



STUDIJŲ KOKYBĖS VERTINIMO CENTRAS

VILNIAUS DIZAINO KOLEGIJOS

VEIKLOS VERTINIMO IŠVADOS

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW REPORT OF VILNIUS COLLEGE OF DESIGN OF HIGHER EDUCATION

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The report describes a review of Vilnius College of Design (the College) carried out in
2. 2014 by a team of experts from Lithuania and other European countries (the team).
3. The review team consisted of the following members:
 - Prof. John Butler (team leader), the Head of Birmingham School of Art, experienced in QAA and IEP EUA reviews (United Kingdom);
 - Ms. Pika Radmilovic (team secretary), experiences as HE evaluator of IEP EUA, the Head of Centre for Quality Development at University of Maribor (Slovenia);
 - Mike Fox (team member), Higher Education Consultant, Quality Assurance and Enhancement Expert Acting Head of Department of Design, Currently researching for a PhD in designing Art and Design Programmes to meet the needs of Non-Traditional Learners; (Ireland);
 - Ms. Renée Turner (team member), the Director of the Piet Zwart Institute, Trained EQ Reviewer, (Netherlands);
 - Darius Bagdžiūnas (team member, social partner representative), the co-founder and director of interactive agency Gaumina, director of holding company Paranoic Investment (Lithuania);
 - Ricardas Rimkus (team member, student representative), the President of Student Union at Vilnius College, the student of Business Economics at Vilnius College (Lithuania).
4. The SKVC evaluation coordinator was fully supportive to the team throughout the revue process.
5. Before visiting, the College provided the team with a Self-Evaluation Report (SER) supported by annexes. A group representative of the College community and its social partners, including a student representative, had prepared the SER. The SER and annexes covered the information required to prepare the team for its visit to the College and was presented in a clear format with a very good quality of English translation. The SER described its activities under each heading and provided links to the annexes. The SWOT analysis and aims for improvement were presented in the Strategic plan 2010-2013 and 2014 – 2020. This showed the College’s capacity for thoroughness of documents.
6. In advance of the site visit to the College, members of the team reviewed the SER with its annexes, commenting on certain points and prepared the questions for further clarification. Additional information was requested and further documentation was supplied during the visit. Beforehand the team was also provided with other background information, including an evaluation of College performance by the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) and the evaluation of learning resources and associated infrastructure (MOSTA). Both evaluations were positive. The team met in Vilnius immediately before the visit to the College for a day’s training, including an overview of the national education system and preparation of the agenda. The visit took place over the three days 25th – 27th November 2014, and included a tour to review facilities and twelve formal meetings. The team spent the day after the visit agreeing its judgements and drawing together material for its report, which was refined and finalized by email correspondence over the following month.

II. BACKGROUND INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSTITUTION

7. The College traces its origins back to 1997, but essentially its present form dates from 2009. It is the only private higher education school in the study area of arts in Lithuania. The founder and owner is Mrs. Giedrė Fledžinskienė, a long-time teacher of Vilnius Academy of Arts. Its mission is to provide applied artistic studies in design fields that meet local, national and European needs and standards, and to create and disseminate knowledge and advanced practical experience of applied science that contribute to economic development and competitiveness.
8. The College has five accredited professional bachelor degree study programmes: Fashion Design with 130 students, Interior Design with 192 students, Applied Photography with 115 students, Graphic Design with 165 students and Design for Creative Industries with 36 students. All programmes except Design for Creative Industries are offered both full-time and part-time. In 2013, the College developed the joint study programme of Interior Design with ESAD Matosinhos, Portugal that was launched in the beginning of academic year 2014-2015.
9. During the period 2008-2013, the College underwent changes twice. The changes were made in the managerial structure to create conditions for a rational distribution of responsibilities and more optimal achievement and effectiveness of strategic goals.

III. STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

10. The strategic documents align the mission and vision with the relevant internal and external documents, both national and European as shown for the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), in particular by a detailed description of the quality management system that is assigned to owners of the processes. In the area of research, the College shows effort to meet the expectations of the European research area. Since it has a status of a design college, the Team **recommends** its scope and remit need to be oriented more towards applied research. The Team received two Strategic Plan documents, one from 2010-2013 (in advance of the visit) and the second from 2014-2020 (during the visit). The Strategic Plan (Plan) 2014-2020 appears to be comprehensive but the Team **recommends** that the data acquired should be synchronised and synthesized with other strategic documents. The SWOT analysis describes very openly some areas for improvement and opportunities that are internal rather than being dependent on the external environment.
11. In the College Statutes there are clear strategic objectives, goals and principles incorporating aspects of education, artistic creation, artistic and scientific applied research, dissemination of culture in the society, the development of professional graduates that meet labour market and community needs, teacher's qualifications, the impact on the local and international environment and descriptions and terms of reference of the governing bodies of the College. These strategic objectives, goals and principles clearly define the mission and the vision of the College, stressing a strong connection to the demands of the environment and responding to the needs of the labour market. Additionally, responsible management bodies and/or individuals are assigned tasks to fulfil the strategic goals outlined in the Strategic Plan (Annex 1), with the required outcomes and measurable indicators analysed in the Annual Plan (AP, Annex 5).

