minimum requirements, and there are drawbacks that must be addressed; **unsatisfactory** – 1 point – the area does not meet the minimum requirements, there are fundamental drawbacks.

13. The decision on **positive** evaluation is made when none of the evaluation areas is evaluated unsatisfactorily (1 point). The decision on **negative** evaluation is made when at least one of the evaluation areas is evaluated unsatisfactory (1 point).

14. In line with the Methodology the review report, prepared by the Panel is reviewed by SKVC and sent to the higher education institution to submit comments on factual errors and the evaluations based thereon. The Panel revises the report in response to the comments from the higher education institution (if applicable) and submits it to SKVC.

15. The Panel received from Kazimieras Simonavičius University the comments and considered them. As a result, minor changes were made to the report, without impacting on the conclusions.

16. After the Panel considers comments from the higher education institution (if applicable) and finalizes it, the report is considered by the external Commission of the Higher Education Institutions' Review (hereinafter – the Commission), set up by SKVC. On the basis of the proposal, made by the Commission, provisioned in the Commission's regulations, approved by the order of the Director of SKVC on 8 of January, 2020 order No. V-5, SKVC takes one of the decisions:

    - to evaluate the performance of the higher education institution positively;

The higher education institution shall be entitled to lodge a reasoned complaint to the Commission for Appeals formed by the Centre.

The decisions of the Centre and the Commission for Appeals may be appealed against in accordance with the procedure established by the Law on Administrative Proceedings of the Republic of Lithuania.

17. On the basis of the external review decision SKVC takes one of the following decisions on the **accreditation** of the higher education institution:

- to **accredit for a period of seven years** if performance of the higher education institution is evaluated positively;

- to **accredit for a period of three years** if performance of the higher education institution is evaluated negatively;

- to **provide no accreditation** if the repeated external review results of the higher education institution are negative.

18. SKVC announces the decision on the external review together with the conclusions of the external review and the decision on the accreditation of the higher education institution on its website. The higher education institution respectively announces the decision on the review of the higher education institution together with the external review report on its website and maintains it until the next external review.

2.2. Background information about the institution

19. Kazimieras Simonavicius University is a private university that developed from Vilnius Business Law Academy (an institution established in 2003), with the permission to conduct integrated law studies and to issue the diploma of Master's degree in law to its graduates. In January 2012 a change of shareholders (stockholders) took place, followed by the restructuring of the institution, which acquired the current name of Kazimieras Simonavicius University and was granted by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania, on February 8, 2012, to conduct university studies and related activities (licence No. 002081). On August 23, 2012, Kazimieras Simonavicius University merged with the private non-state higher education institution Business and Management Academy, which was integrated into the University's structure.

20. Since July 2021, Kazimieras Simonavicius University is part of the Synergetica educational group of three private higher education institutions, together with University of Applied Social Sciences and International School of Law and Business. This collaboration has enabled the University to step into a new stage of strategic development, as it is stated in the SER.

21. According to its Statute, the supreme management body of the University is the General Meeting, which reunites the shareholders. The Rector "is the sole management body, responsible for leading the university, acting on its behalf and representing it". The Rector is elected/ dismissed by the General Meeting and, together with the Vice-Rector, Chancellor, Head of Administration and Chief Financier form the University administration team.

22. According to the SER, "the University's self-governance is ensured by the Senate and the Council." The Senate currently consists of 20 members, including: 12 professors, 4 associate professors, 2 lecturers, and 2 student representatives. The Academic Council includes 23 members:

Lithuanian and international academics, representatives of business and social partners, student representatives.

23. Students' interests are represented by the Student Union of the University. There are two students in the Senate and one student in the Academic Council. Students are also involved in the study programme committees when existing programmes are being reviewed or new programmes are being developed.

24. KSU has currently three units with faculty status, all located in Vilnius, which conduct educational activities:

- Institute of Law and Technology (former Faculty of Law, until 2021),
- Institute of Creative Economy (Former Institute of Creative Society and Economy, until 2021),
- Business Innovation School (former Business School).

25. The scientific research is conducted through three units:

- Big Data Excellence Centre, established in 2018,
- Next Society Institute, established in 2021,
- Digital Aviation LAB, established in 2023.

26. The University structure also includes four departments, supporting specific activities:

- Science and Competence Centre,
- Study Department,
- International Relations and Strategic Development Department,
- Marketing and Communication Department.

27. The University currently offers 10 study programmes:

- 6 first-cycle (Bachelor's) study programmes in the fields of Communication, Management, Business, and Marketing,
- 3 second-cycle (Master's) study programmes in the fields of Law, Management, and Communication,
- 1 integrated study programme in the field of Law.
  In addition, 2 new third-cycle (doctoral) study offerings in the fields of Law and Management are being prepared to be submitted for evaluation.

28. As of March 30, 2023, KSU had 431 students, distributed as follows: 220 are enrolled in the Institute of Law and Technology, 88 – in the Institute of Creative Economy and 123 – in the Business Innovation School. 8.89% of the total student population are international students, studying in the field of Law and Management. According to University statistics for October 2023, 530 students are enrolled at KSU in the academic year 2023/2024.

29. During the academic year 2022/2023, 91 students graduated from the University, out of which 38 – from first-cycle studies and 16 – from second-cycle studies and 37 – from integrated Law studies. The total number of graduates since its establishment in 2003 is 1318.

30. In the academic year 2022/2023 KSU had 76 academic staff, consisting of 62 employed for teaching activities (including 18 professors and 18 associate professors, all holding a doctoral

degree) and 13 researchers (9 of them with a doctoral degree). 22,6% of the total number was represented by international staff, with approximately equal percentage distribution of teachers and researchers. The number of teaching staff has decreased in 2023/2024 to 48 (11 professors, 15 associate professors and 22 lecturers). Only one staff is full-time teacher.

31. KSU was externally evaluated in November 2015 by SKVC, and accredited for a period of six years, according to SKVC Director's Order No. SV6-1 of January 19, 2016. For the current external evaluation, the self-evaluation group, appointed by the Rector on February 23, 2022, and renewed on April 25, 2023, conducted the self-evaluation process in the University and prepared the self-evaluation report.

III. ANALYSIS BY EVALUATION AREAS

3.1. Management

Management area is analysed in accordance with the following indicators and criteria, set up in the Methodology.

> *1.1. Compliance of the higher education institution's strategic action plan with the mission, assurance of its implementation:*
>
> *1.1.1. The strategic action plan is consistent with the mission of the higher education institution, legal acts regulating research and study activities and it takes into account the provisions of the national research and study policy, the European Higher Education Area and the European Research Area;*
> *1.1.2. The parts of the strategic action plan (analysis of the current situation, priorities and aims, objectives of the activities, implementation means, resources, planned performance indicators) are appropriate and justified;*
> *1.1.3. Regular monitoring of the implementation of the strategic action plan is carried out and the results are used to improve performance management.*

32. KSU has developed a strategy for 2019-2023, which includes the institution's mission and vision, goals, values, strategic development and expansion of the University, strategic principles, a SWOT analysis, and the strategic action plan. The document is published on the University website both in Lithuanian and English.

