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ON THE STATUS OF HIGHER EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT (HEI) IN ALBANIA 2024

FINDINGS ON THE STATUS OF THE "THIRD MISSION" IN ALBANIAN HEI'S IN 2024

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Abstract
Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Europe have traditionally had two main missions: teaching and scientific research. Recently, however, a "Third Mission" (M3) has emerged, focusing on HEIs' engagement with society and the business world. While the first two missions have been extensively studied and measured, M3 remains incomplete and requires the development of indicators and methodologies for its measurement. This article examines the importance and challenges of M3 for HEIs in Albania, drawing from international experience and the European Indicators and Methodology for the Third Mission of Universities. M3 encompasses three main activity groups: i) lifelong learning, ii) technology transfer and innovation, iii) and social engagement. The measurement of HEIs' three missions is based on concrete indicators, which can serve as a basis for evaluating institutions' excellence in this field. The presented study focuses on analyzing the understanding of the third mission (M3) of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Albania, aiming to align them with best international trends and practices. Key findings from a survey of various stakeholders show that curricular development in Albanian HEIs has not kept pace with socio-economic changes and market developments, negatively affecting academic offerings and creating unnecessary competition in the labor market. Furthermore, the lack of a comprehensive national employment framework for first-cycle graduates has created pressure to continue studies, even when not necessary.

Keywords: *Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) / Third Mission (M3) / Teaching / Scientific Research / Social Engagement / Indicators and Methodology / Technology Transfer / Innovation / Smart Specialization Strategy (S3) / Higher Education Funding*

THE THIRD MISSION

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the European HEIs Space have traditionally accepted **"two main missions"** as their tasks: i) teaching; as wella s ii) research and development. Recently, a Third Mission **(M3)**[1] has emerged, but often underdeveloped by higher education institutions (HEIs), failing to include activities that facilitate their engagement with society and the business world.

While the first two missions of HEIs have been extensively studied and frequently measured, the "Third Mission" still needs thorough examination and the development of approaches for its measurement. This requires indicators and ranking methodologies **(ETM)**[2] for M3 of HEIs to measure the activities they undertake in this area. The measurement and evaluation of the three missions of HEIs should generally be based on indicators. In this context, the methodology used for ETMs to assess HEIs' contributions to society includes, among other things, the identification, definition, and selection of the best set of indicators that, in a possible future ranking, could serve as the basis for evaluating institutional excellence in this area.

M3 in HEIs is not a new phenomenon, although it is often considered as such. Throughout the 20th century, contributions to the economy and society coexisted within HEIs alongside teaching and academic research. Since their inception, HEIs have always contributed, directly or indirectly, to society in general and not only in academic fields. However, since today M3 contributions are seen as essential, they deserve specific attention, policies, and resources to ensure their effective functioning.

Although it is widely accepted that the third mission of HEIs refers to their contributions to the economic and social development of territories, it is fair to say that the focus in this area has mostly been on the economic dimension and the potential impact of HEIs, with the assumption that innovation and economic growth will inevitably lead to societal development. This issue is primarily related to the interaction between business world actors and academic world actors, which should lead to technology transfer and economic growth at regional or even broader levels. Dynamic interactive capabilities result from adaptive learning processes that, in their collective dimension, can be more localized, strengthening the capabilities of the higher education system (HE). This means that within a specific region or locality, a concentration of qualified human resources is not an end in itself but a resource that, through learning, can be transformed into technological capabilities for the business world and/or academic capabilities for HEIs as well as progress for the ecosystem as a whole.

The increasing concern about inequalities and a growing crisis in the education system has highlighted a range of new concepts related to the third mission of HEIs. In high-income countries, this implies a strong focus on sustainability, smart specialization, and responsible innovation. The situation differs in HEIs in middle and low-income countries, characterized by varying levels of technological skills, higher levels of inequality, and significant resource constraints for a large part of the population, especially those located far from major metropolitan centers. Here, the focus tends to align more strongly with the dimension of inclusion, examining how HEIs, through their activities and community engagement, can contribute to addressing the limitations of inequality and poverty. The emphasis is placed on how HEIs can contribute to transformative change by responding to localized challenges and enabling local development and beyond.

The concept of M3 is vague and can be misunderstood as simply involving the reconfiguration of academic activities of HEIs, extending their reach into their geographic territory and within the institutional framework of the country. Today, there are two perspectives or approaches to defining M3:

The first is the "Triple Helix" model of academia-industry-government relations. This approach is particularly well-known in Latin America but less so in Europe and the USA.

The second approach defines this mission as: **"the sum of all activities** *related to generating, using, applying, and exploiting knowledge, as well as other university skills outside academic environments."*

Higher education must respond to, adapt to, and anticipate changes in the labor market and national and broader development. The goal of this article concerning the status of HE is to explore new findings and to orient and develop premises for high-quality higher education that meets labor market needs, as well as the strategic development directions of the country, region, and beyond. It is crucial to aim for a unified and standardized higher education system in Albania; one that creates opportunities for a cohesive and competitive higher education system with "regional" and domestic "markets," as well as at the European level or beyond. Therefore, the creation of a "unified system" remains the long-term objective of every policy and strategy so far in Albania.