12. In the Strategic plan, there are 46 key performance indicators (p 39) which are a combination of qualitative and quantitative measures addressing the different areas of College's operation. Most of them are concise but some could be more specific and clear in the requirement: (e.g. encourage active involvement of teachers and students in College's activities should be related to the support and opportunities given...). The Plan also includes objectives and responsibilities assigned to individuals with deadlines and related documents. The weaknesses indicated in the SWOT analysis of the College are addressed.
13. The College regularly performs satisfaction surveys (of students, employees, tutors for practice, teachers and administrative staff) with the provided services (SER, p14; Quality Manual (QM, p25). Further, the College carried out EFQM assessment with a positive outcome (Annex3) and through this process 24 key performance indicators were identified (Annex 4) (SER pp14&15). However, the Team **recommends** that the implementation of the Strategic goals and quality indicators should be referred to in the annual plan, annual report and self-evaluation documents more clearly.
14. The Director monitors the implementation of the Annual Plan (AP) that is approved by the General Assembly of Stakeholders. The Academic Council and Methodological Council also engage in the monitoring of the AP through discussing the reports at their meetings, though these meetings are not very frequent. As it was explained during the meetings, the Annual report of the previous year is used as the foundation for the next year plan at a departmental and College level. The social partners and students are involved to a certain extent but not so rigorously. The minutes of the Academic and Methodological Councils are published on the intranet, but the Team was informed at their meetings that they are not accessible to students or social partners.
15. After each main section of the Annual Report (AR): Development of academic activities (AR, p30), Study programmes and students (AR, p43), Human resources (AR, p55), Project management and internationalisation (AR, p67) and Activities of information department (AR, p70), there is a part devoted to "Problems and their solution insights", where they point out relevant issues. These issues **should be** indicated in the implementation plan for the following year with correctly deployed objectives aligned throughout the plan and that all the necessary resources are assigned. The College has established the processes of monitoring, measuring, analysis and improvement (QM, p25; SER, p15) that are mandatory to all employees (QM, p4), however the students and external stakeholders **should be** more actively involved in these processes.
16. As stated during the meetings and in the SER, the information about the Plan and its implementation is distributed among all employees of the College and to some external partners mostly in electronic version (QM, p17, SER p16)). The SER and SWOT analysis recognise that the communication with social partners and students could be improved, especially regarding feedback and dissemination of information (SER p17). The Annual Report for 2013/2014 is detailed, informative and readable and is presented to the Academic Council and submitted to the stakeholders (SER p17). The Team was pleased to learn during the meetings that the College is cohered to and implements its Plan. However, the College **needs to assure** that the information on strategic documents is also available to students and that they are regularly informed about them.
17. The College manages its quality process operating to the ISO 9001:2008 standard (SER p18,

18. QM p 7; AP, p8), the performance of which was audited in 2013. The Quality Manual is well structured, describing the roles and tasks with responsibilities (QM, pp16&17) and giving reference to the procedural documents related to quality assurance and enhancement activities. There is an extended list of processes for managing the quality system (QM, p12) including the processes for managing the study programmes and student performance. In general, the quality management system meets the needs of clients (QM, p11), who are defined as College staff and social partners. However, the students are not mentioned as clients in the quality management process but only as customers signing the Study Contract (QM, p22) and as College clients in the process of satisfaction with requirements and expectations (QM, p25; SER p24).
19. The College encourages teachers to develop professionally and has offered in the past two years several training courses on teaching methods, internationalisation and recognition of non-formally acquired competences (SER p25). The Team learned at the meetings with staff that they are encouraged to participate in Erasmus staff mobility and the College was committed to develop staff careers and promotion. The College does lack formal mechanisms for staff to participate in training programmes, for example to fill out an application form (prioritisation) and report form (dissemination). Nevertheless, the annual plan for staff development with regular and permanent opportunities for their personal development **should be developed**.
20. Students are organised through a Student Board and have their formal representatives in each study programme for each year (45 student representatives). The student representatives are members of the Academic Council (10% representation; Annex 9, p10), but for the meetings of Methodological Council and Department meetings they are only invited if certain issues are discussed. During the meetings with students, they agreed that they can communicate with management and have the opportunity to approach staff at any level, but this is done mainly informally. The students sometimes invite the representatives from administration to their meetings to discuss certain issues. Students are active in European student Network (ESN) and there are possibilities to learn English and to prepare to go abroad, as well as they offer support to the Erasmus incoming students – for the study process, housing, showing the city, etc. Students are also offered support by other students regarding social, economic or health problems. However, there is no office or professionally trained staff available for students to talk to, nor specific procedures to support Dyslexia, pregnancy and other unforeseen obstacles to study. The Team **recommends** exploring the possibility to provide professional support for students.
21. The College has also introduced an IT tool for the management of documents and data records as part of internal quality processes and for management of quality indicators (measurement, monitoring and assessment management system). The IT tool is an integral part of the improved internal quality management system of the College (SER p19). The main function of this tool is to optimise processes and to facilitate work of teachers. It enables default users of the system to get access to accumulated information and in this way processing of information is considerably enhanced. One of the most efficient advantages of the tool is, according to the SER (p.20) a decreased number of mistakes in students' data. The IT tool is adjusted to various spheres, which embrace data on students, teachers and related operations. The IT tool is integrated with the State Register of Students and in September 2014 it was integrated with the State Register of Teachers, which will additionally enhance the processes in the College.
22. The main governing body of the College is the General Assembly of Stakeholders and the Director. The management body of the College is the Academic Council that is responsible

for the academic affairs and approves strategic documents, study programmes, quality management procedures and regulations (Annex 9, p10). The Methodological Council is an advisory body (AR, p8) and was established in 2013, dealing with organisational, assessment, methodology and research activities. The members of the Academic Council and the Methodological Council are elected by the General Assembly of Stakeholders, which comprises of two members - the owner of the College and the Director (Annex 8, Annex 9). Both governing and managerial bodies meet every semester to provide strategic oversight of the system, and appear to perform a useful role in ensuring the formality of the system necessary to satisfy ISO 9001.

23. Although, the responsibilities and organisational structure is well defined and documented and it is evident that College is very compliant with quality processes, the Team **recommends** greater emphasis on quality enhancement. While not legally required, the Team would **recommend** the College establishes a body of external experts or an advisory board, who meet and consult with upper management and the stakeholder to review and give feedback on planning, strategic vision and managerial approaches.
24. During the Team's meetings, the role of departments proved to be very strong in operational matters, but to create greater clarification of operational management structure, the role and relationships between the Director, Academic Council, Methodological Council and departments **should be more clearly defined**.
25. The College has established several offices/divisions to support the needs of the study process (SER p27). The Quality Office comprises of two quality specialists who administer the various quality processes, reporting directly to the Director. They proved to be very knowledgeable about the quality systems and understand the complexity of the development of a quality culture within the College community. In 2013 several organisational changes took place to reduce bureaucracy and raise the efficiency of management and the employees expressed satisfaction during the meetings about it (SER p28).
26. The internal quality assurance system appears to meet the requirements of the European Standards and Guidelines. In relation to student involvement, they participate in the evaluation of the study programmes as members of the Academic Council, and they provide feedback on teachers' performance by filling out surveys after each semester and at the end of each year they participate in an evaluation of their overall experience (SER p4, QM, p25). The Quality Office collects and analyses the data and the results are presented at the department meetings, Methodological Council and Academic Council. Students receive results at meetings and from the academic staff if they asked for it. However, current students expressed during our meetings that **there is inconsistency** in the communication of evaluation criteria and some students wish for a **more in depth feedback** from teachers relating to their individual work projects. The graduate students and social partners felt very positive about the College achievements, expressed pride, enthusiasm, and strong interest and desire to more actively participate in Life Long Learning programmes and in alumni network development.
27. It could be concluded that the quality management system of the College is generally accepted among staff members, is well documented and supported by a very efficient information system, especially for data collection. However, the Team **recommends** that there should be clear relationship between the existing quality management systems following the ISO 9001:2008 standard and its procedures with the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG). The Team also **recommends** that the College should integrate its

