SKVC

STUDIJŲ KOKYBĖS VERTINIMO CENTRAS
CENTRE FOR QUALITY ASSESSMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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POLITICAL SCIENCE FIELD OF STUDY

European Humanities University

EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT

Expert panel:
1. Panel chair: Prof. Dr. Tomaž Deželan
2. Academic member: Prof. Dr. Žaneta Ozolina
3. Academic member: Prof. Dr. Stefano Braghiroli
4. Social partner representative: Rimantas Dumčius
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Report prepared in 2025
Report language: English

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I. INTRODUCTION

1.1. OUTLINE OF THE EVALUATION PROCESS

The field of study evaluations in Lithuanian higher education institutions (HEIs) are based on the following:

- Procedure for the External Evaluation and Accreditation of Studies, Evaluation Areas and Indicators, approved by the Minister of Education, Science, and Sport;
- Methodology of External Evaluation of Study Fields approved by the Director of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (SKVC);
- Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG).

The evaluation is intended to support HEIs in continuous enhancement of their study process and to inform the public about the quality of programmes within the field of study.

The object of the evaluation is all programmes within a specific field of study. A separate assessment is given for each study cycle.

The evaluation process consists of the following main steps: 1) Self-evaluation and production of a self-evaluation report (SER) prepared by an HEI; 2) A site visit by the review panel to the HEI; 3) The external evaluation report (EER) production by the review panel; 4) EER review by the HEI; 5) EER review by the Study Evaluation Committee; 6) Accreditation decision taken by SKVC; 7) Appeal procedure (if initiated by the HEI); 8) Follow-up activities, which include the production of a Progress Report on Recommendations Implementation by the HEI.

The main outcome of the evaluation process is the EER prepared by the review panel. The HEI is forwarded the draft EER for feedback on any factual mistakes. The draft report is then subject to approval by the external Study Evaluation Committee, operating under SKVC. Once approved, the EER serves as the basis for an accreditation decision. If an HEI disagrees with the outcome of the evaluation, it can file an appeal.On the basis of the approved EER, SKVC takes one of the following accreditation decisions:

- **Accreditation granted for 7 years** if all evaluation areas are evaluated as exceptional (5 points), very good (4 points), or good (3 points).
- **Accreditation granted for 3 years** if at least one evaluation area is evaluated as satisfactory (2 points).
- **Not accredited** if at least one evaluation area is evaluated as unsatisfactory (1 point).

If the field of study and cycle were **previously accredited for 3 years**, the re-evaluation of the field of study and cycle is initiated no earlier than after 2 years. After the re-evaluation of the field of study and cycle, SKVC takes one of the following decisions regarding the accreditation of the field of study and cycle:

- To be accredited for the remaining term until the next evaluation of the field of study and cycle, but no longer than 4 years, if all evaluation areas are evaluated as exceptional (5 points), very good (4 points) or good (3 points).
- To not be accredited, if at least one evaluation area is evaluated as satisfactory (2 points) or unsatisfactory (1 point).

1.2. REVIEW PANEL

The review panel was appointed in accordance with the Reviewer Selection Procedure as approved by the Director of SKVC.

The composition of the review panel was as follows:

1. Panel chair: Prof. Tomaž Deželan
2. Academic member: Prof. Žaneta Ozolina
3. Academic member: Prof. Stefano Braghiroli
4. Social partner representative: Rimantas Dumčius
5. Student representative: Evelina Brazauskienė

1.3. SITE VISIT

The site visit was organised on 9th of December 2024 onsite.

Meetings with the following members of the staff and stakeholders took place during the site visit:

- Senior management and administrative staff of the faculty(ies);
- Team responsible for preparation of the SER;
- Teaching staff;
- Students;
- Alumni and social stakeholders including employers.

There was no need for translation and the meetings were conducted in English.

1.4. BACKGROUND OF THE REVIEW

Overview of the HEI

European Humanities University is a non state higher education institution established in Minsk, Belarus, in 1992. With the aim of promoting the integration of Belarus and the region into the European intellectual space EHU has become an important actor which also contributed to its forced closure in 2004. In 2005, the Government of the Republic of Lithuania invited EHU to re-establish and continue its activities in Vilnius and thanks to the support from international donors EHU obtained the legal status of a public institution – a Lithuanian university-type higher education institution operating in exile in 2006. This context distinguishes the University from other Lithuanian higher education institutions as the development of academic freedom in Belarus remains one of its important goals.

Overview of the study field

The University is based on the Liberal Arts model and is characterised by a strengthened humanities component. It has the status of a public institution and operates in compliance with the procedure established by the laws and other legal acts of the Republic of Lithuania, as well as in accordance with the standards of the European Higher Education Area and the HEI guidelines. EHU currently offers study programs in the humanities, social sciences, arts and computer science, 16 programs in total). At present, EHU offers two study programs in the field of Political Science: the BA programme World Politics and Economics and the MA programme Public Policy. In line with EHU mission and its vision for 2026, both programmes aim to: (1) To provide high quality education in the field of Political Science and Economics based on a balance of theoretical knowledge, practical skills and professional competences in accordance with current education standards in the field; (2) To train professionals capable of promoting the social, political and cultural integration of Belarus into the European and global contexts; (3) To prepare political scientists with expertise in economics and public policy, capable of responding to global political and economic challenges, and actively initiating and implementing political and economic policies; and (4) To cultivate in students the capacity for self-directed learning, essential for continuous professional growth amidst the relentless expansion of information and evolving societal norms.

Documents and information used in the review

The following documents and/or information have been requested/provided by the HEI before or during the site visit:

- *Self-evaluation report and its annexes*
- *Final theses*

Additional sources of information used by the review panel:

The group of experts requested additional course descriptions, clarifications of student alumni survey regulation and implementation, regulation and implementation of measures assuring student personal data protection, the prescribed structure and dynamics of internal quality assurance reports and detailed internal quality assurance regulation, student enrollment and retention KPIs as well as the insights into funding trends and statistics in order to assess sustainability of operations. Apart

from financial data that apparently does not need to be fully revealed due to the institution's non-state status, all other information has been delivered fully and promptly.

The following additional sources of information have been used by the review panel: university website.

II. STUDY PROGRAMMES IN THE FIELD

First cycle/LTQF 6

Title of the study programme	**World Politics and Economics**
State code	6183JX001
Type of study (college/university)	University
Mode of study (full time/part time) and nominal duration (in years)	Full-time - 4 years; Part-time - 5 years.
Workload in ECTS	240/243
Award (degree and/or professional qualification)	Bachelor of Social Sciences
Language of instruction	Russian, Belarusian, English
Admission requirements	Secondary education
First registration date	2019-04-19
Comments (including remarks on joint or interdisciplinary nature of the programme, mode of provision)	N/A

Second cycle/LTQF 7

Title of the study programme	**Public Policy**
State code	6211JX103
Type of study (college/university)	University
Mode of study (full time/part time) and nominal duration (in years)	Full-time, 1,5 years
Workload in ECTS	90/96
Award (degree and/or professional qualification)	Master of Social Sciences
Language of instruction	Russian, Belarusian, English
Admission requirements	Bachelor degree
First registration date	2019-04-19
Comments (including remarks on joint or interdisciplinary nature of the programme, mode of provision)	N/A

III. ASSESSMENT IN POINTS BY CYCLE AND EVALUATION AREAS

The **first cycle** of the political science field of study is given a **positive** evaluation.

No.	Evaluation Area	Evaluation points[1*]
1.	Study aims, learning outcomes and curriculum	2
2.	Links between scientific (or artistic) research and higher education	2
3.	Student admission and support	3
4.	Teaching and learning, student assessment, and graduate employment	2
5.	Teaching staff	2
6.	Learning facilities and resources	4
7.	Quality assurance and public information	2
	Total:	17

The **second cycle** of the political science field of study is given a **positive** evaluation.