Another goal of the unified higher education system is to create sustainable internal mechanisms (within HEIs) and external control mechanisms (external evaluation and close links with the local and global business world) to ensure European standards in increasing accountability to society and serving the public interest.

Under these conditions, the academic offer of HEIs should be oriented through all incentivizing tools from central and local governance in accordance with:

Albania's Smart Specializations Strategy (S3);

Labor market demands at local, national, and broader levels curriculum development oriented towards learning outcomes in close and real collaboration with business actors in Albania.

The challenge of this article is to determine the most realistic way possible and under Albanian conditions to measure efforts and results related to M3 activities, by providing a **"set of**

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[1] *M3 – Third Mission*
[2] *ETM – Evaluation of the Third Mission*

relevant indicators" and a **"cohesive methodology"** for assessing M3.

On the other hand, it is not necessary that all M3 activities be exactly the same across all HEIs, as there is always diversity and originality. But the spirit of the mission is more or less the same for every academic institution.

Based on this idea, the assessment of M3 can start by structuring all activities of this mission into **three main groups,** which are also considered by literature and global experience as representative of M3, including:

Continuing Education (CE) – *This term, according to the European Commission, refers to "all learning activities undertaken throughout life, aimed at improving knowledge, skills, and competences with a personal, civic, social, and/or employment perspective."*

Technology Transfer and Innovation (TTI) – *The TTI concept is related to "the movement of an idea, or tacit knowledge, complete knowledge, technical knowledge, intellectual property, discovery, or invention resulting from research conducted at universities (in collaboration with external partners or not) into a non-academic environment where it can lead to and benefit commercial applications at local, regional, national, or global levels."*

Social Engagement (SE) – *This term relates to the role of universities (HEIs) in engaging with their citizen, cultural, industrial, and business communities, and the main activities that the university organizes for society in general or specific demands from societal sectors to enrich them in cultural or developmental fields.*

Drawing from national and international best practices, the methodology for identifying indicators to evaluate M3 of HEIs in Albania is based on lessons learned from the *"European Indicators and Methodology for the Third Mission of Universities (E3M)*[3]*"* project coordinated by *Universidad Politécnica de Valencia (Spain),* which includes eight partner universities from seven different European countries. The project aims to create a ranking methodology for measuring M3 activities of HEIs. This three-year project (2009-2012) was funded by the European Commission under the *"Lifelong Learning Programme.*

EVALUATION OF THE THIRD MISSION

The measurement of the three missions of higher education institutions (HEIs) is based on indicators. In line with this, the methodology used by this article to assess the contributions of Albanian HEIs to society consists, among other activities, of identifying, defining, and selecting the best group of indicators which, in a possible future ranking, could serve as a basis for evaluating the institutions' excellence in this area.

Indicators for Evaluating the Third Mission in Higher Education Institutions:

In general, the measurement of the three missions of HEIs in this context relies on specific indicators. In this context, the methodology used to evaluate the contributions of HEIs to society includes, among other activities, identifying, defining, and selecting the best group of indicators which could be used in a future ranking to assess the institutions' excellence in this area.

Below is a final list of "identified indicators" from international experience for each dimension of the Third Mission (M3) as well as the processes on which the evaluation is based, which could also be adapted as guidelines/orientations in Albania:

Indicators for Continuing Education (CE):

Inclusion of CE in the mission, policy, and/or strategy of HEIs. - Existence of an institutional plan for CE.Existence of a quality assurance procedure for CE. - Total number of active programs. - Number of programs offered that are recognized in the higher education system and the market (licenses). - Number of partnerships in CE programs with public institutions and private businesses. - Percentage of international programs offered in the field. - Percentage of projects funded by the market/state in the CE trainings offered. - Total number of ECTS credits for the offered CE programs. - Number of (micro-)ECTS credits registered/confirmed (in the Ministry of Education and relevant departments, for LLL training or for licensing preparation, knowledge updates). - Number of enrollments of beneficiaries in the respective programs. - Percentage of total ECTS for CE credits registered, referring to the total ECTS registered/licensed for HEIs, and across all program levels. - Percentage of qualifications/beneficiaries certified compared to the total enrollments for CE. - Level of student satisfaction with knowledge/ECTS/qualification obtained through student/qualification evaluation surveys.Level of satisfaction of key stakeholders (licensing authority or state examination authority for licensing, declaring the percentage of licensed individuals who completed CE with the specific HEI, or evaluations by contracting companies, etc.). - Average completion and graduation rate for all programs in question.