33. KSU's declared mission is "to enhance the scientific leadership and competitiveness of Lithuanian society by creating new knowledge and innovations, and introducing the principles of sustainable development in life, culture, technology, social relations, politics and other areas", and it sees itself at becoming "the most advanced private institution of science and studies in Lithuania".

34. As the Panel has learned from the SER and the interviews with the University leadership, the KSU strategy is, to a large extent, consistent with the mission, legal acts regulating research and study activities and it takes into account the provisions of the national research and study policy, the European Higher Education Area and the European Research Area. However, neither the documents read by the Panel, or the interviews that were conducted provided clear evidence on sustainable development principles and tools available and implemented by the institution in achieving its mission. At the same time, the human resources and the research potential do not

match strategic institutional objectives in relation to a global competitiveness in research. Although globally recognised researchers are aligned to the institution, in particular through the Council and the Senate, the total FTE (12,88 – as of October 2023) is very low when considering the ambitions of the institution (e.g., launching two new Master's programmes and one Doctoral degree, or opening new programmes in new study fields).

35. The strategic action plan is part of the strategy of 2019-2023. It sets tasks, measures, periods of implementation, responsible persons, and results for all the strategic goals mentioned in the University strategy.

36. The document is appropriately designed and justified. It reflects the strategic goals. There is a clear continuation of new strategic objectives in the new draft institutional Strategy, building on the implementation results of the previous period while also embedding recommendations from the previous external institutional review.

37. An annual progress report on implementation of KSU's strategy is prepared based on individual reports of each of the University administrative structures. This report is part of the Rector's annual report, which is presented to the Owner, Council and Senate.

38. Although from the discussions with the Rector it resulted that the strategic action plan is regularly monitored and implemented, it is not straightforward to what extent the results are used to improve performance management.

1.2. Effectiveness of process management of the higher education institution:

1.2.1. A clear structure for governance, decision making and distribution of responsibilities is defined;
1.2.2. Regular process management analysis is performed, preconditions for process improvement and risk management are planned;
1.2.3. Stakeholders are involved in the management process at an adequate level.

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39. The governance structure, decision-making, and distribution of responsibilities are defined by the internal regulations of the institution (e.g., Statute). According to its Statute, KSU is governed by the General Stakeholders Meeting, which currently consists of one person: the Owner. At the same time, in reality, the Rector is the sole governance authority and is supported in achieving the tasks by two advisory bodies: the Council and the Senate.

40. While the SER mentions that "the University's self-governance is ensured by the Senate and the Council", in the Statute it is affirmed that "the Senate shall be a community-based institution that shall serve as an advisory body to the Rector on the matters of education and studies" and the "Academic Council shall become the advisory body for strategic management". Next, the Statute provides a set of responsibilities for the Senate members, including decision-making related to education and research activities, which induces some confusion regarding its declared role.

41. The Rector appoints the Vice-Rectors and the Chancellor. As presented in the University flowchart, currently there is one Vice-Rector which is responsible for the Study and Competence Centre, The Study Department and the International Relations and Strategic Development Department; the Chancellor oversees the activity of the Head of Administration, Chief Financier

and Marketing and Communication Department. Currently, the Owner holds the position of Chancellor, as well.

42. The three structures responsible for organising Bachelor's and Master's studies (i.e., Institute of Law and Technology, Institute of Creative Economy, Business Innovation School) are under the direct jurisdiction of the Rector, together with one the structures that conducts scientific research (Next Society Institute). The other two research bodies operate directly under the Business Innovation School.

43. From interviews with different groups (Rector, Council members, Senate members) it is obvious that the reality does not fully reflect the regulation. Although the SER presents the Senate as a "an advisory body to the Rector on the matters of education and studies" and the "Academic Council the advisory body for strategic management" the Statute gives decision-making powers to the Senate (such as "proposing, preparing and approving the documents regulating the quality of education and studies and proposing and approving the study programs and study regulations"). Moreover, the Panel learned from the interviews that the perception of the Senate was to have a more advisory role while the Rector is truly the sole governing authority.

44. At the same time, although the quality of study programmes is explicitly at the core of the institutional mission, the responsibilities over the quality policy are not sufficiently supported at the highest managerial level. The Panel learned from the interviews that the Rector was responsible for all areas, while in the Vice-Rector's responsibility laid the international cooperation. While the Vice-Rector declared that he also had quality assurance in his portfolio, there was clear evidence from the interview with the quality assurance group that the responsibility for quality assurance and enhancement of learning and teaching rests at the level of the Head of Study Department.

45. Regular process management analysis is performed in line with ISO standards, preconditions for process improvement and risk management are planned. Based on the documents provided by the University, the Panel is able to conclude that a Risk management procedure, applying FMEA model, is in place and periodic risk assessment reports are issued.

46. The Council and Senate include student representatives. However, based on the information received at the meetings, the role of students in Council and Senate is not sufficient: student representatives should actively participate in all Council/ Senate meetings and be part of the decision-making process.

47. The Council members, whom the Panel was able to talk to, joined that structure based on invitation from the Owner or the rectorate, given their personal contacts or previous involvement with KSU in projects. The Senate members are academics employed by KSU and scientists/ recognized artists from other institutions, who consider themselves more advisors to the Rector rather than decision makers for several education and research processes, as provided by the Statute.

48. During the site-visit it was obvious that, at least for some study fields (e.g., aviation management, law), representatives of employers directly collaborated with the academic departments, however without a systematic approach or clear policies for their involvement in the management process.

49. According to the SER and the discussions in the meetings with the self-evaluation group and the quality responsible, KSU systematically collects and analyses data related to general information about study programmes, admission requirements and procedures, number of admitted students and their scores; information on student employment and graduate career monitoring. Students fill in surveys after each semester and graduates are tracked by using a three-levels model: just after graduation and then, after one year and three years from graduation.

50. During the discussions both with students and Head of Study Department the Panel learned about the specific focus put by the University on student centred learning. The students' progress is monitored, and students in risk of drop-out are identified and addressed. The panel specifically commends the efforts that the institution invests in preventing students' drop-out by using learning analytics and applying individual student learning strategies.

51. However, although the institution collects valuable sets of data about students and graduates, there are no explicit evidence-based policies to support developments. The panel learned from the interviews that many activities are being performed as a result of these analyses, but they fall outside the internal quality assurance arrangement.

52. KSU publishes on its website information about the study programmes offer, including their description, admission requirements and study fees, programme outcomes, acquired qualifications and career opportunities; this is complemented with different testimonials from graduates. At the same time, information about research projects and publications, scientific events, and cooperation with social partners are available to the wider public. The Panel was able to find it easily on the website and concluded it was clear, accurate and accessible.