No.	Evaluation Area	Evaluation points[2*]
1.	Study aims, learning outcomes and curriculum	2
2.	Links between scientific (or artistic) research and higher education	2
3.	Student admission and support	3
4.	Teaching and learning, student assessment, and graduate employment	2
5.	Teaching staff	2
6.	Learning facilities and resources	4
7.	Quality assurance and public information	2
	Total:	17

[1*]

1 (unsatisfactory) - the area does not meet the minimum requirements, there are substantial shortcomings that hinder the implementation of the programmes in the field.
2 (satisfactory) - the area meets the minimum requirements, but there are substantial shortcomings that need to be eliminated.
3 (good) - the area is being developed systematically, without any substantial shortcomings.
4 (very good) - the area is evaluated very well in the national context and internationally, without any shortcomings.
5 (exceptional) - the area is evaluated exceptionally well in the national context and internationally.
[2]

IV. STUDY FIELD ANALYSIS

AREA 1: STUDY AIMS, LEARNING OUTCOMES AND CURRICULUM

1.1.	Programmes are aligned with the country's economic and societal needs and the strategy of the HEI

FACTUAL SITUATION

1.1.1. Programme aims and learning outcomes are aligned with the needs of the society and/or the labour market

EHU's political science programs are "designed to educate political science professionals capable of supporting democratic change in Belarus, integrating Belarusian policymaking into the broader democratic context, and advancing the political and cultural integration of Belarus into the European Union." The aim is not entirely realistic due to Belarusian context challenges. The repressive regime and inhospitable labor market in Belarus present significant obstacles for EHU alumni seeking to contribute to the country's recovery. Evidence of persecution of EHU graduates in Belarus and low wages highlight the misalignment between program aims and the Belarusian context. To reflect this situation EHU should consider recognising its focus on preparation of youth of Belarusian diaspora for labour markets outside Belarus, emphasizing skills relevant to Lithuania, Poland, the EU, and the broader international community.

The programs align with EHU's mission to "promote the development of civil society through the Humanities and Liberal Arts for students from Belarus and the region" by offering a curriculum that balances "theoretical knowledge, practical skills and professional competences". This alignment is reflected in the programs' emphasis on practical applications, such as internships and project-oriented learning, as well as their responsiveness to contemporary labour market trends. These trends include the importance of "analytical thinking, resilience, and flexibility," which are explicitly incorporated into the skillset provided by the programs. Civil society's role in shaping and delivering the curriculum ensures relevance and practical impact. This collaboration enriches education with diverse perspectives, aligning it with real-world needs.

While focusing on the preparation of youth from Belarusian diaspora to successfully integrate in the societies and labour markets of Lithuania, Poland and wider EU, EHU should consider strengthening emphasis on developing public policy analysis skills, understanding the key tenets of good governance, developing inclusive political and economic institutions, understanding the role of the EU, its institutions, processes of multilevel governance and open method of coordination. EHU's mission should evolve to strengthen civil society and governance in the diaspora and host regions, fostering networks within Lithuanian and European civic spaces. Alumni should be viewed as contributors to the democratic ethos and economic prosperity of their host countries, while maintaining their links to and understanding of the situation in Belarus.

1.1.2. Programme aims and learning outcomes are aligned with the HEI's mission, goals, and strategy

The program aims at EHU political science programs appear broadly aligned with the HEI's mission, goals, and strategy, as outlined in the self-evaluation report. The programs are designed to "train professionals capable of promoting the social, political and cultural integration of Belarus into the European and global contexts," directly reflecting EHU's mission to foster civil society development and academic freedom in the region.

EHU's strategy for 2019–2026 emphasizes its role as a Belarusian university in exile. However, this vision should be updated to reflect the extended duration and complexity of exile. Instead of focusing solely on preparing professionals for a post-authoritarian Belarus, the strategy should emphasize

empowering graduates to integrate and thrive in host countries while maintaining their connection to Belarusian identity and advocacy. The undergraduate (World Politics and Economics) and graduate (Public Policy) programs should refine their objectives to address these new realities. Goals could include preparing students to work in the public sector of the European Union, international organizations, and industries that require expertise in policy analysis, governance, civil society, and regional geopolitics.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 1.1.)

EHU programme aims and learning outcomes are broadly aligned with the needs of the society and the labour market as well as EHU's mission, goals, and strategy. However, they do not fully address the dilemma of catering for the needs of Belarus, while operating in exile with its graduates unable to return safely to Belarus, let alone work in government institutions of a repressive regime. While EHU's commitment to Belarus remains a cornerstone of its identity, the prolonged nature of its exile status necessitates a strategic pivot. The programs should evolve to prepare graduates for success in host and regional labour markets while retaining the capacity to contribute to Belarus's democratic future when circumstances allow. Balancing this dual mission will be critical to ensuring EHU's sustained impact and relevance.

1.2.	Programmes comply with legal requirements, while curriculum design, curriculum, teaching/learning and assessment methods enable students to achieve study aims and learning outcomes

FACTUAL SITUATION

1.2.1. Programmes comply with legal requirements

Overall, the programs offered comply with the legal requirements as outlined in the self-evaluation report. In particular, references are made to the Law on Science and Studies of the Republic of Lithuania, the Descriptor of Study Cycles, the Descriptor of the Study Field of Political Sciences and internal EHU documents. The relevant university bodies are in charge of complying with the set legal requirements at the national level.

1.2.2. Programme aims, learning outcomes, teaching/learning and assessment methods are aligned

The two programs overall commit to align their aims, learning outcomes, teaching, and assessment methods coherently, however the collegial system of guaranteeing constructive alignment should be strengthened, especially when it comes to updating literature and academic sources. This might be particularly relevant when it comes to literature published in Russia, especially after Moscow's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The programs aim to "prepare political scientists with expertise in economics and public policy, capable of responding to global political and economic challenges" and to "promote the integration of Belarus into the European and global contexts".

Overall, learning outcomes emphasize critical thinking, analytical skills, and practical problem-solving in governance and policy-making. Teaching methods, such as interactive lectures, seminars, and asynchronous tools like Moodle forums, are combined with practical learning through internships and student-centered projects to develop the skills outlined in the learning outcomes.

Given EHU philosophy and the focus of the curricula, the presence of a course dedicated to transition studies seems particularly recommended.

Assessment methods, including term papers, group projects, and capstone theses, aim to measure students' ability to apply theoretical knowledge to real-world scenarios, demonstrating mastery of the learning outcomes. There is a basic system of structured guidance, including research methods

courses and pre-defense evaluations, ensuring alignment with both program aims and expected competences. However, seminars that would be dedicated to the preparation of students' theses at individual level are currently inadequate and should be strengthened.

1.2.3. Curriculum ensures consistent development of student competences

Both curricula aim to support the development of student competences through a combination of theoretical and practical learning. The curriculum is structured to build skills, starting with foundational courses and advancing to specialized subjects like Comparative Politics, Public Policy Process, and Project Management.

Practical elements include internships, collaborative projects, and research activities that allow students to engage with applied aspects of their studies. Research skills are emphasized through courses on qualitative and quantitative methods, leading to the preparation and defense of theses.

More attention should be devoted to the acquisition of English language skills as highlighted by students and alumni, and potentially of the Lithuanian language. While general English language courses - along with a few courses taught in English - are offered, students would certainly profit from targeted courses on focussed on academic writing, given the limited entry level requirement (A2). This is particularly relevant both in the light of the multilingual nature of the curriculum and given the added value for students who plan to stay in Lithuania after the graduation.

In addition, to support EHU students' personal development and address their diverse experiences, courses in mediation, trauma, and conflict resolution should be introduced. These would equip them with key skills for managing interpersonal and societal challenges.

1.2.4. Opportunities for students to personalise curriculum according to their personal learning goals and intended learning outcomes are ensured

The curricula provide certain opportunities to personalize the students' learning experiences. However, the fruition of optional or elective courses is also conditioned on the language in which the courses are taught, given the prevalence of Russian-language courses. Such a factor appears particularly relevant, and potentially critical, also in the light of the growing number of Ukrainian students attending the EHU programmes.

1.2.5. Final theses (applied projects) comply with the requirements for the field and cycle

Students participate in mandatory research methods courses to develop their research capabilities. However the presence of more specific thesis-focussed seminars would surely increase the students' preparedness when it comes to the thesis writing process.

A pre-defense review is conducted in the spring semester to ensure the quality and readiness of the thesis. During this stage, the relevance of the topic, the methodological approach, and the feasibility of the research are assessed.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 1.2.)

The programs comply with legal requirements set by Lithuanian regulations and internal EHU policies. They align program aims, learning outcomes, teaching, and assessment methods, though stronger coordination is needed, particularly in updating academic sources, including Russian-language literature post-Ukraine invasion. The curriculum fosters critical thinking, analytical skills, and practical problem-solving through interactive teaching and internships, but lacks dedicated thesis preparation seminars.