Indicators for Technology Transfer and Innovation (TTI):

Inclusion of TTI in the mission, policy, and/or strategy of HEIs. - Existence of an institutional action plan for TTI in HEIs. - Number of licenses/assistance (active, executed under contract, (non-exclusive) for start-ups & spin-offs, and existing market companies. - Total budget and revenue from commercialization of knowledge/expertise and licenses through contracting/funding/grants for HEIs. - Number of start-ups and spin-offs created with HEI support. - Number of joint projects in creative and social innovation involving HEI employees and the HEI itself. - Number of agreements, contracts, and collaborative projects sponsored by Research & Development with non-academic partners (state, private, NGOs, donors, or those related to the HEI's social mission/responsibility, etc.). - Percentage of HEI's budget coming from revenue of Research & Development contracts and collaborative projects with non-academic partner. - Number of consultancy contracts. - Percentage of level 8 students of the Albanian Qualifications Framework (KSHK) and

Lifelong Learning (LLL) researchers and Post-Docs (compared to the total number of students in HEIs at each level) directly or co-financed by HEIs, or co-financed by public and private businesses, NGOs, donors, etc. - Number of laboratories and facilities invested in (by HEIs and/or co-financed) or shared. - Number of companies participating in Continuing Education (CE) courses for professional development (LLL). - Number of HEI employees with temporary positions outside academia. - Number of permanent non-academic employees (focusing on research, innovation, and R&D administration) in HEIs. - Number of level 8 KSHK thesis or projects with co-supervisors from non-academic fields. - Number of joint publications with authors from non-academic fields. - Number of academic staff participating in boards, networks, organizations, associations, and professional boards. - Number of organizations/individuals outside HEIs participating in advisory/governing/validating/ reviewing boards of HEIs, institutes, centers, and educational programs. - Number of prestigious awards for research, development, innovation, and TM awarded by business associations, public sector, funding agencies (national/ international), etc.

Indicators for Social Engagement (SE):

Inclusion of SE in the mission, policy, and/or strategy of HEIs. - Existence of an institutional action plan for SE in HEIs. - Budget allocation for SE. - Percentage of academics involved in voluntary advisory and consultancy roles for communities, issues, and institutions in need (without payment). - Number of open events/activities for the community/public and with public impact. - Number of research initiatives with a direct impact on the community. - Number and cost of staff, student/ researcher hours engaged in providing services and facilities to the community. - Number of people impacted in communities using HEI facilities/services and staff. - Number of projects related to extending education throughout the territory and social strata. - Number of HEI staff and students involved in informative activities to expand education. - Percentage of HEI budget used for extending education in the territory and across social strata, and percentage of beneficiaries/students compared to the total students in HEI. - Number of community participants in education extension/expansion activities. - Number of activities specifically targeting underserved students/ community groups. - Number of community representatives or local representatives in educational boards or committees at HEIs. - Amount of grants/donations/contracts materialized from partnership engagement.

The analysis of this group of indicators has been implemented in six case studies. The objective of the case studies was to verify the opinion of these six HEIs on the selected indicators through a comparison with institutional representatives of M3 activities in the three grouped areas, and also to detail the best practices of each visited and evaluated university. The pilot was conducted at these European institutions: *i) Universidad Politécnica de Valencia (Spain), ii) Politecnico di Torino (Italy), iii) University of Cambridge (UK), iv) Turku University (Finland), v) Dublin Institute of Technology (Ireland), vi) and Széchenyi István University (Hungary).* The case studies also open a broader debate on possible improvements to the specific indicators proposed for the visited and evaluated universities. There is also an ongoing initiative to build a global network for M3 of HEIs in Europe to ensure access and allow European institutions in the future to input data related to M3 activities and possibly create a European/global classification. This network would be a useful tool for assessing institutions and comparing their indicators and services across Europe.

Further explanations of the concepts related to the reporting of indicators are:

1. Human Resources	Focus:	Transfer of embodied knowledge into the work of PhD graduates. - This indicator monitors the transfer of "trained research competencies" to industry and public services "mission-oriented."
	Indicators:	Number or parts of PhD dissertations that specifically contribute to industry and public services (distinguishing between R&D and non-R&D aspects).
2. Intellectual Property	Focus:	Codified knowledge produced by the university and its management (patents, copyrights).
	Indicators:	Not only patents owned by the university but also for 'inventors' of the university (whoever benefits). Patent numbers should be supplemented with data on licenses granted and fees received/applied.
3. "Spin-Offs"	Focus:	Knowledge transfer through entrepreneurship.
	Indicators:	Simple counts or a unified typology are not sufficient. Consider the distinction between spin-off initiatives and laboratories (staff who have left after qualifying, staff still involved, research contracts, related licenses, etc.). Figures should have explanations to characterize the extent of the university's involvement and development, such as dedicated teams, indicators, available funds.
4. Industry Contracts	Focus:	Co-production of knowledge and its circulation in industry. This is considered the main indicator of the university's attractiveness to economic actors.
	Indicators:	Number of contracts, revenue amount as part of total resources, type of partners (global, large domestic firms, SMEs) are key reporting aspects. Concentration level (sectoral, territorial, or with several partners), types of contracts (research, consulting, services, project development), and duration are important supplementary reporting aspects. Identification of large/medium/small laboratories and their focus level (thematic or territorial/sectoral) is also often needed to clarify this indicator and strategic positioning.
	Comment:	Reporting indicators here also requires a 'soft' dimension where aspects such as membership in professional associations (role played in professional networks/associations), professional publications, continuous training activities, consulting activities (often unpaid in the laboratory), and practices (Master's students) are accounted for.
5. Participation in Policy Making	Focus:	The 'public service' dimension for research activities.
	Indicators:	As with industry relations, the same logic applies to public institutions, distinguishing between joint research and services.
	Comment:	It is important that contracts here are not viewed solely from a financial perspective, but also from intensive relationships with public institutions, which often focus on aspects of social-cultural impact; building an image for the country/region/city; or in relation to drafting new reforms/laws, and new sectors of the economy such as tourism in Albania. This is also typical in health research (clinical trials for new therapeutics, medical protocols, free service analyses, etc.).