53. As it is shown in the documents provided by the institution and confirmed during the interviews, the Rector's annual report, which includes information about performance of the institution, is presented to the Owner, Council and Senate. It is however only the Owner that can take action for development, since the Council is an advisory body and the Senate is seen as such by its members, although it is empowered with decision-making attributes by the KSU Statute.

> *1.4.4. Conditions are created for the academic staff to improve the knowledge and skills required for teaching and research activities;*
> *1.4.5. Conditions are created for non-academic staff to develop competencies.*

54. The staff management process at KSU, including formation, management and evaluation of academic and non-academic staff, is conducted according to the Personnel Management Procedure and the Procedure for the Selection and Attestation of Pedagogical and Research staff; the latter includes criteria for academic and research staff, which are in line with the Lithuanian legislation and based on education and academic degree, teaching/ research experience, scientific performance, personal initiative and leadership. Discussions with staff, both academic and non-academic, confirmed that they were aware of the principles and rules governing the staff management at KSU.

55. The institution currently has 48 academic staff employed with work contracts: 11 professors, 15 associate professors and 22 lecturers, out of which only one is employed full-time (but has also administrative tasks). Given the total number of students from October 2023, which is 530, and considering the FTE of 12,88 reported by the University, the student-teacher ratio is 41:1. The ratio is even higher when looking at the statistical official information provided by SKVC: 54,34 (in 2018-2019), 55,09 (in 2019-2020), 50,76 (in 2020-2021), 45,61 (in 2021-2022), 50,30 (in 2022-2023). Therefore, the Panel considers that the institution has insufficient in-house academic staff to support its growing objectives that include the strategic objective of increasing the number of students, launching new study programmes at Master and Doctoral level and expanding to other disciplines.

56. The academic (teaching and research) staff is selected taking into account the legal provisions in Lithuania and the criteria set by the institution in its own specific procedure (i.e., Procedure for the Selection and Attestation of Pedagogical and Research staff). This ensures appropriate qualification of the personnel employed by KSU. According to the data provided by the SER, during the past five years the break-down by academic degrees is relatively steady, lecturers fluctuating from 45% to 55%, while the number of professors and associate professors form the other half of the total number. The gender distribution is balanced (maximum 10% difference from year to year, in one way or the other) and the structure by age, adequate. During the interviews with students, it was confirmed a high degree of satisfaction regarding the teachers holding didactic activities.

57. Regarding the non-academic staff, the Panel met most of them during the interview and is able to conclude that they cover the needs for performing activities according to the institution's goals. There are 22 full-time employed staff (the vast majority women), and the number has remained the same during the last four years.

58. Conditions are created, to some extent, for the academic staff to improve the knowledge and skills required for teaching and research activities. The SER mentions different training and subject-specific seminars and round tables organised for academic staff. Staff mobility, mainly in the framework of Erasmus+ programmes, is also offered by the University; according to the SER, 20% of the academic staff benefit from this opportunity, annually. However, during the meeting with teaching and research staff, the Panel understood that responsibility over upgrading their skills and knowledge rests mainly with the individuals, while there is not a systematic institutional policy or approach to professional and academic staff development. At the same time, staff

mobility is regarded more as a reward for good professional results than as an opportunity for capacity building.

59. The university Chancellor is responsible for the conditions created for non-academic staff to develop competencies. From the interviews during the site-visit the Panel learned that the development plan was based on the needs collected from the employees, included in the overall annual plan of the University, and budgeted accordingly. Participation in trainings or different formative events is possible, on demand. The staff mobility opportunities are used to a higher extent and, practically, all members of the administration have benefitted from Erasmus mobility grants for training stages abroad.

1.5. Efficiency of financial and learning resource management:
1.5.1. Financial resources are planned, allocated and used rationally;   *1.5.2. Various financial resources for the implementation of higher education activities are attracted;*   *1.5.3. Learning resources for provision of studies and research (art) activities are planned and used rationally;*   *1.5.4. Learning resources for conducting studies and research (art) activities are appropriate, sufficient and available.*

60. As described in the SER, the Chancellor is responsible for drafting the budget, which is planned annually, at the beginning of the academic year, and approved by the Rector. Its execution is annually audited by the financial director of the "Synergetica" educational group, which KSU is part of.

61. The revenues and expenditures of KSU over 2020-2022 were presented to the panel in the documents submitted by the institution: over 50% of the revenues come from the tuition fees; the share of project-based funding have increased in the last three years from 21% to 33%; other significant sources are represented by lifelong learning services, which also have increased from 1.8% to 4.5%, and state funding (quite fluctuating from 3.5% in 2020 to 7.1% in 2021 and again 3.5% in 2022). In terms of expenditures, about 45% are salaries; the expenditures with projects increased from 25% in 2020 to 35% in 2022; a slight increase of expenditures with infrastructure is also observed (from 160,000 EUR in 2020 to 179,000 EUR in 2022). The balance is positive every year, constantly above 85,000 EUR.

62. The institution makes constant efforts to diversify its sources of revenues; apart from the tuition fees, the most important financial resource attracted is represented by projects.

63. From the data presented by the University and from the discussion with the Owner (who also holds the position of Chancellor, as already mentioned), the Panel was able to conclude that financial planning is prepared annually considering main expenses and revenues. KSU has a clear vision of their financial liabilities and assets. Various sources of funding are attracted including project based and the ones related to lifelong learning activities.

64. Development of University infrastructure is one of the strategic objectives within the 2019-2023 Strategy and is kept as such for the next period, according to the draft strategy 2024-2030. The institution has in place procedures for Procurement and Infrastructure Management, IT, and Data Security Management, which set requirements for planning and adequate use of resources. KSU

follows legal requirements when purchasing new resources and updating the existing ones. The interview with students and staff, both academic and non-academic, confirmed that student, graduates, and staff needs are considered as well as latest labour market trends. As an example, the internet connection has been recently improved in the University, following the feedback from students and graduates.

65. KSU conducts its activities in a new and modern building, accessible to people with special needs on mobility, which accommodate spaces for education and research, administrative offices and rooms dedicated to student activities (such as Student Union and Research Student Unit). The Panel visited the University premises: lecture rooms with number of seats ranging from 32 to 90, seminar rooms for 8 to 24 attendees, computer labs with 24 workplaces, different offices. The learning environment is friendly and well equipped, also suitable for the hybrid education that the institution is applying to a large extent. A wireless 500 Mbps internet connection is provided and access to the Office 365 cloud services is ensured for both University's premises, and remote students. An e-learning platform based on Moodle is used for teaching activities and several digital applications assist the academic and administrative processes of KSU. The library has a well-defined location and is endowed with scientific and educational books, practical guides, periodicals, etc. Students and graduates were satisfied by the learning resources put at their disposal by the institution. The Panel considers the infrastructure and learning resources offered by KSU are adequate.