While students can personalize their studies, language barriers—especially the prevalence of Russian-language courses—affect accessibility, particularly for Ukrainian students. English

proficiency should be further developed, with targeted academic writing courses. Additionally, introducing mediation, trauma, and conflict resolution courses would support students' personal growth. The final thesis process follows required standards, but thesis-focused seminars could further enhance research preparation.

AREA 1: CONCLUSIONS

AREA 1	Unsatisfactory - 1 Does not meet the requirements	Satisfactory - 2 Meets the requirements, but there are substantial shortcomings to be eliminated	Good - 3 Meets the requirements, but there are shortcomings to be eliminated	Very good - 4 Very well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings	Exceptional - 5 Exceptionally well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings
First cycle		X			
Second cycle		X			

COMMENDATIONS

1. The presence of a formalized pre-defence process plays a key role in preparing students for thesis writing. It provides them with valuable feedback and recommendations, helping them approach the final defence with greater confidence and readiness to successfully complete their thesis.

2. Worth mentioning is also the involvement of civil society in the design and delivery of the curriculum. This is crucial for ensuring its relevance and practical impact. Such horizontal collaboration brings diverse perspectives and expertise, enriching the educational experience and aligning it with real-world needs and societal challenges.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address shortcomings

1. The EHU strategy for its political science programmes, as well as their aims and learning outcomes should address better the realities of operating in exile with its graduates being unable to return safely to Belarus, let alone work in government institutions of a repressive regime. The prolonged nature of EHU's exile status necessitates a **strategic pivot to preparing graduates for success in host and regional labour markets** while retaining the capacity to contribute to Belarus's democratic future when circumstances allow. Balancing this dual mission will be critical to ensuring EHU's sustained impact and relevance.

2. To enhance students' preparedness in the thesis writing process, it is recommended to introduce dedicated courses on **academic writing** and an ad hoc **master's thesis seminar**. These additions would address students' common challenges in developing their dissertation and provide comprehensive support, complementing the methods course currently offered.

3. It is strongly recommended to introduce a new course focused on **transition studies**, given the importance of these dynamics for both programmes, the target audience, and EHU as a whole. Such a course would be essential to ensure the study focus remains current and aligned with contemporary developments.

4. It is advised to prioritize the **updating of literature and academic sources**, with particular attention to works published in Russia, especially following Moscow's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. This ensures that the curriculum reflects contemporary developments and maintains academic rigor.

For further improvement

1. Given EHU students' backgrounds and personal experiences, as well as to support their personal development, it is recommended to introduce courses on mediation, trauma, and conflict resolution. These courses would equip students with essential skills to navigate complex interpersonal and societal challenges effectively.

2. To further strengthen EHU's tradition of multilingualism, it is recommended to expand English and Lithuanian language training and offer at least some courses in Lithuanian. Additionally, given the increasingly diverse student body, it is important not to assume proficiency in the Russian language, particularly for Ukrainian students, given the obviously sensitive nature of the matter, and to think of alternatives where needed.

AREA 2: LINKS BETWEEN SCIENTIFIC (OR ARTISTIC) RESEARCH AND
HIGHER EDUCATION

2.1.	Higher education integrates the latest developments in scientific (or artistic) research and technology and enables students to develop skills for scientific (or artistic) research

FACTUAL SITUATION

2.1.1. Research within the field of study is at a sufficient level

The European Humanities University (EHU) has made substantial progress in advancing research activities over the past four years. Evidence from MOSTA reports highlights significant growth in research output within the field of Political Science, increasing from 2.60 points in 2020 to 29.48 points in 2022. Nearly all staff members actively contribute to one of the University's established research centers, fostering continuous participation in projects and related scholarly endeavors.

During the reporting period, EHU implemented several measures to enhance research performance, including increasing publication output and encouraging greater faculty participation in research projects and scientific conferences. Notably, it has developed internal policies that provide clear guidance, streamline research management processes, and establish an internal fund to support projects and other research activities. This fund is also accessible to students, but efforts are needed to better inform them about these opportunities.

EHU remains committed to a policy of openness and engagement, exemplified by its integration of Ukrainian faculty members and active collaboration with Belarusian civil society. The integration of research and technological advancements into the curriculum further demonstrates the University's dedication to sufficient quality performance.

Not all faculty members contribute to research publications. Data from the EHU indicates that eight teachers have not published research papers. Furthermore, staff research outputs are not featured in internationally recognized peer-reviewed journals in an adequate and balanced manner, across the entire teaching staff. In that sense, faculty members have not published monographs in international publishing houses in an adequate manner.

The EHU is engaged in research projects but they are limited in scope and partnerships. Greater emphasis should be placed on expanding participation in international research projects rather than focusing solely on collaboration and capacity-building initiatives. Strengthening and reassessing existing research networks at both national and international levels is crucial. Additionally, partnerships should be carefully evaluated—for instance, cooperation with the Baltic International Academy in Latvia should be reconsidered, given its negative assessment by national accreditation bodies.

2.1.2. Curriculum is linked to the latest developments in science, art, and technology

The Research (Art) Strategy 2019–2024 adopted by the University ensures that scientific activities align with study programs and contribute to the quality of teaching outcomes. The document also highlights the primary research priorities, which serve as a framework for developing key sub-themes. Publications by the teaching staff address the majority of these priorities. Additionally, the EHU's efforts to advance research in areas such as democratization, critical thinking, political

communication, and others are integral to fulfilling one of the University's core missions: supporting and expanding the civil society of Belarus.

While EHU seeks to promote interdisciplinary studies and has made noteworthy strides, this area of research could benefit from further strengthening.

Further internationalization of research performance at EHU would significantly enhance curriculum development and elevate the academic standing of the institution. While the teaching staff actively integrate their research achievements into the study courses, these contributions remain largely confined to the Eastern and Central European context. Given the University's clear focus on serving students from Belarus, Ukraine, and Russia, this regional emphasis is understandable. However, to strengthen the University's academic reputation and broaden its influence, it is essential to expand the international visibility of both the teaching staff and their research accomplishments.

By fostering collaborations with global academic networks, participating in internationally recognized research initiatives, and encouraging contributions to high-impact, peer-reviewed journals, the University can increase its visibility and provide students with a more comprehensive and diverse educational experience.

2.1.3. Opportunities for students to engage in research are consistent with the cycle

The University undertakes several essential measures to actively involve students in research activities. This involvement is reflected in projects, conferences, guest lectures by visiting faculty, and other academic initiatives. The University also offers several courses that build research skills, such as *Project Management* (BA) and *Project Planning and Implementation* (BA).

However, greater focus is needed on engaging second-cycle students in research projects. Currently, students are more involved in network-based projects, which, while valuable for their professional development, do not prioritize research-related initiatives. Expanding opportunities for direct participation in research projects could significantly enhance their academic and professional growth.

The EHU has facilitated the establishment of several research centers, creating favorable conditions for expanding research activities. However, greater effort is needed to inform and involve students in the research projects conducted at these centers. Active participation would enhance their academic skills, including the application of research methods, critical thinking, and academic writing.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 2.1.)

The EHU has made substantial progress in research, particularly in Political Science, as reflected in the impressive increase in MOSTA report scores from 2020 to 2022. Nearly all teaching staff contribute to research centers, ensuring consistent engagement in scholarly activities. The University has implemented well-defined internal policies that streamline research management and provide financial support through an internal research fund, accessible to both faculty and students. Faculty members incorporate their research findings into study programmes, aligning with the University's research strategy and ensuring that students benefit from up-to-date academic developments. Students have opportunities to participate in research through projects, conferences, and coursework focused on research skills, fostering early academic engagement.

At the same time, while the EHU has established strong regional research networks, greater participation in international projects and collaborations with international academic institutions is needed to enhance visibility and impact. Some partnerships, such as with the Baltic International Academy, should be reconsidered due to concerns about the quality of their academic programmes. While interdisciplinary research is encouraged, it requires more structured support and development

to maximize its impact. Given the University's focus on Belarusian, Ukrainian, and Russian students, research remains regionally concentrated. Expanding contributions to international peer-reviewed journals would enhance EHU's academic standing. While students are involved in network-based projects, more efforts should be made to engage second-cycle (Master's) students in hands-on research initiatives within the University's research centers.