[3] *E3M – Evaluation of the Third Mission*

6. Engagement in Social-Cultural Life	Focus:	The university's involvement in 'social' life (primarily at the city/region level but also nationally).
	Comment:	Several HEIs actively participate in the social and cultural life of the city (museums, orchestras, sports facilities, festivals, open libraries, exhibitions, etc.); or through opening 'social services' (such as legal aid shops). These "structural" investments also include a range of workshops, experimental laboratories (exhibitions, biennials, concerts, urban and developmental projects, etc.). Their description is based on expenditures, documented products and events with reports and publications.
7. Science Communication to the Public	Focus:	Interaction with society.
	Comment:	This involves focusing solely on dissemination and interaction with the general public (participation in public debates, drafting reform documents, drafting laws, participation in teams or task forces for legal and public initiatives (part of policy making). Reporting includes open days, participation in fairs and national scientific conferences, involvement in the general press and media on public issues, especially education and science, public magazines, website construction and 'interactive' pages, participation in activities directed at children and secondary schools, etc. The distinction is made between individual staff initiatives and proactive policies of laboratories and the IAL as a whole or through its departments/institutes/units.

SURVEY ON THE THIRD MISSION IN ALBANIAN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS (SEE ANNEX)

An anonymous survey was prepared to gain insight into how Albanian higher education institutions perceive and implement the Third Mission (M3), their sensitivity and understanding of this topic, etc. The survey was conducted in February-March 2024 and was completed by 30 out of 40 active higher education institutions (75% of the total HEIs)[4] . This qualitative survey explores various aspects of the Third Mission, including community engagement, knowledge transfer, innovation, entrepreneurship, and more. By analyzing the responses, the goal is to understand the current state, identify challenges, and uncover opportunities to improve the social impact of universities and their contribution to national development.

After processing the data from this questionnaire (see below), the results are as follows:

There is an increasing sensitivity towards the Third Mission (M3) among Albanian higher education institutions (HEIs). This is an emerging topic internationally as well. The vast majority of HEIs responded to the questionnaire (30 out of 40 HEIs of 75%).

About 1/3 of the surveyed/respondent HEIs seems to have good or very good understanding of M3, while two-thirds have limited understanding or no information and concrete actions. There remains a significant need to work on a better and shared understanding of the sector on this topic through training, projects, and capacity-building guides.

Larger HEIs (especially public ones) generally tend to have more laboratories and real potential (often underutilized) for M3. However, responses indicate that the community of smaller/medium-sized HEIs (and especially private ones), as well as specialized/focused HEIs, are moving more quickly towards tangible M3 results, thanks to institutional commitment, government projects, EU funding, and other donors/actors.

The business community in Albania remains small in scale and more limited to services rather than mass production. There is a misunderstanding about the potential for collaboration within the academic world. HEIs themselves need to be more proactive in seeking and materializing this partnership. There is a concentration of contributions more in metropolitan areas than in other regions/peripheries of the country.

CONCLUSIONS AND VISION FOR THE FUTURE

Further indirect findings from the questionnaire results also show that curricular development has not adapted to socio-economic changes and market developments. As a result, academic offerings have not always been successful. Higher education institutions (HEIs), by not following a rigorously market-oriented curriculum development policy, have largely replicated one another, leading to unnecessary competition in the labor market among graduates from the same field. Specifically, in just four fields of study (business management, law, teaching, nursing), public HEIs offer 968 study programs, while private HEIs offer 520 out of a total of 1,488 study programs.

The issuance of three-year "Bachelor" diplomas did not have the intended effect of guiding graduates towards the labor market and serving as a "valve" to relieve the pressure on higher education from students who do not meet the requirements to continue to the Second Cycle (level seven of the NQF National Qualifications Framework). The absence of a comprehensive national employment framework with specifications for the professions and fields in which first-cycle graduates can work has also negatively impacted this. Under these circumstances, the pressure on first-cycle graduates (Level six of the NQF) to continue their education, even when not warranted, has been very high. On the other hand, HEIs were either inconsistent in applying the established criteria for admission to the Second Cycle (mainly public ones) or did not apply selective admission criteria (mainly private ones).The lack of clear, measurable criteria and standards for core academic areas has often resulted in a non-harmonized process, even within the same field. Efforts to align teacher training programs have also been unsuccessful due to continuous changes in these programs post-accreditation, based on the freedom that academic Senates have to change curricula without consulting real market needs.