66. **In summary,** KSU is conducting its activities following a strategic plan in accordance with its mission, however without clearly addressing the sustainable development goals mentioned in the document and with challenges in achieving objectives related to global competitiveness in research, given the limited human resources and research potential. The management should be improved by clarifying the roles of the various governance structures and ensuring the consistency between the provisions of the KSU Statute and how they are operationalized. The institution benefits, to some extent, from human and financial resources to achieve its strategic goals. The infrastructure is modern and adequate for conducting education and research.

Based on the evidence and analysis provided above, the Panel concludes the following:

– KSU has a Strategic Action Plan, which is, to a large extent, consistent with its mission and its implementation is assured.

– The KSU management process lacks coherence and clarity since the internal regulations are not fully reflected in reality and the members of the Senate understand their role more as advisors than decision-makers. Stakeholders are not involved in the management process at an adequate level.

– KSU publicly provides information on its performance and management effectiveness, which is available to all stakeholders.

– KSU has set up a human resource management system which can be majorly improved by creating a systematic institutional policy or approach to professional and academic staff development.

– Financial and learning resources are planned, allocated and used rationally and are sufficient for fulfilling KSU's mission.

67. **Judgment:** *the area meets the minimum requirements, but there are drawbacks that must be addressed* and is given 2 points.

68. **Recommendations for the area:**

- Develop a robust strategy of the institution, aligning the University aspirations with its potential.

- Revise the University management system by making a clear distinction of the roles of Senate, as a decision-making body, and the Council, as advisory body.

- Make sure that all internal stakeholders, including students and full-time academic staff, are duly represented in the management structures, with clear and effectively applied roles.

- Make a better use of the results of monitoring of the implementation of the University's strategic plans in improving the quality of its activities.

- Consider embedding the strategic action plan into the performance management system by using its objectives and targets as performance indicators for departments and individual employees.

- Elevate the importance of quality assurance by establishing clear responsibilities at the highest managerial level and providing adequate resources for quality policy implementation.

- Develop a more strategic approach to attracting employers and the business sector into the activities of institutions.

- Strengthen the University's human resources, in particular to increase the number of in-house academic staff (full-time) that would assure sustainability of quality and further institutional developments, taking into account the strategic objectives of increasing student enrolment, launching new study programmes, and expanding into new disciplines.

- Develop a systematic institutional policy for professional and academic staff development on a regular basis.

3.2. Quality Assurance

Quality Assurance area is analysed in accordance with the following indicators and criteria, set up in the Methodology.

2.1. Implementation and effectiveness of the internal quality assurance system:
2.1.1. The higher education institution has approved and made publicly available internal quality assurance documents that are consistent with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area; *2.1.2. Internal quality assurance measures of planning, implementation and improvement are appropriate, applied periodically and ensure the involvement of the whole institution and stakeholders;* *2.1.3. Processes for planning, implementation, monitoring, periodic evaluation and development of activities are specified;* *2.1.4. Students and academic and non-academic staff of the institution receive effective support;*

> *2.1.5. Provisions and procedures for academic integrity, tolerance and non-discrimination, appeal and ethics are specified and applied;*
> *2.1.6. The results of the external review are used to improve the performance of the higher education institution.*

69. All KSU processes are organised following the standard ISO 9001:2015. According to the SER "detailed information on the implementation of the University's quality policy is publicly announced and presented in the annual external quality management audit report" which is an Audit Report confirming the compliance with ISO 9001:2015. This cannot be considered as a proof of having a quality policy compliant with the ESG. Moreover, its current Strategy (Measure 1.3.1. Regular audit of the University's quality management in accordance with the ISO standard) does not give an assurance that the institution develops its internal quality assurance system in line with ESG i.e., SKVC's indicators and criteria transposing the ESG.

70. In the SER, KSU has provided a self-assessment of compliance of its internal quality assurance system with ESG, which is more declarative, and does not provide sufficient evidence. For example, the institution declares to have its internal policies in relation to teaching staff (ESG 1.5) by stating that "the qualification improvement of University's lecturers and the annual organisation of training activities for the pedagogical staff are described and established in the KSU Quality Guide's *Personnel Management Process*; additionally, a *Human Resources Qualification Enhancement Programme"*. This statement refers to procedures that may support this specific standard but the procedures themselves are not sufficient to assure the competence of the institution's staff. They do not contain criteria, measures, indicators, actions, monitoring system, development plans etc. In other word, the institution has no academic staff recruitment and development policy. At the same time, from the interviews held with the Self-evaluation group, Quality Department, or teaching and research staff, it was clear that the ISO quality management system cannot replace an internal quality assurance system based on the ESG.

71. Given the arguments mentioned above, the Panel concludes that the institution has approved and made publicly available internal quality assurance documents that are not entirely consistent with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area. Quality at KSU is associated with ISO Quality management system rather than with ESGs (which do not seem to be part of the quality culture of the institution). Regarding teaching and learning, the internal quality assurance system lacks clarity and formal development based on own standards/ requirements.

72. As described in the SER and confirmed during interviews, the quality of study programmes is the responsibility of the Study Programme Committees. There are three programme committees that correspond to the three fields of study and three academic departments. These committees are responsible for a total of 10 study programmes, currently offered by KSU. All committees include, besides academic staff, social partners and one student; they review and update the study programmes periodically, according to the feedback received from students, graduates, and labour market. The SER states that all interested parties have an opportunity to contribute to improving the quality of studies and specific actions are listed that demonstrate engagement of internal and external stakeholders in the study programmes developments. The panel has received examples of assurance that internal and external stakeholders are involved, to a certain extent, in developments related to study programmes.

73. The Vice-Rector declared by the institution to be responsible for quality assurance seems to limit its activities to simply overseeing the Study Department while the actual responsibility for quality assurance and enhancement of learning and teaching rests at the level of the Head of Study Department.

74. Apart from ad-hoc actions taken at programme/ department level, the Panel lacked clear evidence, therefore concluded that internal quality assurance measures of planning, implementation and improvement are not applied systematically; they seem to be rather spontaneous and informally. The actual involvement of internal and external stakeholders and their systematic contribution to the improvement of the quality of programmes is not sufficient.

75. Processes for planning, implementation, monitoring, periodic evaluation system, development of activities are specified in accordance with the ISO Quality management system, but the Panel is not assured that these processes are used to support the internal quality assurance system appropriate for a HEI, neither they seemed to be functioning sufficiently to enhance the quality of teaching and learning. These procedures give an appropriate framework that includes the steps needed for implementation of processes and particular responsibilities but are set to improve primarily efficiency.