AREA 2: CONCLUSIONS

AREA 2	Unsatisfactory - 1 Does not meet the requirements	Satisfactory - 2 Meets the requirements, but there are substantial shortcomings to be eliminated	Good - 3 Meets the requirements, but there are shortcomings to be eliminated	Very good - 4 Very well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings	Exceptional - 5 Exceptionally well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings
First cycle		X			
Second cycle		X			

COMMENDATIONS

1. The research output of EHU has seen a notable increase in recent years, significantly contributing to the overall performance and academic reputation of the University. This growth reflects the University's commitment to advancing its scholarly impact and aligning research initiatives with institutional goals.
2. The implementation of the Research Strategy 2019–2024 has played a pivotal role in mobilizing EHU's research staff, fostering a more focused and cohesive approach to academic inquiry. This strategy has prioritized the pursuit of studies closely aligned with the University's study programmes, ensuring that research activities directly contribute to the quality and relevance of the curricula. Additionally, the strategy has emphasized the importance of building knowledge capacity on regional matters, particularly those relevant to the Eastern and Central European context.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Greater attention should be directed toward strengthening institutional and research staff capacity for participation in high-level international projects. This includes building competencies, fostering partnerships, and ensuring that the University is well-positioned to compete with Lithuanian and regional universities.
2. Efforts should also focus on increasing the involvement of students in research activities. For 1st cycle (undergraduate) students, there should be a greater emphasis on engaging them in applied research through the utilization of existing infrastructures at EHU, such as the research Centres. At the same time, 2nd cycle (graduate) students should be more actively engaged in advanced research projects, contributing to the University's broader research goals.
3. To elevate the University's academic reputation it is necessary to increase the number of publications in peer-reviewed international journals and contributions to international monographs. Encouraging teaching staff and researchers to collaborate with international scholars and submit their work to high-impact journals will be crucial in achieving this objective.

4. Interdisciplinary research should be prioritized by leveraging the opportunities provided by the University's diverse study programmes and existing research Centres.

For further improvement

1. For the continued development of political science at EHU, the internationalization of research and the adoption of global best practices are essential. EHU has made significant strides in establishing partnerships, but these collaborations must actively enhance the potential of researchers, students, and the institution itself. Additionally, they should play a crucial role in solidifying EHU's position within both the Lithuanian and international research landscape..

2. Currently, the EHU focuses on academic performance relevant to the region, which is undergoing democratic transformation. This knowledge and experience are crucial for the European knowledge area. At the same time, further transformation of the EHU is necessary to share and expand its accumulated knowledge within the broader research community. Introducing a novel research agenda aligned with prevailing European and international trends will broaden research topics beyond those currently relevant to the EHU. Expanding the research agenda will open new opportunities for developing international research projects and modernizing curricula.

AREA 3: STUDENT ADMISSION AND SUPPORT

3.1.	Student selection and admission is in line with the learning outcomes

FACTUAL SITUATION

3.1.1. Student selection and admission criteria and procedures are adequate and transparent

The rules for admission to the Bachelor's degree programme are adopted annually and approved by the Rector of the University and admission requirements are announced on the University's website, in the media, at seminars, in personal interviews and at study fairs. Admission of foreign students takes place in the departments of the higher education institution via a selection procedure in defined stages, the documents received are analysed as part of the admission procedure and a waiting list is drawn up and submitted for approval. Admission is subject to admission requirements; candidates are admitted on the basis of their place in the selection queue and candidates must provide proof of English language proficiency or take an English test at the time of admission. Citizens of the Republic of Lithuania were admitted to the Bachelor's programme via the LAMA BPO system until 2023; from 2024 onwards, admission will take place at the university.

Information on admission to postgraduate programmes and the requirements for applicants are published in advance and are in accordance with the admission regulations approved and updated annually by the higher education institution. Admission is by competitive examination based on the basis of a competition score of at least 8. During the period under evaluation, the number of applicants has increased for both undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. During the period under evaluation, while acknowledging the changes in enrollments, the admission numbers for both undergraduate and postgraduate programs have remained relatively stable. At the time of the evaluation visit, the screening of publicly available information sources revealed that it was difficult to find all documents in Lithuanian and English, while most of the documents were available in Russian language. Taking into account the changes implemented after the evaluation visit, the panel reiterates that all documents relevant to students and applicants should be more easily accessible in at least three languages (English, Lithuanian, Russian).

3.1.2. Recognition of foreign qualifications, periods of study, and prior learning (established provisions and procedures)

The recognition of qualifications, part-time studies and competences acquired through previous non-formal and informal learning abroad is carried out by the higher education institution in accordance with internal and external regulations. Most of the students of the higher education institution are non-Lithuanian citizens and the recognition procedure is carried out. At the time of preparing the SER, the extended procedure for recognition of competences acquired through non-formal, work-based and informal learning has not been approved by the HEI administration. Most of the students at the university are not Lithuanian citizens and have graduated from schools outside Lithuania. Therefore, the university strictly adheres to the procedures for recognising qualifications obtained abroad.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 3.1.)

The student selection and admission criteria and procedures are adequate and transparent. However, it is very evident that languages present a major challenge to students, university operations as well as prospective students. To be precise, English – despite noticeable interventions into the area – still present a major challenge that prevents many students to listen to English-only courses in Kaunas. In addition to this, the absence of efforts to attract Lithuanian students as well as invest into Lithuanian efforts limits the potential of the university to the mere "university in exile". Third, particularly due to the tragic situation in Ukraine and authoritarianism in Belarus, where most of the students come from, the dominance of Russian language and nor Belarusian or Ukranian is insufficiently defended. Recognition of foreign qualifications, periods of study, and prior learning is a laborious process for the institution due to its features, however, it is performing adequately.

3.2.	There is an effective student support system enabling students to maximise their learning progress

FACTUAL SITUATION

3.2.1. Opportunities for student academic mobility are ensured.

Students have the opportunity to participate in mobility programmes such as Erasmus+, OSUN and Campus Europae, which are published and presented at open days, admission campaigns, emails, in the Moodle forum and on social networks. The low number of incoming exchange students and outgoing students for study or traineeship (in 2019-2020, 1 student left and 6 students arrived; in 2020-2022, no students went on mobility; in 2020-2021, 2 students arrived and in 2021-2022, 4 students arrived; in 2022-2023, 2 students went on mobility and no students arrived) is a result of several factors. Mobility at BA level is only possible after successful completion of the first year, the fact that students spend their 2nd and 3rd academic year at Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas, and the tight deadlines for students to apply for student mobility.

3.2.2. Academic, financial, social, psychological, and personal support provided to students is relevant, adequate, and effective

Support for the University's students is provided in the areas of academic and administrative support, financial support, social and organisational support and psychological support. Academic and administrative support is provided by the Academic Support Centre, Student Services, Academic Affairs and other administrative staff. Support includes direct counselling and assistance as well as information provided via the University website and the virtual learning environment 'Moodle'. Each degree programme has a tutor appointed by the Academic Department who monitors the academic progress of students on their programme, coordinates the preparation of term papers and final thesis, prepares and coordinates individual study plans, discusses student placement matters, informs students about scholarship and funding opportunities and is usually the first person students turn to with any queries. In the Academic support centre, students in the programs also have assigned program methodologists who monitor and document (using the study management information system) the progress and achievements of the students, and advise them on technical, financial and other study-related issues.

Students on the university's degree programmes are offered financial support: Scholarships covering all or part of tuition fees, departmental scholarships, incentive scholarships, social scholarships, targeted services for students with special needs, emergency support scholarship, support for participation in academic events, support for research projects. Students of political science programmes can submit a portfolio of their academic and social achievements as well as their voluntary activities and apply for a scholarship to cover (100%) or (50%) of their tuition fees. Such scholarships will be awarded to 10 percent of each student cohort. Departmental scholarships are intended to encourage student mentors to take the lead in bringing the University community together, organising thematic events, representing the University at national and international conferences and other events, and otherwise contributing to departmental activities. Political Science students, like all other students, can apply for a departmental scholarship and participate in the competition. Incentive scholarships such as the nominal Vladimir Furs Scholarship (EUR 2000), Friends of EHU and Alumni Scholarships are awarded to students each cycle who demonstrate outstanding academic, scientific and social achievements. A social scholarship can be awarded to students who are in a difficult financial situation. The amount of the social scholarship is EUR 123 per month. Newly acquired information indicates the amount role to EUR 250. The emergency fund supports university students who or their families have fallen into political hardship, as well as Belarusian students who have been subjected to repression and/or expelled from universities for political reasons and are therefore unable to continue their studies in Belarus.