quality procedures fully within its management procedures including the involvement of students and social partners.

28. According to the College regulations the teaching staff should have at least a Master's degree and have practical experience as professionals in their field (SER p29, QM p19) that is relevant to their position and responsibilities. The new teaching staff are assigned a senior mentor to assist with induction, but there is no formal training programme in pedagogy (QM, p19). Teaching staff are evaluated for a renewable period of five years (Annex 9, p16) in accordance with the procedures laid down by the Academic Council. To be awarded an academic title, the teachers can enter promotion procedures at the Vilnius Academy of Arts. The staff of the College are relatively young and 100% are actively engaged in the professional field. During the meetings with the students, especially with graduates it was stressed that the sharing of work experiences of teachers is very valuable and helps students to develop skills and competences for future job positions.
29. The College states in their SER (p29), and it was also mentioned during the meetings, that the enhancement of teaching qualifications and research activities is one of its priorities (SP, p44). It was clear during the visit that this objective was being taken seriously. In particular, staff salaries depend on the assessment of their teaching quality but also non-material incentives are provided (opportunities to participate in projects, mobility programmes, conferences, training programmes etc.) (SER, p29). In this respect, the Team **commends** the College's purpose to further develop areas of teaching and **recommends** that the College should introduce training programme with certification in higher education pedagogy that will be mandatory for all new teachers. This would also provide an opportunity to develop foreign language skills, and might usefully be arranged in collaboration with other higher education institutions in the area. The Team recommends the College should also **consider** the introduction of a Personnel Management Development System (PMDS), which would ensure that all staff (academic and non-teaching) agree with their Director the priorities for the year ahead.
30. The staff assessment and procedures for human resource management are well defined and described in the Quality Manual (p19) and related documents. Staff of the College are also encouraged to actively participate in decision-making processes, mostly through informal meetings where open and collaborative communication is encouraged (SER, p29). The SER acknowledges that administrative and support staff development is less well established, but plans to improve this are in hand (AP, p44). The Team **suggests** that these plans should also include improving foreign language competences to support the College's international activities. Nevertheless, in general the College manages its staff pro-actively and effectively.
31. As already mentioned above, the College introduced changes to its structure in order to improve efficiency across its activities. These changes were introduced by the Academic Council as a reaction to increasing student numbers and development of new study programmes. (SP, p10). This gives the Academic Council a credibility to evaluate the performance of the College, make important strategic decisions, and implement them to improve performance. At the time of the visit, the Team felt that some areas of College functioning still need to adapt to the new structural changes. Therefore, it is **recommended** to the College to act efficiently and assure that all its procedures and documentation reflect its new structure and that all the College community is informed about it. Further, the Self Evaluation Report is mainly descriptive, following mainly the principles of the SKVC Methodology for Conducting an Institutional Review in Higher Education and during the meetings, only few staff members and no students or social partners present stated that they

were involved in preparing it. Accordingly, the Team **recommends** that the training for critical reflection on a self-evaluation process should be organised where also student and social partners' representatives should be actively involved.

32. As mentioned above, the College's process management is operating to ISO 9001:2008 standard where the different roles of individuals, divisions and stakeholders are increasingly better defined and there is an ongoing improvement. Quality assurance and evaluation is an essential part of the College's management process - it is their improvement strategy. To achieve requisite optimisation set by the ISO standard the College has introduced an internal control system based on the COSO model that defines internal control as a process, which is implemented by the authorities and employees (SER, pp21&22; SP, pp12&13). The COSO model includes also risk assessment and the College told the team that it undertakes formal risk analysis and performance of control that helps guarantee that necessary actions are taken to manage risk influencing the achievement of goals.
33. Each year the College devotes great attention to the improvement of infrastructure, repair and renovation of its premises (AR, p71). The building of the College is on a lease, but they don't need to pay the rent because they invest in it every year. Recently the heating system was renovated which contributed to the reduction of heat energy consumption and the student restaurant was opened. However, during the meetings the students **expressed concern** about the low temperature in winter, as well the Team observed the students during the visit sitting in the classrooms with their coats on.
34. During the tour of the College's facilities the Team was presented with new equipment and tools in workshop rooms, newly equipped learning spaces, the latest software programmes, etc. and the Team thought it was fit for the purpose of subjects, level and number of students taught. The Team was also introduced to the expansive number of students awarded project works and **commends** it as good practice. During the visiting of facilities and meetings with students, they endorsed that the equipment and space was adequate and was improving year by year, though there was still some room for improvement. Students past and present at both meetings **indicated a need** for greater access to specialist equipment, including a high quality, large format printer (if not purchased by College an arrangement in collaboration with social partners can be explored). Further, they conveyed a wish to have a private study space for students to meet and work and that the opening hours of the building, (studio, workshops, and library) should be extended. The Team **recommends** that the College finds ways to create private study space with extended access to enhance the peer learning culture.
35. The team also visited the Library, which appeared adequate, and students were satisfied with what was provided. The Librarians are also organising training for students about writing and database usage. All students can access the library database on their own computers also from home. The course material is electronic and all key documents are on the web page that is on a separate server. A considerable attention is allocated to renewal/expansion of library holdings and improvement of access to relevant databases. (SER, p43) The library-reading room has specialised publishing in the field of art; where there are more than 2000 different publications. In addition, the librarians provide students with information about career planning. 2 to 3 times per month students and graduates receive information about placement traineeships, work opportunities, and announcements about regional/national competitions. This means that the librarians are performing the activities of the Career Centre (SER, p27).