Currently, the state budget has about 38 million euros available to support over 120,000 students in public universities (this figure can be supplemented by approximately another 20 million euros from secondary revenues secured by the universities themselves), approximately 460 euros per student in the public sector. The private sector, with about 34,500 students and tuition fees of around 1,000-1,500 euros/student, contributes about 20-25 million euros to the system. Meanwhile, modestly developed EU countries like Romania and Bulgaria have financing quotas of around 2,700-2,900 euros/student, not to mention countries like the UK, France, etc., which have quotas of 10,000-11,500 euros/student, Switzerland 15,700 euros/student, Sweden 15,210 euros/student, the USA 22,000 euros/student, etc.

In Albania, since 1992, with few exceptions, the education budget in general has not exceeded 3% of GDP, fluctuating between 2.2-2.8% of GDP or 10-15% of total budget expenditures. It should be noted that these figures refer to education in general (at all levels) and not just higher education. Developed Western countries within the OECD finance their education at levels of 5-8% of GDP, of which 1-3% of GDP goes directly to higher education and scientific research. Albania currently spends 0.4% of GDP on Higher Education.

The evolution of the number of students in the higher education system in Albania, without a clear vision and market study, needs now and in the future sufficient state support for improving the infrastructure of public HEIs, including their material base, as well as increasing human capacities by easing the fiscal burden for businesses collaborating with HEIs and, through the legal framework, formalizing student payments during internships with the business world, encouraging accountability and demand from students during internships and turning this process into a precursor to their employment. Therefore, a better linkage between educational/research policies with social and employment policies in general, and entrepreneurship with social responsibility is required.

In addition to the state's obligation to increase higher education funding towards contemporary standards, finding supportive financing alternatives for HEIs through collaboration with business actors in Albania is considered important. Higher education should become more open to direct (as opposed to indirect) funding from various sources such as: state budget, students, local authorities, donations, businesses, income from specific services, development projects, etc., through alignment of the current legal framework in higher education with those covering other central and local government ministries.

On their part, HEIs should provide various services to stakeholders. These include teaching, scientific research (or research and development), career counseling, library services, sports infrastructure, and opportunities for participation in student activities. HEIs should also establish and strengthen close contacts with the business world, helping students find job or internship opportunities.

In this context, the offering of the Third Mission (M3) by HEIs could evolve towards:

Teaching: Various scientific and professional programs, including continuing education courses or specialized and certified study programs.

Scientific Research: HEIs as centers of research and development, including scientific projects, laboratories, and opportunities for participation in research, applied research, consulting, etc.

Career Counseling Services: Assistance in career choice, CV preparation, interview simulations, and connections with potential employers.

Libraries: HEIs have libraries rich in knowledge resources and tools for study and research, for international networking and events related to books and digitization.

Student Services: Medical services, psychological counseling, sports services, social-cultural activities, assistance with preparation for individual licensing processes and state exams.

Student Projects and Activities: Opportunities to participate in clubs, associations, biennials, competitions, and various student events that promote collaboration and personal development.

Connections with the Business World: Collaboration with companies and organizations outside the university to offer internships, industrial visits, and job opportunities after graduation, etc.

The current approach to implementing the Third Mission is to create interconnected spaces and mechanisms that offer or enable training, **innovation and entrepreneurship incubation,** and support programs with real-world partners. Furthermore, **community-based centers** should emerge as useful interface mechanisms to bring HEIs closer to communities, both physically and in orientation. The real challenge is that conventional formal knowledge transfer models may not be suitable in resource-poor environments. However, they can reduce the need for informal businesses, provide social and practical assistance, and encourage the formalization of micro-enterprises in difficult areas. Creating innovation and incubation centers in cities or regions, as well as NGOs with social impact, can nurture community enterprises, support local skills development, and promote job creation for specific needy groups.

On the other hand, there seems to be no real need to produce specific/additional strict laws or decrees for the Third Mission; rather, there is a real need for orientations, reporting formats, and guides regarding: i) What the Third Mission is as a definition and what its components are; ii) What are the potential/unified indicators and instruments to measure and determine quantitatively the volume, equivalent financial value, and success of the Third Mission for a HEI; iii) Reorganizing the annual report of each HEI submitted to the Ministry according to the three pillars: **teaching, research,** and **third mission**; specifying reporting items exhaustively and as concisely as possible, with measurable indicators, becoming part of institutional development and ranking evaluation.

It is suggested that the Ministry of Education undertake several steps:

Firstly - Prepare guidelines and training for HEI leaders and their key units for a deeper understanding of the Third Mission in a consensual spirit.

Secondly - Each HEI should make rapid improvements/ reviews of its mission and institutional strategies in light of the three components: teaching, research & development, third

mission.

Thirdly - Each HEI should start reporting on all three pillars mentioned above.

Fourthly - Each HEI should develop institutional plans for the Third Mission applying an inclusive logic of academic staff, student representatives, base units, and strategic partners outside the HEI: from the market, government, and business community.