Socio-organisational support is provided by the University's Student Services and the Student Union. Student Services coordinates services for students, promotes the realisation of creative student initiatives and the development of public, intellectual and cultural activities, and takes care of the practical aspects of student life. Since the beginning of political repression and persecution in Belarus after the presidential elections in August 2020, EHU has supported about 100 students who have progressed to the next cohorts or entered EHU due to political persecution or pressure in Belarus. EHU also provides legal assistance through the Legal Clinic and the Centre for Constitutionalism, which operate on the initiative of legal scholars, and in exceptional cases also through the reimbursement of lawyers' fees in connection with political administrative and criminal proceedings in Belarus. EHU also provides students with visa support.

3.2.3. Higher education information and student counselling are sufficient

Students admitted to the programme are informed about the programme, requirements and other information relevant to students in various ways: on the University website, directly by sending information messages via email, by posting information on 'Moodle' and via social media channels (the University has Facebook, Instagram and other accounts), and in introductory sessions with first-year students (both in class and online). Intensive information communication with newly admitted students and students who have transferred from other universities is carried out by Student Services, later by the department and in particular by the curator of the degree programme and the staff of the Academic Support Centre.

The University's information and advice system includes direct academic and administrative advice and support from programme directors, teaching staff and administrative staff, information material published in the 'virtual learning environment 'Moodle', regular information reports, etc., as well as information on study programmes published on the EHU website, which students can access themselves. It should also be mentioned that first-year students are supported during their introductory phase not only by the programme curator but also by mentors – older students. Such

support from student mentors is very important for new students as they have to adapt not only to the EHU study system but also to a foreign country.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 3.2.)

Student mobility abroad and especially incoming mobility remains very low, which severely limits the internationalisation experience of students and the impact on the overall student experience. So the opportunities are there, but various contextual circumstances, competence factors as well as curricular provisions prevent them from being utilised. On the other hand, universities support motivated students with performance-related, but also general academic, financial and socio-organisational support in the form of financial resources, benefits in kind, support from administrative staff and support from fellow students.

AREA 3: CONCLUSIONS

AREA 3	Unsatisfactory - 1 Does not meet the requirements	Satisfactory - 2 Meets the requirements, but there are substantial shortcomings to be eliminated	Good - 3 Meets the requirements, but there are shortcomings to be eliminated	Very good - 4 Very well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings	Exceptional - 5 Exceptionally well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings
First cycle			X		
Second cycle			X		

COMMENDATIONS

1. First-year students are mentored, which helps them integrate successfully into the study process, especially for students coming from abroad.
2. Since students do not demonstrate high motivation to participate in student surveys, alternative ways are found to get students' opinions.
3. Students' extracurricular efforts are recognised for their portfolios, which also has a positive impact on their chances of receiving financial aid.
4. Students are systematically represented in a number of university bodies and play a role as partners.
5. Student financial and socio-political difficulties are actively addressed, taking an individualised approach and responding to the immediate needs of each student.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address shortcomings

1. Documents relevant to students or applicants should be more easily accessible in at least three languages (English, Lithuanian, Russian).

2. Efforts to improve English language skills should be intensified, as the level of English language skills continues to be decisive for the future career of graduates and their educational opportunities.
3. The university demonstrates an effort to attract local students through local (Lithuanian) access routes, however, the success of these efforts is still to be seen. The panel recommends the institution to strengthen efforts to increase the institution's embeddedness in the local environment.
4. The programme should look for ways to make mobility opportunities for students at all levels an actual and frequent practice.

For further improvement

1. The possibility of providing materials in Belarusian would send a strong signal about the character and identity of the university, especially given the history of the institution.
2. Participation in surveys on student satisfaction with information and counselling should be improved.

AREA 4: TEACHING AND LEARNING, STUDENT ASSESSMENT, AND GRADUATE EMPLOYMENT

4.1.	Students are prepared for independent professional activity

FACTUAL SITUATION

4.1.1. Teaching and learning address the needs of students and enable them to achieve intended learning outcomes

The assessed study programmes are offered on site, i.e. students attend face-to-face lectures at the university. However, the World Politics and Economics programme is offered in two forms: Full-time (continuous mode) and part-time (session-based continuous mode). Full-time students study at EHU in the first and fourth years and at Vytautas Magnus University in the second and third years and usually live in Kaunas. The total duration of the programme for these students is 4 years. Part-time students (both on-campus and distance learning) usually come to Vilnius and attend face-to-face lectures during the sessions. In between sessions, students participate in distance learning and other contacts with teachers. The duration of training for these students at EHU is 5 years. The Master's programme in Public Policy is offered as a full-time programme (1.5 years or 3 semesters).

Education at EHU, including the World Politics and Economics programme, is based on humanistic principles and encourages individuals to participate actively, independently and responsibly in the learning process. The teaching, learning and assessment methods in lectures, seminars and examinations are selected according to the objectives of the subjects studied, the learning outcomes and the progress of the educational process and are based on teaching and assessment strategies. The educational process follows the principles of learner-centred education, in particular student autonomy and responsibility, partnership between teachers and students and adaptation to students' learning needs. Traditional teaching/learning methods are predominantly used at the university, i.e. lectures, seminars, individual and group work. Distance learning is mostly synchronous (via Zoom, Moodle, pedagogical tools and resources from Google, electronic whiteboards Padlet or similar platforms). The learning management system Moodle is often used to store the necessary teaching materials, computer tests, teaching information and assignments. The methods and ways of assessing student performance are specified in the programme descriptions and in the syllabi.

4.1.2. Access to higher education for socially vulnerable groups and students with individual needs is ensured.

The educational process is adapted to different vulnerable groups of students. The premises are equipped with a variety of adaptations for people with limited abilities. Each academic year up to 5 students with disabilities and special needs are enrolled and successfully study at the University, these students are also supported with a published guide. Supporting vulnerable groups of students is also a priority for the University, particularly due to the large number of students from Belarus and other neighbouring countries. Many of them feel oppressed by their home regimes or have experienced war-related trauma. The university offers psychological help, individual adjustments and financial support. Students whose stay in Belarus is restricted for political reasons have the opportunity to be enrolled at the university as part of a special programme. The flexibility of the

educational process is ensured by offering students the opportunity to study according to individual study plans. The university also awards social and other scholarships to students from socially disadvantaged groups and also participated in the implementation of the European Structural and Investment Funds project 'Improving Access to Education' for 2014–2020.

EHU has systems in place to identify students with special needs. A special committee reviews applications to be categorised as students with limited opportunities, providing a formal process for identifying individual needs. The University offers financial aid tailored to disadvantaged groups. For example: students with special needs receive an additional €160 per month throughout their studies if they are permanently resident in Lithuania. Under Erasmus+, students with special needs or from disadvantaged backgrounds can receive additional financial support for mobility programmes (e.g. €250 per month for long-term mobility). EHU provides academic support through its Student Service, which coordinates extracurricular activities and promotes cooperation between student organisations to address community challenges.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 4.1.)

EHU's political science programmes show some success in preparing students for independent professional activity, but significant improvements are needed to reflect current realities and opportunities. The programmes offer a practise-oriented curriculum that emphasises analytical thinking, adaptability and multilingualism. The integration of research into course activities, coupled with thesis requirements, encourages critical thinking. Participation in projects, conferences and summer schools provides valuable experience. However, there are also some notable weaknesses. Internships do exist, but their relevance to the specific needs of the labour market outside Belarus is not consistently demonstrated. The overemphasis on Belarus overshadows the need to prepare graduates for Lithuanian society and Lithuanian labour market as well as the EU or for further international opportunities. A heavy teaching load and limited opportunities for professional development limit faculty research and mentoring, which impacts student preparation. Insufficient systematic tracking of graduates' career progression makes it difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of the programme. A critical gap is the lack of systematic integration of Lithuanian language training, which hinders access to key labour markets for the Belarusian diaspora and integration into host countries. The English language is also a problem for some students, which consequently affects their educational choices and the opportunity to study in Kaunas. This omission impacts employability in the public sector or community-based positions. The decision to start with the language of instruction dominated by Russian functions as an instrument of inclusion for students who come from weaker educational systems with recognisable knowledge gaps. However, the decision to maintain the dominance of Russian in the two degree programmes ultimately works to their disadvantage, as it severely restricts the relevant labour market for graduates of both programmes. In terms of accessibility, EHU demonstrates a commitment to supporting socially vulnerable students and students with special needs through financial aid and formal identification processes. The university is guided by the principles of inclusive education.