36. The hardware and software of the College is modern and fully meets the study demands. The college has a computer room with 22 stations. Besides, all workplaces have computers with access to the Internet and Wi-Fi is available everywhere in the college (SP, p11).
37. A serious concern was the buildings that the Team visited were not accessible for disabled students and staff, and the Team **recommends** that the College should examine the possibilities to create better access and support for disabled people.
38. More than 60% of the College's income is generated by their own revenue of service, greater than 24% from the EU and international organisation support and about 11% from state funds, through study grants for students. The management and spend of College funds are described in SER (pp 34, 35). The allocation of funds available within the approved budget is in the domain of the Director, although any significant structural changes are subject to approval by the General Assembly of Stakeholders. The management of College finances seem to be well conducted.
39. In 2013 the Code of Ethics of the College was revised and updated (SER, p35), and possible violations are examined by the Ethics Committee of the Methodological Council (SER, p36) that has also the function of the Dispute Resolution Commission. The students' adherence to the Code of Ethics is included in the Study Regulations documents. Plagiarism was not raised or considered to be an important issue or problem during any meetings with staff or students.
40. In general, the College presents a convincing report on strategic planning and implementation. All the elements of the strategic planning are implemented: mission, vision, goals and objectives, action plans, indicators and measures. The recent organisational changes have been significant and mean that the strategic and quality procedures and data need to be synchronised, synthesised and results communicated and made accessible and understandable to the College staff, students and social partners. The Team concludes that the new structure seems fit for purpose and capable of supporting continuing strategic management at the College.

Judgement on the area: Strategic Management is given positive.

IV. ACADEMIC STUDIES AND LIFE-LONG LEARNING

41. The self-assessment document outlines the College's commitment to complying with the provision of lifelong-learning, as outlined in the Bologna process and subsequent additions and supplements (SER p48 and SP p3). In particular, the College outlines its aims to achieve the goals of the Leuven Communication (2009) to insure that by 2020 20% of College graduates will have spent part of their study time abroad. It is foreseen that this will be achieved through further expansion of the College's existing policies of staff and student mobility (SER p48). Through a large number of social partners, (over 300), competences, which are in demand in industry, have been recognised and are offered through a number of different access routes (full time, part-time, evening and weekend programmes). The financial feasibility of part-time programmes is dependent on regional support. The lack of this support resulted in the suspension of part-time studies in 2013, but due to a renewed increase in demand for part-time programmes they were reinstated in 2014.

42. There is recognition of non-formal and informal learning and application of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) (SER p48). In collaboration with other higher education institutions in Lithuania, Vilnius College of Design has implemented two projects financed by the European Structural Fund in the period from 2012-2014, related to development and implementation of a system of assessment and recognition of competences acquired in a non-formal way (SER p38).
- *“Creation and implementation of the system for the assessment and recognition of non-formally acquired skills in higher education“, project No. VP1-2.1-ŠMM-04-K-03-001. Applicant: Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences (LEU). Project partners: Vilnius of Cooperative College, Vilnius College of Technologies and Design, College of Social Sciences, Klaipėda State College, Žemaitija College, Vilnius College of Design, University of Klaipėda, St. Ignatius of Loyola College, Alytus College.*
 - *“Creation of the system of formalisation of non-formally acquired competences and its implementation in the partnership network of higher education institutions“, project No. VP1-2.1-ŠMM-04-K-03-005. Applicant: V.A. Graiciunas School of Management. Project partners: Vilnius Business College, Vilnius of Cooperative College, Vilnius College of Technologies and Design, Vilnius College of Design, Kaunas College of Forestry and Environmental Engineering, Lithuanian University of Health Sciences, Klaipėda State College. (SER p 40-41)*
43. It is envisaged that persons, already working in the applied design industries, can upgrade their skills and/or qualifications through these routes. The SER outlines the College’s aim to educate and develop specialists who are able to work under conditions of rapid change in technologies (SER p39).
44. The various social partners expressed a desire for the development of this up-skilling facility to be expanded and it is a **recommendation** of the Team that greater cooperation and consultation with the social partners could potentially further strengthen development, in the already existing, Lifelong –Learning strategy. This would also increase the college’s impact on local and regional cultural development.
45. Lifelong-Learning/flexible programmes are run through evening and weekend courses and through flexible access to the full-time programmes. The main focus of these programmes is to develop and upgrade competences, in response to labour market demands from social partners. This demand has given rise to programmes in areas such as, drawing, garment sewing and pattern cutting, photography, computer graphics (Adobe Photoshop and Adobe Illustrator) and make-up as well as preparatory courses (SER p41).
46. In response to students’ individual/flexible needs they may, through consultation, devise individual study plans. Details of executed individual study plans are available in the SER (Annex 16). These individual study plans allow students to choose specific study programmes, change study programmes and/or take specialist programmes in other institutions, either in Lithuania or abroad (SER p43). The Team **commends** this flexibility. The procedure for recognition of learning outcomes of prior learning applied in the College has been prepared following the Order of the Minister of Education and Science of RL No. ISAK-1603 of 12 November 2003 and subsequent amendments to this document. Since 2013 credit for outcomes, achieved in other institutions has been accredited to 15 students (SER p43).

47. It is very evident that all staff are actively engaged in their professional fields, that this engagement is reinforced by the College's commitment to principles of Lifelong-Learning that support staff mobility and that these experiences are shared, through the curriculum, to the students. As part of this active engagement there is a high level of staff and student mobility and a strong commitment, on the part of the College, to participation in Erasmus, Erasmus+ and Leonardo Da Vinci programmes.