76. On the other side, the institution developed additional and own tools that it uses to plan, implement, and evaluate its actions in relation to quality teaching and learning. For example, the Study Department collects data about student admission, progression, completion, and employability. The panel was impressed how these data were systematically analysed and the results systematically used to improve the performance. More specifically, the institution is commended for applying an individualised approach to prevent drop out and for designing individualised learning strategies for students in risk of non-completion and individual learning plans that make it possible for students to take the studies at different pace. The efficiency of these measures can be seen from the results such as 70% completion rate and 80% employment rate in the first 6 months after graduation.

77. Another example in relation to learning and teaching modes and approaches is related to how the institution applies different teaching methods, adapted to the specificity of its students (i.e., working students). Thus, KSU is commended for promoting activating learning and teaching modes such as gamification, project-based learning, case studies and internships, research-based learning.

78. Although these activities are authentic, implemented systematically and present a common practice, they are most evidently efficient, in line with the ESG, however, they are not explicit, set or prescribed by clear policies.

79. Students receive adequate and comprehensive academic, administrative, financial, career and psychological support. The support is adapted to students with special needs, including international students and students with disabilities. The University monitors and analyses satisfaction with student services using student and graduate surveys, mid-semester meetings with study groups and feedback from the Students' Union representatives. The results are communicated to students and used to enhance the quality of student support.

80. The institution demonstrates a student-centred learning approach at various levels: being substantially funded by the students fees the institution develops studies that may attract students

as well as it designs delivery models that may accommodate students with other obligations such as full-time work.

81. Students value the quality of teaching, the uniqueness of study programmes, such as aviation management and fashion industry, and the flexibility of study process, which allows them to easily combine studies with work and personal life. The policy of distance learning and lecture recording is highly appreciated.

82. The institution makes a good use of online delivery of study programmes while keeping the assessments onsite. Institutional support to students from teachers in the online teaching and learning environments is ensured using Moodle, e-library, additional training for the teaching staff, constant technical support to students and teachers.

83. Students get support from the KSU to engage in research activities. Students' Research Union is recognised as a good example of introducing students to research activities conducted jointly with their teachers. They also get good support in establishing contacts with potential employers, through internships, joint projects with the business community or through teachers' networks.

84. Students receive personalised feedback about their learning progress and learning outcomes. They can also consult with their teachers when needed.

85. Students of KSU form the Students' Union, which represents them before the University authorities, appoints representatives to the University bodies and organises student events. The Students' Union operates in accordance with the national law and its self-adopted regulations. The Students' Union has unrestricted access to the University's infrastructure, including facilities, office equipment and supplies. It is also provided with the necessary financial resources. Nevertheless, during the meeting with students the Panel learned (and in the meeting with graduates it was confirmed) that in the recent past there have been times when the Students' Union has not functioned, at least not in a visible way, which may suggest that the level of support was not always sufficient.

86. Students may also establish and join other student organisations, such as the Student Research Council. These organisations are also supported by the University.

87. Students participate in the University's governance and quality assurance through their representatives in the Senate, Council, Study Programme Committees, and other bodies.

88. Academic and non-academic staff receive support to some extent. For example, mobility opportunities are in principle open to all staff members as well as individual request professional development activities are usual approved. However, this is basically provided on demand, the institution being open to answer to its staff's requests related to ensuring appropriate means for conducting the activities or for career development.

89. Although teachers working from abroad shared more sophisticated practices of peer learning and peer review that they apply in other institutions where they teach, peer learning and peer review are not a common practice at the KSU; teachers rather follow general guidelines coming from the heads of study programmes and keep the responsibility over designing and applying appropriate assessment approaches.

90. During the meeting with teaching and research staff, the Panel understood that teachers were of a high opinion of their competences, their teaching skills and research abilities, which can be seen

as an obstacle for continuous professional development that relies on a demand-based approach. Best teachers are awarded in an annual poll organised by the Students' Union.

91. Provisions and procedures for academic integrity, tolerance and non-discrimination, appeal and ethics are specified and applied to a large extent. The norms of academic ethics are set by the University's Ethics Code. The oversight of the Ethics Code is carried out by the Academic Ethics Committee, which convenes upon receiving a complaint. Therefore, the functions of the Ethics Committee are limited to the functions of a Disciplinary Committee acting upon specific cases of academic misconduct. During 2018-2023 five complaints were filed, out of which three were found justified.

92. The University has implemented procedures to prevent and respond to violence and discrimination. Students who have witnessed or been victims of illegal or unethical behaviour can seek help from the University authorities, either directly or through their representatives. Students may also appeal the assessments and other decisions, file complaints and make formal requests. They are aware of their options, as it was confirmed during the interviews.

93. KSU has been institutionally reviewed by SKVC in 2012 and 2015. The SER presents how the institution addressed each of the recommendations from the previous review. As confirmed by the Council, the main advisory body to the institution, finding its niche and focusing on the specifically identified fields of education and research is the major transformation KSU has undergone based on the outputs of the external review. At the same time, it has strengthened the International Relations and Strategic Development Department by increasing the number of staff, which is in line with the strategic goal towards internationalisation. The Panel's opinion is that the recommendations of 2015 have been implemented.

94. **In summary,** KSU has implemented the Quality management system based on ISO 9001:2015, without having in place a comprehensive internal quality assurance policy compliant with ESG. Stakeholders are insufficiently involved in the quality assurance of teaching and learning, while data collection and analysis could be used more effectively and with increased impact on the quality of processes. The institution is flexible in applying different teaching methods to best fit the different student profiles, at the same time demonstrating a student-centred approach at various levels. While student support is obvious and covers a wide range of services, for staff it is offered mainly on request.

Based on the evidence and analysis provided above, the Panel concludes the following:

- The higher education institution has approved and made publicly available internal quality management documents based on ISO, which cannot be considered as a proof of having an internal quality assurance system consistent with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area.

- There are no systematic internal quality assurance measures of planning, implementation, and improvement, apart from those provided in the ISO procedures, which aren't appropriate to support and enhance the quality of teaching and learning. Stakeholders, although included in the study programme committees, are not systematically involved in the planning, monitoring and improvement of teaching and learning.

- Processes for planning, implementation, monitoring, periodic evaluation, and development of activities are specified, however only in relation to the ISO procedures, which governs them.

- Students receive effective support, while academic and non-academic staff receive effective support to some extent.

- Provisions and procedures for academic integrity, tolerance and non-discrimination, appeal and ethics are specified and applied.

- The results of the external review are used to improve the performance of the higher education institution.

95. **Judgment:** *the area meets the minimum requirements, but there are drawbacks that must be addressed* and is given 2 points.

96. **Recommendations for the area:**

- Strengthen the ownership for quality and quality assurance at top managerial level and support it with coherent policies and practices.

- Ensure a better support to the quality of study programmes by assigning a clear responsibility over quality enhancement and quality assurance at the highest managerial level, in addition to responsibilities over the quality of procedures and processes.