4.2.	There is an effective and transparent system for student assessment, progress monitoring, and assuring academic integrity

FACTUAL SITUATION

4.2.1. Monitoring of learning progress and feedback to students to promote self-assessment and learning progress planning is systematic.

The assessment of academic performance is determined by an internal regulation and is based on learning outcomes and assessment methods adapted to them. A system of three levels of achievement of learning outcomes (high, typical and borderline) is used for assessment, linked to a ten-point grading scale. To ensure active and coherent student work throughout the programme, the assessment of learning outcomes and the awarding of a final grade is based on a cumulative points system that takes into account the results of the interim assessment (50-60% of the final grade) and an examination or similar form of assessment (40-50% of the final grade). The interim assessment must fulfil the established criteria specified in the descriptions of the educational disciplines and published in the university's virtual learning environment.

If a student's learning outcomes are unsatisfactory and there is a risk that they will not achieve the objectives of the subject, they may be offered individual or group counselling by the teacher or at the student's request. The final grade is made up of the grades of the intermediate examination and the examination. A cumulative grading system and clearly defined qualitative and quantitative assessment criteria ensure an appropriate level and reliability of grades for teaching and student performance. At the end of the course, students are surveyed to find out their opinion on the quality of teaching. The results of this survey are discussed in the meetings of the programme committee (study area). If a student does not achieve results in a subject and does not receive a positive overall grade, but does receive positive grades in the mid-term examinations, he or she can postpone the final examination to the so-called academic debt reduction week. Such a week is organised every semester after the end of the examination session.

4.2.2. Graduate employability and career are monitored

The University has a system for collecting data on the careers of graduates. The University's Career Centre collects this information. The main source of information about students' careers is a survey of EHU graduates who provide information about their careers. The University reports that graduates from the programme find employment in a variety of industries and fields of work, demonstrating a wide range of skills and competencies acquired during their studies. Many graduates continue their education by enrolling in MA programmes, demonstrating an appropriate level of graduate preparation for further academic pursuits. Graduates of the MA programme demonstrate a variety of career paths, with careers in product and user interface design, consulting, project management, law, marketing, education and others.

The EHU Career Centre supports students in their professional development with a range of services and resources. These include regular newsletters on career opportunities, current job vacancies and internships. A Telegram chat is also available to post job opportunities and prospects. The Career Centre also hosts regular webinars where students learn how to write cover letters, prepare for successful interviews and other aspects of career development. The university also has its own alumni community, which adds weight to the career development efforts of graduates.

4.2.3. Policies to ensure academic integrity, tolerance, and non-discrimination are implemented

The principles and means of ensuring academic integrity, tolerance and non-discrimination at the University are reflected in the approved 'Code of Academic Ethics', which sets out standards of

academic ethics that apply to faculty, students and administrative staff and their relationships in the context of academic activities. The University has a Senate-elected Academic Ethics Committee, which includes a student representative. From 2019 to 2024, the number of complaints filed by students and faculty was between 1 and 2 per year.

Cases of cheating, academic dishonesty and plagiarism and the procedure for the relevant decisions are defined in the 'University 'Regulation on the Independence of Written and Creative Work at the European Humanities University'. Until 2022, the University used the software Turnitin and now OXSICO, which are integrated into the virtual learning environment Moodle. All term papers and final papers must be checked using this software, but many teachers also use Turnitin to check other written work. Practise also shows that this regulation is applied in practice. In the interest of the correct application of the regulation, the EHU Library organises regular training sessions for students and consultations on issues of correct citation and independence requirements. In addition, 'Methodological recommendations for the design of written work' have been created and are available to students in the Moodle virtual learning environment.

The University guarantees the non-discriminatory conduct of teaching and academic research in accordance with the Code of Academic Ethics. Equal opportunities at the University are guaranteed by the EHU Equal Opportunities and Gender Equality Policy and its Action Plan. Gender equality is implemented in accordance with the framework of the National Programme for Ensuring Equal Opportunities for Women and Men for 2015–2021.

4.2.4. Procedures for submitting and processing appeals and complaints are effective

Appeals at EHU are regulated by 'Appeals Regulation of the European Humanities University'. Appeals can be made regarding interim and/or final assessment grades, as well as non-compliance/violation of assessment procedures to the Head of Academic Department who forms an Appeals Board, consisting of faculty members and student representatives. If the student's appeal is found to be justified, the assessment results must be reevaluated. In the event of disagreement with the decision of the Appeals Board, the student(s) may submit a Complaint to the Rector of the university.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 4.2.)

Student assessment is both formative and summative and there is a marked student-centredness, including attention to the contextual situations in which students find themselves. An example of such student-centredness is also the so-called "liquidation week', which allows students to catch up with their peers. Apart from this, the assessment methods are not innovative enough and do not provide enough scope to constructively align assessment methods with learning objectives and classroom activities. Some information is available on students' career prospects and graduates' employability and career paths, but these activities lack robustness, validity, regularity and publicity. Graduate tracking and employability activities are also too tied to the Belarusian context, which limits the overall employability of graduates and their career prospects. While the MA programme is slightly better positioned in terms of the low number of graduates to be tracked and the stronger alumni retention, its strong focus on Belarus and the inappropriateness of the same type of monitoring mechanisms as the BA programme means that both programmes importantly underperform in this area of activity. The plagiarism prevention and academic integrity systems are functioning, as is the complaints system

AREA 4: CONCLUSIONS

AREA 4	Unsatisfactory - 1 Does not meet the requirements	Satisfactory - 2 Meets the requirements, but there are substantial shortcomings to be eliminated	Good - 3 Meets the requirements, but there are shortcomings to be eliminated	Very good - 4 Very well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings	Exceptional - 5 Exceptionally well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings
First cycle		X			
Second cycle		X			

COMMENDATIONS

1. Open interaction with employers and other relevant organisations and a willingness to engage with them.
2. The approach of actively reaching out to social partners, potential employers and organisations where graduates of the two programmes work is commendable.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address shortcomings

1. In order to strengthen the labour market relevance of the programmes, regular labour market analyses should be carried out for relevant countries and sectors and the curricula should be adapted on this basis. Alternative metrics to assess alumni success of alumni in exile, focussing on employment rates, career advancement and contribution to the host society.
2. Practical skills training should be improved, including through building partnerships with local and regional think tanks, non-governmental organisations and governmental organisations by offering targeted internships and projects.
3. Lithuanian and other regional languages should be more widely and systematically integrated into the curriculum to recognise their importance for employability and integration.
4. Alumni should be seen as contributors to the democratic ethos and economic prosperity of their host countries and not just as actors ready for an eventual return to Belarus.

For further improvement

1. Staff capacity in assessment methods should be further developed and a wider range of formative and summative assessment methods should be introduced to facilitate constructive alignment.

AREA 5: TEACHING STAFF

5.1.	Teaching staff is adequate to achieve learning outcomes

FACTUAL SITUATION

5.1.1. The number, qualification, and competence (scientific, didactic, professional) of teaching staff is sufficient to achieve learning outcomes

The EHU teaching staff meets the qualifications required by Lithuanian legislation, ensuring the successful implementation of study programs. In recent years, as the number of students has grown, the teaching staff has expanded accordingly. A similar trend applies to the number of teachers with doctoral degrees, who specialize in fields relevant to the delivery of first- and second-cycle programs.

Faculty members are actively engaged in research that aligns with the academic programs, enhancing their relevance and quality. Teacher performance is evaluated annually, with assessments focusing on their pedagogical, scientific, methodological, and organizational contributions.

The academic staff is dedicated to producing publications that address all priority areas of EHU's activities. However, greater emphasis should be placed on publishing in peer-reviewed journals, as well as contributing to international collective and individual monographs.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 5.1.)