- *Since academic year of 2011 - 2012, when Vilnius College of Design was granted ERASMUS Charter for Higher Education, students for partial studies and traineeships have been coming to the College annually: **7 students in 2011-2012, 8 students in 2012-2013, 8 students in 2013-2014 and 18 students in autumn semester of 2014-2015.***
- ***Academic year of 2011–2012:** financing received for ERASMUS mobility programme from the Education Exchanges Support Foundation obliged the College to send at least 14 students for partial studies abroad and at least 3 students for traineeship in foreign companies. VCD exceeded these indicators and sent **19 students for partial studies, and 4 students for traineeship. Additionally, 3 more VCD students** went on mobility visits according to other projects (e.g., “Crossroutes 51°“project).*
- ***Academic year of 2012–2013:** financing received for ERASMUS mobility programme from the Education Exchanges Support Foundation obliged the College to send at least 16 students for partial studies abroad and at least 5 students for traineeship in foreign companies. VCD exceeded these indicators and sent **18 students for partial studies, and – 7 students for traineeship. 21 VCD students** went additionally according to other projects and initiatives implemented in academic year of 2012 – 2013 (project “Learn and Live as European Citizens”, ERASMUS IP project “Micro Sustainable Design – Eco Friendly Products“, implemented in Portugal and international exhibition of fashion design “Premiere Vision Pluriel Exhibition“ in Paris).*
- ***Academic year of 2013–2014:** financing received for ERASMUS mobility programme from the Education Exchanges Support Foundation obliged the College to send at least 14 students for partial studies abroad and at least 6 students for traineeship in foreign companies. VCD exceeded these indicators and sent **15 students for partial studies, and – 7 students for traineeship.***
- ***Academic year of 2011–2012:** financing received for ERASMUS mobility programme from the Education Exchanges Support Foundation obliged the College to send at least 16 teachers and administrative staff members. VCD exceeded these indicators and sent **18 teachers and administrative staff members (Annex No. 19).***
- ***Additionally in academic year 2011–2012 29 teachers and administrative staff members were sent abroad according to other international projects (the projects: “Enhancement of Internationalisation of Vilnius College of Design Developing and Implementing the Joint Study Programme of Design“, “Renewal of the Study Programme in the Study Field of Design in Vilnius College of Design, Enhancement of Internationalisation”, “Improvement of Generic and Special Competences of Teachers Promoting Use of Innovative Teaching/Learning Methods in the Process of Learning“, “Crossroutes 51°“, the Programme of Study Visits).***
- ***Academic year of 2012–2013:** financing received for ERASMUS mobility programme from the Education Exchanges Support Foundation obliged the College to send at least 20 teachers and administrative staff members. VCD*

exceeded these indicators and sent 21 teachers and administrative staff members abroad.

- *Additionally in academic year 2012–2013 23 teachers and administrative staff members were sent abroad according to other international projects (“Enhancement of Internationalisation of Vilnius College of Design Developing and Implementing the Joint Study Programme of Design“, “Renewal of the Study Programme in the Study Field of Design in Vilnius College of Design, Enhancement of Internationalisation”, Leonardo da Vinci Innovation Transfer project, “Learn and Live as European Citizens”, the Programme of Study Visits financed by CEDEFOP Agency, EESF “Development of Internationalisation of Lithuanian Higher Education“).*
- *Academic year of 2013–2014: financing for ERASMUS mobility programme was received and VCD fulfilled the obligation to the National Agency sending 17 teachers and administrative staff members abroad. Additionally 9 members of academic and administrative staff members were sent according to other projects (“Enhancement of Internationalisation of Vilnius College of Design Developing and Implementing the Joint Study Programme of Design“, Leonardo da Vinci Transfer of Innovation Project, EESF “Development of Internationalisation of Lithuanian Higher Education“).*
- *Vilnius College of Design invites lecturers from foreign higher education schools of arts and design, encourages visits of administrative staff members to exchange the good experience in organisation of the study process. Thus, the College provides students, who cannot go on ERASMUS visits, with opportunities to use knowledge and competences of guest lecturers from foreign countries. Such visits also promote exchange of competence and experience of applying pedagogical methods as well as expand the range of themes in the taught study subjects (**Annex No. 20**).*
- *Academic year of 2011–2012: when Vilnius College of Design was granted ERASMUS Charter for higher education, 12 representatives of academic and administrative staff from foreign higher education institutions visited the College according to ERASMUS mobility programme. According to ERASMUS IP “Micro Sustainable Design – Eco Friendly Products” administered by another 8 teachers visited the College.*
- *Academic year of 2012–2013: according to ERASMUS mobility programme 10 representatives of academic and administrative staff from foreign higher education schools visited the College. Two more teachers from foreign higher education schools came to teacher in the College within the project “Support to Foreign Teachers who Teach in Lithuanian Higher Education Schools” initiated by the Ministry of Education and Science.*
- *Academic year of 2013–2014: according to ERASMUS mobility programme 10 representatives of academic and administrative staff from foreign higher education schools visited VCD. According to ERASMUS IP “Micro Sustainable Design – Eco Friendly Products “administered” by another 7 teachers visited the College. (SER p 52-54)*

48. It is **recommended** that the College should develop Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programmes, based on needs, identified through consultation with alumni, social partners and the regional creative industries. It is also **recommended** that the College introduce additional pedagogical training in student centred learning, e-learning teaching methodologies, to support further development in their Lifelong-Learning strategy.