- Create a comprehensive approach for internal quality assurance, by using the data collected and analysed but adding more focus on effectiveness and impact and ensuring active contribution of all stakeholders.

- Develop a more strategic approach to evidence-based internal quality assurance system that would go beyond the efficiency of procedures and that would encompass different activities of data driven measures that are already in place.

- Develop a more strategic approach to professional teaching staff development, rather than leaving it on providing support on staff's request.

97. **Good practice examples:**

- Monitoring student progression and applying individual learning paths for avoiding high drop-out rates.

3.3. Studies and Research (Art)

Studies and Research (Art) area is analysed in accordance with the following indicators and criteria, set up in the Methodology.

3.1. The level of research (art), compatibility of studies and research (art) and its compliance with the strategic aims of activities:
3.1.1. The study and research (art) activities carried out and their results are consistent with the mission and strategic aims of the higher education institution; *3.1.2. The level of research (art) activities is sufficient for the ongoing studies of the higher education institution;*

> *3.1.3. Studies are based on research (art);*
> *3.1.4. Consistent recognition of foreign qualifications, partial studies and prior non-formal and informal learning is performed.*

98. The mission and strategic goals of KSU are explained as oriented towards shaping a contemporary multidisciplinary research and study system, while increasing the effectiveness of science, study, and innovation activities, expanding international relations, and adopting global research priorities.

99. According to the adopted Strategy 2019-2023, objectives include the needs of science and labour market, individualised and student-oriented studies, distinctive study programmes and internationalism.

100. As part of these goals and objectives, KSU wishes to establish long-term priorities for research and development, improve the quality of research output, recruit and retain talent, and to obtain the right to conduct doctoral studies.

101. Currently, KSU offers six Bachelor's, three Master's, and one integrated study programme, in five main study fields: management, business, marketing, law, and communication. It is planned to add two Master's and two Doctoral programmes within these fields.

102. The current programmes include Bachelor's studies in amongst other Aviation Management, which appears to be a major focus area for KSU. In that connection, the institution has obtained the status as an IATA Authorised Training Centre, which is important for providing professional training. However, it is not clear how this will contribute towards teaching at the academic level.

103. A second focus area is the Bachelor's programme in Fashion Industry, which together with the Bachelor's programme in Entertainment and Tourism Industries is deemed to constitute Communication studies.

104. Differently, research is divided into the three fields of Management-Business, Law and Communication-Information, which does not seem to correspond to the grouping of study programmes. Furthermore, most of the research themes and units do not present clear links to the study programmes. This does raise a concern about the extent to which the research activities provide the basis for the study programmes.

105. As an example, most law students appear to follow the integrated study programme in Lithuanian law, but the research unit is entitled the Law and Technology Institute, which focuses on the thematic challenges of the transformation of law in the digital era.

106. The outcome of these divergences is an impression that the fields of study and research do not follow a development strategy as such, but rather represent a collection of topics that might be explained by labour market needs and research fund availability. That does not ensure a coherent development path for KSU.

107. Additionally, it is not clear whether the various research centres produce output that may be applied in the teaching of study programmes. That concern is increased by the focus placed on revenue generating research. As an example, it is difficult to see which study programme will benefit from the research project on developing an optimal model for regulating electric vehicle charging.

108. Furthermore, it is stated in the KSU report that publication of research in future will be directed towards journals relevant for business schools, which would seem to be relevant only for some of the study programmes. Likewise, it is stated that emphasis will be placed on the publication of popular science articles, which would seem mostly relevant for the marketing of the University.

109. The Panel is therefore able to conclude that the study and research activities carried out and their results are consistent with the mission and strategic aims of the higher education institution, but as noted above, there remains a concern about the linkage between research and teaching. University study programmes and the competence of graduates are held in high esteem by those social partners that the panel had the occasion to meet. However, the panel only met with employers in the field of aviation management and law and in the case of the latter it was explicitly confirmed that the graduates of KSU were at the same level in law as the graduates of well-established state universities. For aviation management, it seemed clear that the programme is developed in close cooperation with the industry, to serve their specific needs.

110. The level of research activities is sufficient for the ongoing studies of the higher education institution, although the research results are rather low. Statistical official information shows that, in the field of social sciences for example, the research performance indicator set at national level was: 176,2 points in 2019; 64,52 points in 2020; 121,25 in 2021. However, increasing the number of full-time academic staff, who can largely dedicate their resources to research at KSU, might represent a way to improve the overall performance of the University in this direction.

111. The institution uses teachers and researchers that work on a part time basis for establishing and developing connections with international partners. The institution however distinguishes the research affiliated to KSU from the research affiliated to other institutions where the teachers and researchers work. This is duly considered in the academic progression and award of academic titles to teachers and researchers working at the KSU.

112. Although the institution created specific measures to promote and support research activities of its teachers and researchers, the methodology for ensuring that research is used as a basis for teaching was not entirely evident. The Panel learned in the interviews that it is almost entirely under the responsibility of individual teachers to integrate latest research into their teaching activities.

113. The institution applies a consistent recognition approach of foreign qualifications and study periods abroad. The recognition is automatic and in line with the learning agreements. The requests for recognition of prior non-formal and informal learning are rare but there is a procedure put in place when this is required.

3.2. Internationality of studies, research (art):
3.2.1. The higher education institution has a strategy for internationalisation of research (art) and study activities (including indicators of internationalisation), means for its implementation, and measurements of the effectiveness of these activities are performed (not applicable to colleges unless provided for in its strategic documents); 3.2.2. The higher education institution integrates aspects of internationalisation into the content of studies and research (art) activities.

114. A significant part of the study programmes is taught in English, which is also reflected by a significant number of foreign students attending KSU, as well as the number of joint degree programmes with foreign universities. Together with the frequent presence of foreign teachers, this promotes a strong feeling of internationalism at KSU.

115. The SER presents an impressive network of international cooperation and networks, with special reference refers to an extensive use of the Erasmus facility, which may be seen as an effective implementation of the KSU strategy for internationalisation. However, during the site visit it was explained that the number of students going abroad diminished significantly under the Covid pandemic, and that it has taken time to relaunch mobility.

116. However, a concern remains that the main benefactor of the international networks may be the research centres. The international focus of research does constitute a positive element in the SER, but, according to the statistical official information, the amount of funds received by KSU from international research projects was around 8000 euros in 2019, 5000 - in 2020 and 0 – in 2021.

117. At the same time, based on the presentation of research projects during the meetings with the panel, there is a concern as to the degree to which the research has direct benefits for the study programmes, as already set out above.

118. Considering these issues, the Panel concludes that KSU has a strategy for internationalisation of research and study activities embedded in the overall strategy, it has means, at a certain extent, for its implementation, and measurements of the effectiveness of these activities are performed, such as the "Next Society" project that was extensively presented during the meetings with the panel.