The EHU's faculty meets Lithuanian legislative requirements, ensuring the effective implementation of study programs. As student enrollment has increased, the University has proportionally expanded its teaching staff, including a growing number of doctoral degree holders specializing in relevant fields. Faculty members contribute to research aligned with academic programs, strengthening the quality and relevance of teaching. Annual assessments ensure that faculty members are evaluated based on their pedagogical, research, and organizational contributions, supporting continuous professional development.

EHU has a well-qualified and expanding teaching staff actively engaged in research that supports the University's academic mission. However, to further strengthen its academic profile, greater emphasis should be placed on publishing in peer-reviewed journals, contributing to international monographs, and increasing international research collaborations. Addressing these areas will enhance EHU's academic reputation and broaden the impact of its scholarly contributions.

5.2.	Teaching staff is ensured opportunities to develop competences, and they are periodically evaluated

FACTUAL SITUATION

5.2.1. Opportunities for academic mobility of teaching staff are ensured

Academic mobility is present at the EHU; however, the current number of outgoing (2 per year) and incoming teachers (1 per year) is insufficient and requires improvement. Efforts should also focus on broadening the geographic reach of partner universities. The primary programmes facilitating mobility are Erasmus+ and those organized by the Open Universities Society Network (OSUN). To enhance academic mobility, it is essential to explore additional opportunities to increase the number of outgoing and incoming teachers.

5.2.2. Opportunities for the development of the teaching staff are ensured

EHU provides a variety of courses aimed at improving professional competences. These include Lithuanian and English language courses, which are particularly significant for the internationalization of study programmes and for enabling teachers' active participation in international networks and projects. Staff members also benefit from training opportunities offered by OSUN.

EHU teachers demonstrate a strong commitment to enhancing their competences through specially designed courses, publications, and academic collaborations within research centres. However, the inclusion of courses, networks, and research teams with broader participation of international scholars from partner universities could further enhance staff performance.

Training on didactic methodologies informed by international best practices would be particularly valuable. Additionally, expanding and increasing participation in professional associations both within Lithuania and across Europe would significantly contribute to the professional development of EHU faculty.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 5.2.)

EHU places significant emphasis on the pedagogical training and professional development of its teaching staff, ensuring that faculty members have access to a variety of courses designed to enhance their teaching methodologies, research skills, and subject-specific expertise. These training programs play a crucial role in maintaining high educational standards and fostering continuous academic growth.

However, despite these efforts, opportunities for internationalization remain underutilized. The mobility of both incoming and outgoing faculty members is insufficient, limiting exposure to diverse teaching practices, international research collaborations, and cross-cultural academic exchange. Strengthening participation in international mobility programmes would greatly benefit both educators and students by enriching the learning environment with global perspectives.

Furthermore, cooperation with Lithuanian universities remains relatively limited. Expanding partnerships with national academic institutions could facilitate joint research projects, collaborative teaching initiatives, and shared resources, ultimately enhancing the quality of education and strengthening EHU's integration within the Lithuanian academic community. A more strategic and proactive approach to fostering partnerships, both nationally and internationally, would significantly contribute to the University's academic reputation and institutional development.

AREA 5: CONCLUSIONS

AREA 5	Unsatisfactory - 1	Satisfactory - 2	Good - 3 Meets the requirements,	Very good - 4	Exceptional - 5

	Does not meet the requirements	Meets the requirements, but there are substantial shortcomings to be eliminated	but there are shortcomings to be eliminated	Very well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings	Exceptionally well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings
First cycle		X			
Second cycle		X			

COMMENDATIONS

1. Teaching staff at the EHU is committed to pursue research of relevance to their professional qualification.
2. The EHU and individual teachers are actively enhancing their pedagogical skills by participating in courses organized by the institution or external partners.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address shortcomings

1. Internationalization of teaching staff in terms of teaching, learning, mobility and research remains modest.
2. Broader participation in Lithuanian and regional professional and academic networks should be leveraged as a valuable source of information and knowledge.

For further improvement

1. Enhance the internationalization of EHU's teaching and learning processes to foster a global perspective and advance the professional competencies of the teaching staff.
2. Introduce comprehensive training and methodological development courses designed to equip educators with the tools and knowledge needed to adopt and implement a multidisciplinary approach across study courses, thereby enriching the academic experience and promoting innovative teaching practices.

AREA 6: LEARNING FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

6.1.	Facilities, informational and financial resources are sufficient and enable achieving learning outcomes

FACTUAL SITUATION

6.1.1. Facilities, informational and financial resources are adequate and sufficient for an effective learning process

More than half of the HEI's space is occupied by classrooms, all classrooms are equipped with the necessary equipment for hybrid lecturing. The classrooms vary in size, with two classrooms being computer labs. The HEI has rooms for students' independent work and practical activities, all rooms have access to Litnet, students have access to a licensed version of the MC Office package, the necessary software for the study of specialised subjects has been purchased, such as Mathcad, Gretl, and the study material is digitised in a virtual learning environment. The HEI's facilities are accessible to students and staff with disabilities: premises located on the ground floor are accessible without the use of stairs, there is an elevator with embossed buttons and additional Braille engraving on them, non-slip corridors, disabled-friendly toilet facilities, and desks in the computer rooms for wheelchair users. The Higher Education Institution takes into account students with special educational needs, making adjustments where and when necessary, assessing learning outcomes using flexible methods and adapting assignments. Practice placements are selected from cooperating institutions and assignments are linked to the thesis topic.

6.1.2. There is continuous planning for and upgrading of resources.

Resource renewal is planned on the basis of requests from subject teachers. Lecturers can also inform of the equipment needed by students to be able to study successfully and to develop their studies. The cost of purchasing equipment is included in the annual departmental budget, with major purchases being made from the main budget.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 6.1.)

The Higher Education Institution (HEI) offers a properly equipped, accessible learning environment with sufficient resources. Classrooms enable hybrid learning, and students benefit from digital resources.. Study materials are digitalized for ease of access. Facilities for accessibility, including lifts, Braille signage, and wheelchair-accessible workstations, accommodate different needs. Assessment for learning is adapted for students with special needs. Practical placements are coordinated with thesis topics for more real-world applicability. Renovation of resources is dependent on student and faculty demand and budgeting for continuous upgrades. By planning and investing, the HEI provides a dynamic, accessible, and well-supported learning environment for all students.

AREA 6: CONCLUSIONS

AREA 6	Unsatisfactory - 1 Does not meet the requirements	Satisfactory - 2 Meets the requirements, but there are substantial shortcomings to be eliminated	Good - 3 Meets the requirements, but there are shortcomings to be eliminated	Very good - 4 Very well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings	Exceptional - 5 Exceptionally well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings
First cycle				X	
Second cycle				X	

COMMENDATIONS

1. Provision of well-equipped facilities that facilitate both hybrid learning and specialized subject studies, including access to essential software. Additionally, it ensures that digital learning resources are accessible through a virtual learning environment.
2. Dedication to accessibility by providing facilities tailored for students and staff with disabilities to accommodate needs.

AREA 7: QUALITY ASSURANCE AND PUBLIC INFORMATION

7.1.	The development of the field of study is based on an internal quality assurance system involving all stakeholders and continuous monitoring, transparency and public information

FACTUAL SITUATION

7.1.1. Internal quality assurance system for the programmes is effective

The internal quality assurance system at EHU is based on the Quality Assurance Policy and the Description of Internal Studies Quality Assurance approved in 2023. These documents ensure compliance with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (2015). The system includes policies, procedures, and monitoring processes such as program development, teacher qualification, student admission, and plagiarism prevention. Decision-making is based on the principle of subsidiarity, ensuring efficiency by delegating decisions to the most appropriate level.

EHU also integrates some internal and external feedback mechanisms, including annual program quality monitoring reports discussed at the Senate level for further improvements.

7.1.2. Involvement of stakeholders (students and others) in internal quality assurance is effective

There are several layers of involvement of social stakeholders in internal quality assurance processes. The primary level is the Study Program (Study Field) Committee, which includes representatives from students and social partners (five out of 11 committee members for 2023/2024). This committee meets to discuss study program goals, quality assurance, and program improvements. Feedback is systematically gathered through biannual student surveys and alumni consultations, which cover topics like course quality, administrative processes, and overall satisfaction.

The results are analyzed and there is an ambition to have them integrated into teaching and program updates. Additionally, social partners are consulted and have the chance to contribute to thesis defenses and feedback sessions, ensuring their perspectives are reflected in program development.