49. There is an expressed high level of employer satisfaction with the graduates of the College's programmes. Graduates are surveyed twice a year and this survey has recently been changed from a postal to an online platform, to increase the probability of graduate participation. The information from these surveys is used to inform both the courses and the Career Centre - a College facility established in 2012 to inform both students and alumni of employment opportunities and internships. This information is regularly updated and students are informed of these updates every two months. The Career Centre is located in the College library.
50. The Career Centre:
- Provides student with general information on employment and traineeships
 - Provides students with information on how to prepare and make job applications
 - Organises on-going training programmes
 - Gathers and processes research from graduate surveys
51. On the basis of work carried out by the Career Centre feedback is implemented at programme level through:
- focusing on changes in the labour market, new study subjects are introduced, the programmes of study subjects taught by teachers are also improved;
 - learning facilities are regularly renewed and developed. Attempts are made to enable students to be familiar with the latest software and get used to working with the latest equipment used in a chosen speciality. Students are also provided with a possibility of getting access to the most relevant specialist literature.
 - Improving study programmes to increase the competitiveness of future graduates of the College in the labour market. (SER p46)
52. At present there is no formal alumni association, although there is a strong desire among graduates that this should happen. The Team **recommends** the setting up of an alumni association would serve to provide a formal structure by which graduates, working in industry could contribute to programme and strategic developments. The association would also provide for an on-going network, through which graduates might collaborate on regional/ national/international, industrial projects. It is apparent that alumni should be used as a resource for reflecting on the currency of curriculum and to develop interdisciplinary networking informing and shaping local and regional networks.
53. The College social partners outlined that they have been consulted on, and contributed to live projects in architecture /interior design, fashion graphic design and social projects. There are a large number of these collaborations cited in the SER document and the College has over 300 partners. The partners who met with the Team expressed satisfaction with the bilateral arrangements in place between themselves and the College. The social and business partners are a valuable resource for student placements and internships, the volume of which far exceed the College's Key Performance Indicators (KPI) targets. The many ways in which the College collaborates with its social partners and a list of the partners, with whom the College has signed collaboration agreements are outlined in the SER document (SER p47). A full list of the social and academic partners is shown in SER (Annex 18). Continued development of this collaborative process is to be encouraged to increase the potential employability of College graduates. The College recognises the need to formalise its working relationship with its social partners and has plans to increase their involvement in the quality process. (SER p 55).
54. In terms of academic partners the College has a good working relationship with the Vilnius Academy of Arts, which accepts graduates from the College of Design to further their

studies, if necessary or desired. Vilnius Academy of Arts was also consulted at the early stages of the Self Evaluation process and assisted in devising the format through which this process would be achieved.

55. This process of partnership engagement should be further developed and it is a **recommendation** of the Team that the College should endeavour to engage with, new and existing, social partners to develop a strong culture of applied research (knowledge transfer, new technologies and continuing professional development).
56. In general the College, through its practice and policies, recognises some of the key European policies on Lifelong-Learning. The SER document states that the principle documents adhered to, in relation to Lifelong-Learning, cover areas such as:
 - Application of the European Credit Transfer System
 - Supply of learning forms according to principles of Lifelong-Learning
 - Mobility of students and teachers
 - Strengthening of employability
 - Recognition of non-formal or informal learning
 - Integration into the European Higher Education Area. (SER p48)
57. There is evidence of a strong commitment to mobility, particularly staff mobility through the College's involvement in Erasmus and Erasmus+. This facility offers good Lifelong-Learning opportunities for College staff.
58. The College also allows for mobility through its policies on student transfer. A number of students have entered the College from other higher education institutions, particularly Vilnius Academy of Arts and the College policies have accommodated these transfers. Movements in the opposite direction have also been accommodated and a number of students have progressed from the Professional Bachelor's programme at the College to the BA programme at Vilnius Academy and other institutions.
59. Flexible offerings at the College allow for mature students, already in the workplace to access programmes for CPD purposes. Discussions with academic staff revealed a certain naivety in relation to understanding the full implications of student centred learning (SCL). The full implementation of SCL and a strong student support service are necessary to aid student retention, which was recognised in the SWOT analysis as a problem in the College.
60. To further develop the College's compliance with European Lifelong-Learning policies the Team **recommends** that a greater understanding of SCL and a college wide retention and student support strategy should be developed. While there is a certain recognition of these areas, already in place the College could benefit from a greater understanding and utilisation of the core values of SCL. This in itself would form the basis of a stronger retention and student support strategy, which recognises the individual needs of students as they progress through third level education.
61. There is strong evidence of international mobility on the part of students and more particularly on the part of staff. The College has promoted international mobility through involvement in Erasmus, Erasmus+, Leonardo programme and the College is also a member of Cumulus, since 2012. The College Director cited Cumulus as an important interface with other colleagues from around the world. Following their involvement in Erasmus exchange programmes, students submit feedback, on their experiences, which is discussed at departmental level. During the meeting with the academic staff, it was noted that the College is also supportive of staff who wish to participate in conferences etc. The

exchange of students and staff has had a beneficial effect on the teaching and learning environment. The College has been involved in a number of international collaborative partnership scenarios leading to College teachers going abroad to experience examples of best practice and teachers from other European countries visiting and working at the College. There is an extensive overview of the College's international mobility projects in the SER document (SER pp 49-54).

62. While there is a real effort on the part of the College to expand their international connections the Team **recommends** that this area of Internationalisation needs to be more structured and a greater understanding and focus on structures applied research needs to be instigated. The strong international relationships, already fostered by the College, show great potential for developing a substantial applied research culture, which would greatly benefit the curriculum, however this needs to be framed by a planned, focused international strategy.

Judgement on the area: Academic Studies and Life-Long Learning is given positive evaluation.

V. RESEARCH AND ART

63. The Team found there **was clear evidence** that applied research and/or art activities were compliant with the College's policies and strategic planning. The SER, Strategic Plan 2014-2020 and the College's statutes express a strong commitment to developing and promoting applied research and/or artistic activities (SER, p.56). The College situates these activities within the sectors of design and media, and applied research trajectories emerge from professionally driven sectorial needs (SER p.57). Careful reviews of documentation and subsequent onsite interviews, illustrated that the College policy on applied research and/or artistic activities is implemented on different levels through strategic approaches to staffing, mobility, life-long learning and external partners, which constitute the learning environment.
64. As mentioned in sections III and IV of this report, teaching staff are encouraged to further their education and profile their research and/or artistic activities by presenting at conferences, showing in exhibitions, participating in Erasmus mobility schemes and engaging with other academies and industry partners. Reflecting the College's commitment to raising the level and calibre of staffing, the SER states that between 2008 and 2013 teachers deemed qualified according to the Law on Higher Education and Science have risen by 68.4% (SER p.56). The Team draws the **positive conclusion** that teaching staff are fully engaged in professional activities, aware of the latest developments in their disciplinary fields and transfer that knowledge and expertise back into the learning environment.
65. The Team **confirms** that the College's research and /or art activities are aligned with national, regional, cultural and social developments. In various interviews, it was evident that there is a firm commitment to national partners, and local creative industries benefit from collaborating on projects with the College's staff and students. The SER, states "art and creative activities went up by 98% in Lithuania (SER p.60). Nationally, 83% of these activities are carried out and disseminated in Vilnius and 17% are regionally profiled (SER, p.61). While in terms of outreach, the SWOT in the Performance Strategy of the College acknowledges that more publishing of research should be promoted (p.14), efforts have been made in that direction with 97.8% increase of profiling in media, radio, television and public lectures (SER, p.60). The teaching staff's research outputs clearly demonstrate the

College is actively engaged in creative artistic practice, but the Team found there is little applied research being developed and this, in a design environment, will limit the development of a specialist research culture and position the College in the European Research Area. The Team **recommends** that College needs to identify clear niche specialist design areas which industry and the market demands to position itself nationally and internationally and develop stronger collaborations with social partners and generate research income.