119. The institution integrates aspects of internationalisation into the content of studies and research activities, although concerns remain regarding the linkage between teaching and research, as mentioned above.

120. **In summary,** the SER of KSU presents several positive aspects of both teaching and research, as well as internationalisation. However, the internal coherence of the study programmes and their linkage with the research efforts might be better developed. An increased focus on ensuring study efforts at the student level are also recommended. The area is clearly being developed, but currently not in a manner that appears to be entirely systematic, and development seems to be directed by current trends in both student interest and research funding.

Based on the evidence and analysis provided above, the Panel concludes the following:

- The study and research activities carried out and their results are consistent with the mission and strategic aims of the higher education institution.

- Studies are based on research to some extent.

- Consistent recognition of foreign qualifications, partial studies and prior non-formal and informal learning is performed.

121. **Judgment:** *the area meets the minimum requirements, but there are drawbacks that must be addressed* and is given 2 points.

122. **Recommendations for the area:**

- Continue to organise the classification of study directions in accordance with the content of the study programmes, and further develop the internal coherence of study programmes in linked or overlapping fields.

- Strengthen the linkages between studies and research and ensure research to be channelled into the teaching instead of conducting it on demand, mainly based on available projects.

- Include strengthening of links between studies and research into the University's quality policy.

- Improve the overall performance of the University in research, for example by increasing the number of full-time academic staff.

- Strengthen the participation in international projects with themes from the same/ related fields to the ones of the study programmes.

3.4. Impact on Regional and National Development

Impact on Regional and National Development area is analysed in accordance with the following indicators and criteria, set up in the Methodology.

4.1. Effectiveness of the impact on regional and national development:
4.1.1. The higher education institution carries out an analysis of national and (or) regional demands, identifies the needs to be met and foresees the potential impact on national and (or) regional development;   *4.1.2. The monitoring, analysis and evaluation of the effectiveness of the measures on national and (or) regional development are performed.*

123. KSU acts as a "niche" University, focusing on several specific education areas. As it was confirmed by the Council, such a strategic focus will remain for the next period of development.

124. The University systematically carries out an analysis of national and regional demands in several areas of interest. For example, high focus could be provided on the civil aviation sector, where a high level of cooperation with CAVIA and LAVIA is visible. As a successful result for identification of labour market demands, special programmes, such as Aviation Management, were prepared and offered to students.

125. KSU is currently undergoing a significant transformation as it would like to move from catering primarily to the national labour market to establishing a more international, or regional-oriented approach. This strategic shift has not only been highlighted by the institution's top management but has also been mentioned by both students and administrative staff. Nonetheless, for KSU to position itself as a prominent international and regional educational institution, it is imperative to place a heightened emphasis on strategic management, encompassing visionary leadership and expertise insights, as well as rigorous quality control, particularly in the realm of online education.

126. During the meeting with social partners (only four of them were present) cooperation between KSU and social partners was confirmed. The cooperation with the aviation industry is the most developed and visible. As it was mentioned by representatives, the main volume of new employees

was graduates of KSU. However, the cooperation is very specific, being based on preparation of specialists for the dedicated aviation social partners rather than for the aviation industry in general.

127. The quality of cooperation with the labour market presently is monitored and managed by the heads of study programmes. Such an attitude is very autonomous and reflects the individual preferences of each head. To make systemic and unified improvements the involvement of top management of the University is highly needed.

128. As mentioned in the SER, the University's strategy for 2019-2023 places a strong emphasis on KSU's impact and influence on the society, the economy, the well-being of the country, and internationalisation. As an indication of that, Lithuanian strategic documents "Lithuania's Progress Strategy *Lithuania 2023*" and "Lithuania 2050", as well as EU strategic documents "Europe 2030", or regional development documents like the "White Book of Lithuania's Regional Policy for Sustainable and Cohesive Development 2017-2030", "2022-2030 Regional Development Programme", "The Lithuanian Aviation Guidelines up to 2030 or the Lithuanian Innovation Development Programme for 2014-2020" were reflected and aligned with internal strategic documents and study programmes.

129. The present situation of the graduates is a bit contradicting with the national demands affirmed by social partners. Almost half of the KSU graduates are in the law area, while there is a clear higher demand for aviation management professionals. Therefore, ensuring rational proportion by increasing the number of students enrolled into aviation related programmes would be beneficial. Social partners confirmed that they can employ more graduates than KSU is currently providing.

130. The employers show high appreciation to KSU, at least in the fields of Aviation Management and Law (the only fields from which the Panel met employers). Especially important was the opinion given by the president of Vilnius Court, who explicitly confirmed that the graduates of KSU were at the same level in law as the graduates of other Lithuanian state universities. Regarding Aviation Management, it is clear for the Panel that the programme is developed in close cooperation with the industry, to serve their specific needs. The interviews with teaching staff and graduates confirmed the positive impression.

131. During the meeting with four social partners, the Panel was assured that they participated in the education process of the KSU students. Still, improvement of active involvement in all beneficial areas for the University is needed, e.g., cooperation for graduation theses, participation in surveys related to student progression, etc.

132. As stated in the SER, "The effectiveness evaluation of the University's impact measures is a multifaceted process and task, where quantitative metrics are combined with qualitative insights". Further there are presented four main categories of impact measures which lead to 24 measured criteria. The information provided regarding evaluation categories and criteria is well prepared, but it does not entirely reflect the effectiveness of the used measures.

133. The institution monitors its graduates and analyses their employability. During the interview, the graduates confirmed they were requested by the institution to fill in surveys at half a year and one year after graduation. They could not say, though, anything about the overall results of those surveys. Therefore, improving public communication of such results would be beneficial to increasing the efficiency of impact of the institution on regional and national level.

> *4.2. Assurance of conditions for lifelong learning:*
>
> *4.2.1. The higher education institution monitors and analyses the need for lifelong learning;*
> *4.2.2. The higher education institution anticipates the diversity of forms and conditions of lifelong learning and ensures their implementation;*
> *4.2.3. The higher education institution performs the evaluation of assurance of conditions for lifelong learning.*

134. KSU monitors and analyses the need for lifelong learning by cooperating with various social partners, surveying them, analysing data from various sources like, Employment Service, Bank of Lithuania, IATA, etc. As an outcome there are prepared special training packages, conferences, publications, and similar products for business entities and social partners.

135. The discussions during the site visit confirmed that the training offer was created in close cooperation with the business sector and sometimes as a direct response to a demand for specific training. KSU is commended for opening up to non-traditional learners and a wider business community, to the entire society.

136. The University anticipates the diversity of forms and conditions of lifelong learning and ensures their implementation by carrying on formal and non-formal learning. KSU states that "The University fully achieved the results planned in the Strategy 2019 - 2023 and currently offers 11 non-formal adult education programmes and 26 courses and training programmes". However, lifelong learning programmes are more prepared as ad-hoc rather than within a systematic process of education. Worth to mention that in some cases participants to such courses can relate the acquired certificate to the specific study program ECTS credits.