Objectives and Instruments for this Purpose:

By 2030, HEIs should be fully engaged, alongside teaching and research, in the aspects of the Third Mission. – Instrument: Preparation of a guide for HEIs by the Ministry of Education. Initiation of a basic annual reporting/self-declaration process, progressively developed each year by the HEIs, covering all three missions (teaching, research, Third Mission), starting from the 2024-25 academic year, according to a preliminary and concrete format/database prepared by the Ministry of Education.

Increasing the capacity of HEI leaders and staff for the real adoption and implementation of the Third Mission. – Instrument: "Training of Trainers" (ToT) for each HEI within the 2025-26 year. Further training of each HEI's staff by trainers including the leaders, within the 2026-27 year.

Including in the annual report of each HEI the quantification of contributions to the Third Mission to better identify the contribution of this sector to society, the national GDP[5], and overall development. – Instrument: Inclusion of financial reporting for monetization (Lek/Euro, in kind) of the Third Mission for each HEI, to create a database of the Third Mission for the entire higher education sector.

By 2030 and beyond: Institutional quality assessment may also include Third Mission issues, based on annual and financial reports of this sector. – Instrument: Institutional accreditation and rankings at national and international levels.

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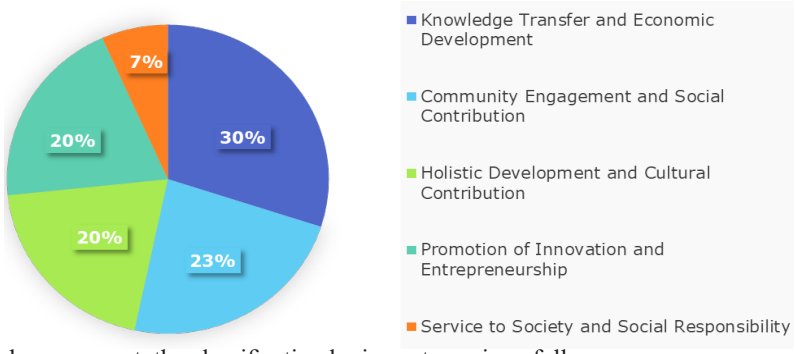
[5] *GDP – Gross Domestic Product*

ANNEX: RESULTS OF THE QUESTIONAIRE.
QUESTION 1: HOW DO YOU DEFINE THE M3 OF UNIVERSITIES IN GENERAL?



According to the weight of each component, the classification by importance is as follows:

Option 1 (30% of the respondents): Knowledge Transfer and Economic Development - This involves transferring knowledge and technology to industry and society, with a perspective aimed at promoting economic and social growth through university-industry collaboration and joint research projects.

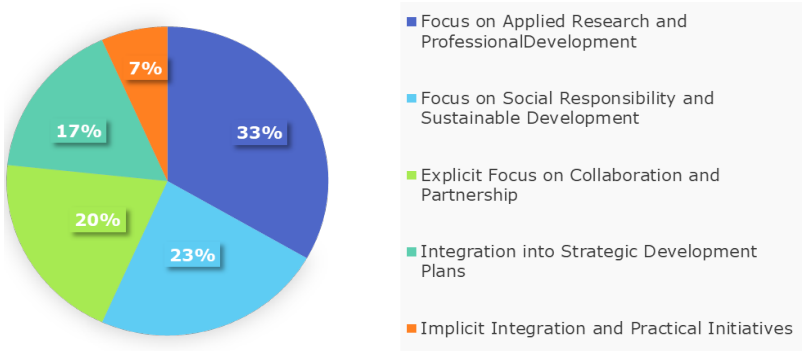
Option 2 (23%): Community Engagement and Social Contribution - This involves collaborating with external parties for social development, including businesses, politics, and stakeholders. The idea requires a focus on concrete results and financial benefits for institutions and society.

Option 3 (20%): Holistic Development and Cultural Contribution - Focusing on the multidimensional nature of the third mission, this involves the university's engagement with social, economic, and cultural aspects of society; aiming at local-regional-national development and cultural enrichment.

Option 4 (20%): Promotion of Innovation and Entrepreneurship - This involves the role of universities in fostering innovation ecosystems, supporting entrepreneurship, and contributing to economic development through the commercialization of research findings.

Option 5 (7%): Service to Society and Social Responsibility - Emphasizing the role of universities in directly contributing to social responsibility and welfare, this perspective highlights the institution's commitment beyond traditional teaching and research.

QUESTION 2: DOES YOUR MISSION AND STRATEGY FOR THE M3 ADDRESS IT?



Option 1 (33% of the respondents): Focus on Applied Research and Professional Development - Highlighting institutions that strive to advance applied research, innovation, and entrepreneurship, with the aim of preparing students with the necessary skills for social impact and economic development, and with real contributions to the market and society.