66. When interviewed, the social partners, whether academic, commercial, cultural, or from industry, testified to the importance and value of working together with the College. This was especially evidenced when addressing the impact of the “Yes – for Textile and Apparel Innovation Expansion and Development” project and when reviewing the broad scope of social partners (additionally provided document by the College “Prioritized list of most significant applied research and art activities” and Annex 29).
67. The Team **positively notes** that academic, social and business partners are providing strong potential areas of applied research, internships, placements and collaborative projects, but at the meeting with the social partners none of them acknowledged research being carried out in this partnership. Acknowledging the relevance and efficacy of this industry-driven approach, the Team **recommends** that the College seek ways to further engage strategically with new and existing social partners to develop applied research, knowledge transfer, new technologies, intellectual property and continual personal development. The Team would also **recommend** that the College more clearly define applied research in the context of the College’s disciplines, design thinking, industry - knowledge transfer, professional development, intellectual property and making links with other related areas. In the Team’s **recommendation** for the College to establish a Senior Advisory Board this is a key area where external expertise on the European Research Area and specific knowledge of applied research in the design fields would be a welcome and necessary addition.
68. The Team found that there is **good evidence** of national and international artistic practice by a considerable percentage of staff. The SER notes that from 2008 to 2013 the College’s participation in international art activities had increased by 100%, with the year of 2012 being the most intensive period for staff and student mobility, due to the initiation of different projects (SER pp.60-62). A few highlights of these initiatives are the College started a joint Interior Design programme with ESAD Matosinhos School of Art and Design in Portugal, administrative and teaching staff visited different countries funded by the European Social Fund. Next to this, students and staff participated in the ERASMUS Intensive Programme “Micro Sustainable Design – Eco Friendly Products” and the Leonardo da Vinci Transfer of Innovation Project “E-Commerce Training Initiatives and Practices” (SER p. 63). Next to these activities the teachers of the College conduct creative workshops and participate in projects in EU and non-EU countries.(Annex22)
69. Overall, statistically student mobility has steadily increased with an incremental growth of incoming students as well (SER Chart, p.63). Erasmus and Erasmus+ have been instrumental to catalysing and supporting the flow of student exchange. At the meetings, both teaching staff and students reflected positively on the capacity to travel and engage in international exchanges or study programmes, and they expressed that these experiences influenced the learning and research culture. As mentioned in sections III and IV, impact is also gauged regularly through student feedback that is processed on a departmental level and teaching staff self-assessment. The Team would **recommend** the College to continue

with these efforts to develop applied research and engage in continual knowledge dissemination, while seeking support from the European Research Area. Efforts in this direction will lead to a viable, robust and sustainable applied research culture.

Judgement on the area: Research and Art is given positive evaluation.

VI. IMPACT ON REGIONAL AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

70. The College's mission and vision both clearly articulate its aims and objectives relating to its impact on regional and national development. As stated in the College's Strategic Development Plan 2010-13 and the 2014 Annual Plan the College has achieved its objectives to make a positive contribution on national and regional cultural, social and environmental development, through developing collaborative national and international live projects and providing skills and human capital to meet the professional needs of local and regional industry. It also has established a major network of over 300 social partners and all of those the Team met fully appreciated this partnership and desired to extend this collaboration more fully into the applied research area. The College acknowledges that course assignments are generally limited to the topicalities of Vilnius city (due to the optimality of actual contacts) [SER p.67]. The social partnerships/collaborations are separate and the vast majority founded on personal contacts, which is both a strength and weakness, the Team **recommends** the College is more strategic in seeking partnerships, prioritises its activities and formalises the applied research objectives.
71. The College clearly states the four key areas it measures its impact on the region and nationally (SER p.65), which are: the implementation of applied activity employing artistic creation; the dissemination of artistic activity, creation and research; educational activity; and social activity in the development of cultural life.
72. The College has identified these Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), but the Team found it difficult to find where the metrics are set, implemented and utilised as measures of the success and/or failure of the teaching staff, departments, courses, applied research outputs, collaborative social partnerships etc. They are not connected to the mission and strategy directly enough to measure the progress of different parts/people/projects of the College over shorter periods (weekly, monthly, and quarterly) as well as annually.
73. The Team **recommends** the implementation of more clearly defined KPI targets and deeper integration of the existing system into daily processes of management, transparency of progress (metrics are open to all the communities including students), and to make the exchange of information more convenient and timely. This should help enhance the development of a quality culture where recognition and reward for success will increase motivation of all parties.
74. As previously stated the College has successfully developed a very large network of over 300 social partners and these have provided invaluable 'real-life' experiences for students that have positively enhanced their career opportunities (Annex 29). The students' training practice and graduation projects create value for the micro (one organisation/business/person) level, which is appropriate in the expanding creative industries. The College needs to **identify** clear niche specialist design areas aligned to its academic portfolio and staff expertise which industry and the market demands so as to position itself nationally and internationally and develop stronger collaborations with social partners and generate research income.