137. Lifelong learning is supported by several international and national projects implemented by the University such as E-commerce training, ICT skills development and integration, and the "Spread your wings" project. However, most of the lifelong training courses are based on project-based financing. Such a situation is understandable due to the small size of the institution and limited financial resources.

138. KSU has exhibited considerable dynamism in its pursuit of their vision, manifested through its proactive organisation of numerous conferences, training programs for social partners, and the facilitation of lifelong learning activities. Additionally, the institution has successfully fostered a valuable partnership with the Lithuanian Public Employment Service. However, it is crucial to recognize that this portfolio of initiatives, while commendable, aligns more closely with the objectives of a college education system rather than serving as a comprehensive strategy for promoting the ideals and standards of a university-level education.

139. KSU performs the evaluation of assurance of conditions for lifelong learning differentiating between the programmes without assessment and awards of certificates and those where it is possible to achieve a training award and possibly ECTS credits. The institution systematically gathers feedback from training participants and customers, where information regarding the training content, teaching methods, infrastructure, organisational elements, and aspects for improvement are collected. As evidence for the assurance of conditions for lifelong learning, the University provides information that revenue from the external training for the reviewed period has increased. However, such measures could be good for the volume and value for the implemented activities, and hardly can represent assurance of conditions.

140. **In summary,** it is clear for the Panel that KSU is actively involved in national and regional development and the positive impact has been noticed. However, a more strategic and systemic approach is recommended.

Based on the evidence and analysis provided above, the Panel concludes the following:

- KSU carries out an analysis of national and regional demands, identifies the needs to be met and foresees the potential impact on national and regional development.

- The monitoring, analysis, and evaluation of the effectiveness of the measures on national and regional development are performed.

- KSU monitors and analyses the need for lifelong learning.

- KSU anticipates the diversity of forms and conditions of lifelong learning and ensures their implementation.

- KSU performs the evaluation of assurance of conditions for lifelong learning.

141. **Judgment:** *the area is being developed systematically, without any major drawbacks* and is given 3 points.

142. **Recommendations for the area:**

- Widen the social partner network as well as the types of cooperation.

- Strengthen the cooperation with social partners on a strategic level and ensure its support from the top management of the University.

- Establish a formal framework for employer engagement in the management of study programmes, particularly in fields where industry expertise is highly relevant, and outlining clear guidelines for employer participation in programme development, curriculum review and assessment procedures.

- Ensure higher visibility and impact of the University on regional and national level by improving public communication on its results.

- Develop a strategic and systemic approach on lifelong learning and integrate it into the internal quality assurance system based on ESG (once in place).

- Develop and promote the "niche" approach with higher academic focus, demonstrating scientific competences and knowledge, rather than exclusively education provider tailored to market demands.

143. **Good practice examples:**

- The variety of training programmes offered by KSU, some of them recognized by ECTS or certificates, in line with current developments in the HEIs, e.g., microcredentials.

- Very close and efficient cooperation of KSU with the social partners from the aviation industry.

- The possibility offered by social partners to KSU students to participate in internships and benefit of modern training resources offered by them.

IV. EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE

The Panel identifies the following examples of good practice in:

Quality Assurance:

- Monitoring of student progression and applying individual learning paths for avoiding high drop-out rates.

Impact on Regional and National Development:

- The variety of training programmes offered by KSU, some of them recognized by ECTS or certificates, in line with current developments in the HEIs, e.g., microcredentials.

- Very close and efficient cooperation of KSU with the social partners from the aviation industry.

- The possibility offered by social partners to KSU students to participate in internships and benefit of modern training resources offered by them.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ENHANCEMENT

The Panel's recommendations for further enhancement are:

Management:

- Develop a robust strategy of the institution, aligning the University aspirations with its potential.

- Revise the University management system by making a clear distinction of the roles of Senate, as a decision-making body, and the Council, as advisory body.

- Make sure that all internal stakeholders, including students and full-time academic staff, are duly represented in the management structures, with clear and effectively applied roles.

- Make a better use of the results of monitoring of the implementation of the University's strategic plans in improving the quality of its activities.

- Consider embedding the strategic action plan into the performance management system by using its objectives and targets as performance indicators for departments and individual employees.

- Elevate the importance of quality assurance by establishing clear responsibilities at the highest managerial level and providing adequate resources for quality policy implementation.

- Develop a more strategic approach to attracting employers and the business sector into the activities of institutions.

- Strengthen the University's human resources, in particular to increase the number of in-house academic staff (full-time) that would assure sustainability of quality and further institutional developments, taking into account the strategic objectives of increasing student enrolment, launching new study programmes, and expanding into new disciplines.

- Develop a systematic institutional policy for professional and academic staff development on a regular basis.

Quality Assurance:

- Strengthen the ownership for quality and quality assurance at top managerial level and support it with coherent policies and practices.

- Ensure a better support to the quality of study programmes by assigning a clear responsibility over quality enhancement and quality assurance at the highest managerial level, in addition to responsibilities over the quality of procedures and processes.

- Create a comprehensive approach for internal quality assurance, by using the data collected and analysed but adding more focus on effectiveness and impact and ensuring active contribution of all stakeholders.

- Develop a more strategic approach to evidence-based internal quality assurance system that would go beyond the efficiency of procedures and that would encompass different activities of data driven measures that are already in place.

- Develop a more strategic approach to professional teaching staff development, rather than leaving it on providing support on staff's request.

Studies and Research (art):

- Continue to organise the classification of study directions in accordance with the content of the study programmes, and further develop the internal coherence of study programmes in linked or overlapping fields.

- Strengthen the linkages between studies and research and ensure research to be channelled into the teaching instead of conducting it on demand, mainly based on available projects.

- Include strengthening of links between studies and research into the University's quality policy.

- Improve the overall performance of the University in research, for example by increasing the number of full-time academic staff.

- Strengthen the participation in international projects with themes from the same/ related fields to the ones of the study programmes.

Impact on Regional and National Development:

- Widen the social partner network as well as the types of cooperation.

- Strengthen the cooperation with social partners on a strategic level and ensure its support from the top management of the University.

- Establish a formal framework for employer engagement in the management of study programmes, particularly in fields where industry expertise is highly relevant, and outlining clear guidelines for employer participation in programme development, curriculum review and assessment procedures.

- Ensure higher visibility and impact of the University on regional and national level by improving public communication on its results.

- Develop a strategic and systemic approach on lifelong learning and integrate it into the internal quality assurance system based on ESG (once in place).

- Develop and promote the "niche" approach with higher academic focus, demonstrating scientific competences and knowledge, rather than exclusively education provider tailored to market demands.