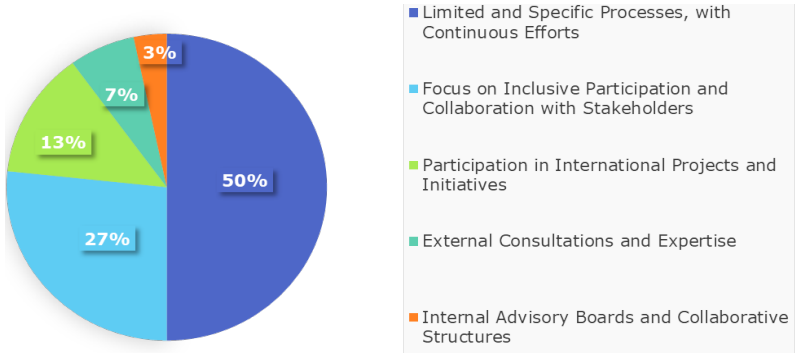
Option 2 (23%): Focus on Social Responsibility and Sustainable Development - This perspective emphasizes the commitment of institutions to social welfare; sustainable development; and engagement with local, regional, and national communities.

Option 3 (20%): Integration into Strategic Development Plans - This implies including the Third Mission in institutional strategic plans, focusing on initiatives such as business cooperation programs, technology transfer, and partnerships with external or foreign entities.

Option 4 (17%): Explicit Focus on Collaboration and Partnership - Emphasizing the explicit inclusion of the Third Mission in strategic plans, with a focus on collaboration with third parties, partnerships with businesses, and social engagement at local, regional, and (inter-)national levels.

Option 5 (7%): Implicit Integration and Practical Initiatives - Refers to institutions where the Third Mission may not be explicitly mentioned, but M3 is reflected in practical initiatives such as education, joint projects with businesses, and social activities for the community's benefit.

QUESTION 3: HAVE YOU UNDERTAKEN ANY PARTICIPATORY PROCESS FOR DEVELOPING THE THIRD MISSION (M3) IN YOUR HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION?



Option 1 (50% of the respondents): Limited and Specific Processes, and Ongoing Efforts - Institutions that recognize the lack of specific processes but show ongoing efforts through consultations, annual plans, and inclusion of the Third Mission as a relative priority in strategic plans.

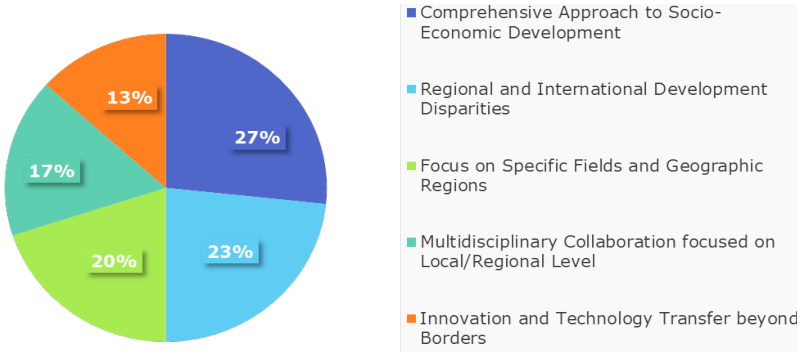
Option 2 (27%): Focus on Inclusive Participation and Stakeholder Collaboration - This implies an inclusive approach in the participation of stakeholders within and outside the institution for developing institutional strategies and M3, including students, academic and administrative staff, alumni, industry representatives, and international partners.

Option 3 (13%): Participation in International Projects and Initiatives - This perspective implies the involvement of the higher education institution in international projects and initiatives aimed at developing M3 activities within the institution.

Option 4 (7%): Consultations and External Expertise - This implies processes involving consultations and external expertise, including meetings with businesses, industrial partners, organizations, and research groups, etc., to develop institutional strategies, especially in relation to M3.

Option 5 (3%): Internal Advisory Boards and Collaborative Structures - This implies the establishment of internal advisory boards and collaborative structures within institutions to provide advice and innovative ideas for study programs and to foster a culture of collaboration with third parties.

QUESTION 4: WHAT IS THE FIELD AND TERRITORIAL SCOPE OF THE THIRD MISSION (M3) THAT YOU TARGET AS A HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION?



Option 1 (27% of the respondents): Comprehensive Approach to Socio-Economic Development - This implies higher education institutions that emphasize preparing students to contribute to social and economic development (national-global) through various concrete initiatives, focusing on sustainability, resilience, community development.

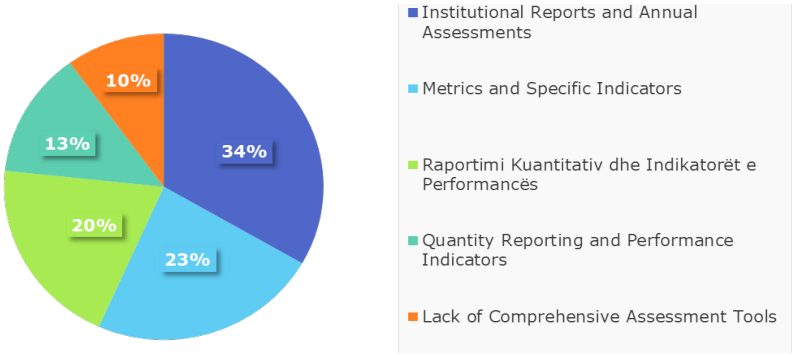
Option 2 (23%): Regional Development Differences (National-International) - This implies that some higher education institutions target fields of knowledge that extend nationally (regions, metropolitan-capital-periphery of the country) and internationally (neighboring cross-border regions or between Albania-EU, etc.), aiming to contribute to social and economic development within the country and beyond national borders.