7.1.3. Information on the programmes, their external evaluation, improvement processes, and outcomes is collected, used and made publicly available

Student and stakeholder feedback is gathered through surveys, which are analyzed and used to improve study programs. The results of external evaluations and subsequent program improvements are published on the University's website and the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education, ensuring transparency and accessibility to all stakeholders.

The Study Program (Study Field) Committees, which include representatives from faculty, students, and social partners, oversee monitoring and updates, ensuring continuous improvement.

7.1.4. Student feedback is collected and analysed

Student Evaluation of Teaching (SET) surveys are conducted twice per year to evaluate teaching quality, while annual surveys assess broader satisfaction with the study environment, including teaching, administration, and psychological climate. Survey results are analyzed and shared with teachers, department heads, and students during university meetings. While feedback is collected regularly, the use of non-university platforms such as google form for feedback (or Telegram for bilateral communication between teachers and students) should be critically discussed, especially when it comes to personal privacy and compliance with GDPR.

Despite clear guidance of university regulation, the interviews revealed that unlike students, alumni do not remember being asked to fill in surveys regularly. Thus it might be a good practice to increase the de facto frequency of such a process to complement the overall satisfactory degree of alumni involvement in the university and programmes' lives.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION (regarding 7.1.)

EHU's internal quality assurance system, based on policies approved in 2023, aligns with European standards and ensures effective program development, teacher qualification, and student admission. Decision-making follows the subsidiarity principle, with stakeholder engagement playing a key role. Annual program monitoring reports and feedback mechanisms contribute to continuous improvement.

Stakeholders, including students and social partners, are actively involved through the Study Program Committee, surveys, and consultations. External evaluations and program updates are published for transparency. Student feedback is regularly collected and analyzed, though reliance on external platforms raises privacy concerns. Alumni surveys, while present, could be conducted more frequently to enhance engagement.

AREA 7: CONCLUSIONS

AREA 7	Unsatisfactory - 1 Does not meet the requirements	Satisfactory - 2 Meets the requirements, but there are substantial shortcomings to be eliminated	Good - 3 Meets the requirements, but there are shortcomings to be eliminated	Very good - 4 Very well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings	Exceptional - 5 Exceptionally well nationally and internationally without any shortcomings
First cycle		X			
Second cycle		X			

COMMENDATIONS

1. The university leadership and programme management demonstrate a clear readiness to constructively engage with students and alumni, reflecting EHU's commitment to addressing challenging issues such as turnout, retention rates, and related concerns.

2. EHU is making a concerted effort to collect relevant information and ensure its effective dissemination to specific stakeholders. This process involves gathering data on key areas of interest, analyzing it to derive actionable insights, and sharing these findings with targeted audiences, including students, alumni, faculty, and external partners.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address shortcomings

1. It is strongly advised to review the external platforms used for communication and ensure their compliance with privacy regulations and GDPR standards. In particular, platforms such as Telegram should be avoided for bilateral teacher-student communication. This is

especially important given the sensitive experiences of repression faced by some students from specific contexts, such as Belarus, to ensure their safety and confidentiality.

2. It is recommended to strictly follow the planned frequency of alumni survey (annual survey) to provide continuous structured insights into relevant areas of the survey and foster stronger connections with the alumni community. Systematic feedback to alumni about the results of the annual survey is also recommended.

For further improvement

1. It is advisable to expand the pool of stakeholders involved in the design, reshaping, and updating of programmes. This should include individuals from more diverse backgrounds, reflecting the growing diversity among students and the increasing regional focus of the university. Such inclusivity would ensure that the programmes remain relevant, comprehensive, and aligned with the needs of a broader audience.

2. To enhance the quality of student feedback and improve response rates, it is recommended that the EHU leadership consider implementing postmark feedback specifically for individual courses. This could provide more detailed insights, contributing to the further improvement of course content and delivery.

V. SUMMARY

This external evaluation assessed the Political Science field of study at the European Humanities University (EHU), encompassing first and second cycle programmes. The review panel acknowledges and appreciates the considerable effort EHU put into preparing the self-evaluation report, organising the site visit, and engaging in open and constructive discussions. These efforts provided valuable insights into the programme's strengths and areas for development.

The programmes are generally aligned with EHU's mission and provide a curriculum that balances theoretical knowledge with practical skills. The formalized pre-defence process for thesis writing is a commendable strength. The involvement of civil society in curriculum design is also crucial for ensuring its relevance and practical impact. However, the EHU strategy for its political science programmes, as well as their aims and learning outcomes should better address the realities of operating in exile, with graduates unable to return safely to Belarus, let alone work in government institutions of a repressive regime. There is a need to prioritize the updating of literature and academic sources, particularly those from Russia. Introducing dedicated courses on academic writing, a master's thesis seminar, transition studies, mediation, trauma, and conflict resolution would be beneficial.

EHU has demonstrated progress in research output in recent years, supported by the implementation of the Research Strategy 2019-2024. Faculty members are actively engaged in research, and students have opportunities to participate in research activities.
However, greater participation in international projects and collaborations is needed to enhance visibility and impact. Some partnerships, such as with the Baltic International Academy, should be reconsidered. More efforts should be made to engage second-cycle (Master's) students in hands-on research initiatives within the University's research centres.

Admission procedures are adequate and transparent. The university provides comprehensive academic, financial, social, and psychological support to students, including mentoring for first-year students and recognizing extracurricular efforts. Student financial and socio-political difficulties are actively addressed, taking an individualized approach and responding to the immediate needs of each student. However, documents relevant to students or applicants should be more easily accessible in at least three languages (English, Lithuanian, Russian). Efforts to improve English language skills should be intensified. The university makes insufficient efforts to attract local students through local access routes. The programme should look for ways to make mobility opportunities for students at all levels an actual and frequent practice.

The programmes emphasize analytical thinking, adaptability, and multilingualism. The university demonstrates a commitment to supporting socially vulnerable students and students with special needs. There is open interaction with employers and other relevant organisations and a willingness to engage with them. However, to strengthen the labour market relevance of the programmes, regular labour market analyses should be carried out for relevant countries and sectors and the curricula should be adapted on this basis. Alternative metrics to assess alumni success of alumni in exile, focussing on employment rates, career advancement and contribution to the host society are needed. Practical skills training should be improved, including through building partnerships with local and regional think tanks, non-governmental organisations and governmental organisations by offering targeted internships and projects. Lithuanian and other regional languages should be more

widely and systematically integrated into the curriculum to recognise their importance for employability and integration. Alumni should be seen as contributors to the democratic ethos and economic prosperity of their host countries and not just as actors ready for an eventual return to Belarus. Staff capacity in assessment methods should be further developed and a wider range of formative and summative assessment methods should be introduced to facilitate constructive alignment.

Teaching staff at the EHU is committed to pursue research of relevance to their professional qualification. The EHU and individual teachers are actively enhancing their pedagogical skills by participating in courses organized by the institution or external partners. However, internationalization of teaching staff in terms of teaching, learning, mobility and research remains modest. Broader participation in Lithuanian and regional professional and academic networks should be leveraged as a valuable source of information and knowledge. Enhance the internationalization of EHU's teaching and learning processes to foster a global perspective and advance the professional competencies of the teaching staff. Introduce comprehensive training and methodological development courses designed to equip educators with the tools and knowledge needed to adopt and implement a multidisciplinary approach across study courses, thereby enriching the academic experience and promoting innovative teaching practices.

EHU provides well-equipped facilities that facilitate both hybrid learning and specialized subject studies, including access to essential software. Additionally, it ensures that digital learning resources are accessible through a virtual learning environment. EHU provides facilities tailored for students and staff with disabilities to accommodate their needs. The university leadership and programme management demonstrate a clear readiness to constructively engage with students and alumni, reflecting EHU's commitment to addressing challenging issues. EHU is making a concerted effort to collect relevant information and ensure its effective dissemination to specific stakeholders. However, it is strongly advised to review the external platforms used for communication and ensure their compliance with privacy regulations and GDPR standards. It is recommended to increase the frequency of surveys targeted at alumni. It is advisable to expand the pool of stakeholders involved in the design, reshaping, and updating of programmes. To enhance the quality of student feedback and improve response rates, it is recommended that the EHU leadership consider implementing postmark feedback specifically for individual courses.