75. Team **recommends** working more actively in finding opportunities, challenges, partners that would lift the potential of new value created by a student (during training practice and/or graduation project) to a higher multiplier of national or regional impact.
76. A large number of the College's staff are members of Lithuanian creative unions and associations, including: Head of the Association of Graphic Design of Lithuania; the founder of the Association of Cultural and Creative Industries; a members of the international arts organisation *Art Forum*, Vilnius Bookbinders' Guild, Association of Lithuanian Female Artists and Lithuanian Artists Association; an expert of arts in Lithuanian Council for Culture; Head of Lithuanian Fashion Design Association; member of the Board of Lithuanian Design Association; a member of Lithuanian Association of Analogous Photography etc.
77. It is clear to the Team that the College staff members are very active nationally and internationally and are engaged at the highest levels in their professional fields.
78. The participation of the teaching and administrative staff in these positions and responsibilities is not formally recognised by the College and the Team **recommends** the College to establish a formal staff annual review process as a tool to reward and support the needs of teaching and administrative staff, and does recognise and encourage these activities in order to increase both competences and motivation of the staff.

Judgement on the area: Impact on Regional and National Development is given positive evaluation.

VII. GOOD PRACTICE AND ENHANCEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT

79. Strengths:

- Mission, vision, values were clearly articulated.
- The strategic documents are in alignment with the mission, vision, national policy on research and studies, and the principles of the European HE area.
- The quality management system is well defined; the quality manual clearly describes the processes.
- Growing internationalisation, commitment and support for students and staff is evident.
- There is a strong commitment to the development of staff careers and promotion.

80. Recommendations:

- Quality Assurance procedures and all the acquired data need to be synchronised, synthesised and results are made accessible and understandable to staff, students and social partners.

- Training for critical reflection on a self-evaluation process should be introduced, as the SER is mainly descriptive following the mapping tool questions for evaluation process. The students, administrative staff and social partners' representatives should be actively involved.
- Greater clarification of the operational management structure and responsibilities is needed (Director- Academic Council-Methodological Council – Departments).
- Students and social partners should be regularly informed about the strategic documents and ongoing quality processes and actively involved at all levels.
- While not legally required, we would recommend the college having a body of external experts or an advisory board, who meet with upper management and the stakeholders to consult, review and get feedback on planning, strategic vision and managerial approaches.
- Clarification of level of achievement for KPIs is necessary to measure departments' quality progress.
- The introduction of a Personnel Management Development System (PMDS), which would ensure that all staff (academic and non-teaching) agree with their Director the priorities for the year ahead.
- The College should enhance its arrangements by introducing a suitably resourced formal certificated course in higher education pedagogy that is mandatory for all new teaching staff.
- It is evident that College is very compliant with quality processes, but we recommend greater emphasis on quality enhancement.

ACADEMIC STUDIES AND LIFE-LONG LEARNING

81. Strengths:

- 100% of staff are actively engaged in professional field and sharing experiences with students.
- The study programme offer complies with the college mission.
- The College responses to the professional field demands.
- High employer satisfaction with the skills and competence level of the students.
- Strong commitment and participation in Erasmus mobility for staff and students.
- High-level partnership with social partners and offering valuable resource for student placements and internships, far exceeding College KPIs targets.
- High-level employability rate.

- Good opportunities of Lifelong learning for teaching staff.

82. Recommendations:

- Develop a greater College wide understanding of student centred learning and the impact on the quality assessment processes (ESU toolkit link: <http://www.esu-online.org/pageassets/projects/projectarchive/100814-SCL.pdf>)
- Build on the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programme based on identified needs of alumni, social partners and creative industries as part of the College Lifelong learning programme.
- Introduce additional pedagogical training on student centred learning and e-learning teaching strategies.
- Develop a College wide student retention and support strategy.
- Setting up of an alumni association that would serve to provide a formal structure by which graduates could contribute to programme and strategic developments, as well as to develop interdisciplinary networking informing and shaping local and regional networks.
- Clearer strategy and policy on internationalisation embracing curriculum, staffing, applied research, etc.
- Assure greater consistency in the process of student assessment feedback (example of good practice: <http://www.sparqs.ac.uk/resources.php>)
- Provide private study space for students to meet and work and extended access to facilities, workshops, library etc.

APPLIED RESEARCH AND ART PRACTICE

83. Strengths:

- Since 100% of staff are engaged in professional practice and aware of the latest developments in their professional fields, this is also transferred into the study programmes.
- There is good evidence of national and international artistic practice by a considerable percentage of staff.
- Social partners are providing strong potential areas of applied research utilising internships, placements, collaborative projects, etc.

84. Recommendations:

- More clearly define applied research in the context of the College's disciplines, design thinking, industry – knowledge transfer, professional development, intellectual property (IP), making links with other areas.
- A College of Design should engage in applied research to support staff development and promotion; and to strengthen its collaboration with the design industry and the generation of income from the European research area.
- Establish a Senior Advisory Board where external expertise on the European Research Area and specific knowledge of applied research in the design fields would be a welcome and necessary addition.
- Find way to strategically engage with new and existing social partners to develop applied research (knowledge transfer, new technologies, IP, CPD.).
- At a national level, the Ministry should more clearly define applied research for the design fields.

IMPACT ON REGIONAL AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

85. Strengths:

- Positive contribution on national and regional cultural, social and environmental development.
- Developing collaborative national and international live projects.
- Providing skills and human capital to meet the professional needs of local and regional industry.
- Represented in major national boards of associations of professional bodies and voluntary organisations.
- Started implementing the project of Recognition of non-formally acquired competences and training (2013-2014).

86. Recommendations:

- The College should try to be strategic in seeking partnerships, prioritise its activities and formalise the applied research objectives.
- The implementation of more clearly defined KPI targets and deeper integration of the existing system into daily processes of management, transparency of progress, and to make the exchange of information more convenient and timely.

- Identify clear niche specialist design areas aligned to its academic portfolio and staff expertise which industry and the market demands so as to position itself nationally and internationally and develop stronger collaborations with social partners and generate research income.
- Working more actively in finding opportunities, challenges, partners that would lift the potential of new value created by a student (during training practice and/or graduation project) to a higher multiplier of national or regional impact.
- The College does not formally recognise the participation of the teaching and administrative staff in different positions and responsibilities outside the College. The College should establish a formal staff annual review process as a tool to reward and support the needs of teaching and administrative staff, and does recognise and encourage these activities in order to increase both competences and motivation of the staff.

VIII. JUDGEMENT

Vilnius College of Design of Higher Education is given positive evaluation.

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ANNEX. VILNIUS COLLEGE OF DESIGN RESPONSE TO REVIEW REPORT