Option 3 (20%): Focus on Specific Fields and Geographical Regions - Some higher education institutions focus on specific thematic fields (specializations like Medicine, Security, Polytechnic, Agriculture, Sports, etc.) versus others that are generalist institutions (attempting to cover all areas). Meanwhile, some institutions target specific geographical regions within the country (regional institutions or those focused on capital/metropolitan) while others work on a (inter-)national level regarding the impact and reach of their mission.

Option 4 (17%): Multidisciplinary Collaboration Focused on Local/Regional Level - This concerns higher education institutions that aim for collaborations in various fields with a focus on the local or regional level, and within the country.

Option 5 (13%): Innovation and Technology Transfer Beyond Borders - This concerns higher education institutions that aim to advance innovation, technology transfer, and collaboration with international partners, aiming to contribute to local, national, and international economic and social development.

QUESTION 5: DO YOU MEASURE/QUANTIFY THE VALUE/CONTRIBUTION OF THE THIRD MISSION OF YOUR HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION? HOW?



Option 1 (34% of the respondents): Institutional Reports and Annual Evaluations - Many higher education institutions conduct annual evaluations and produce documentation reports of their activities (including the Third Mission), which are then used to assess their contribution and progress in this regard.

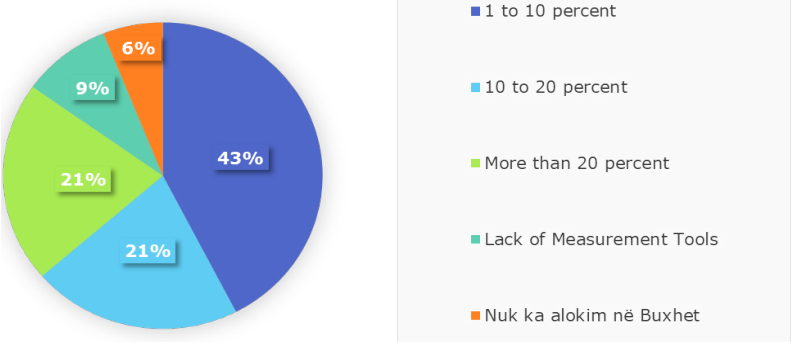
Option 2 (23%): Specific Metrics and Indicators - Some HEI's have developed specific metrics or indicators to evaluate their Third Mission, such as surveys with the alumni community, and economic-financial indicators.

Option 3 (20%): Quantitative Reporting and Performance Indicators - Some higher education institutions use quantitative reporting methods and performance indicators to evaluate the success and impact of their Third Mission activities.

Option 4 (13%): Use of Surveys and Relevant Results - Some higher education institutions rely on surveys and feedback from stakeholders to evaluate the impact and effectiveness of their Third Mission activities.

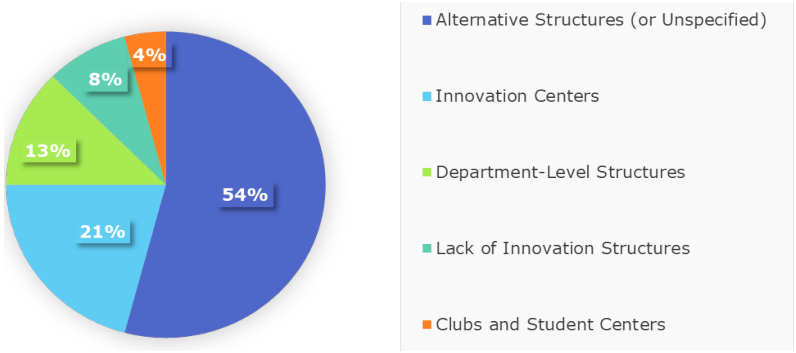
Option 5 (10%): Lack of General Evaluation Tools - Some higher education institutions mention basic mechanisms for evaluating certain aspects, including M3; but lack a comprehensive tool/instrument for assessing the overall contribution of the Third Mission in the organization.

QUESTION 6: WHAT IS THE % OF THE ANNUAL BUDGET DEDICATED SOLELY TO THE THIRD MISSION (M3)?



According to the weight of each identified component, the classification shows that over 15% of the respondent HEIs, accept of not having measurement tools or budget for M3.

QUESTION 7: IN ADDITION TO TEACHING AND RESEARCH, DO YOU HAVE SPECIAL STRUCTURES FOR INNOVATION IN YOUR INSTITUTION? WHAT ARE THEY?



Option 1 (54%): Alternative (or Non-Specific) Structures - Various higher education institutions have established different structures to encourage innovation, including alternative offices such as research centers focused on specific fields, startup and entrepreneurship centers, technology transfer centers, etc.

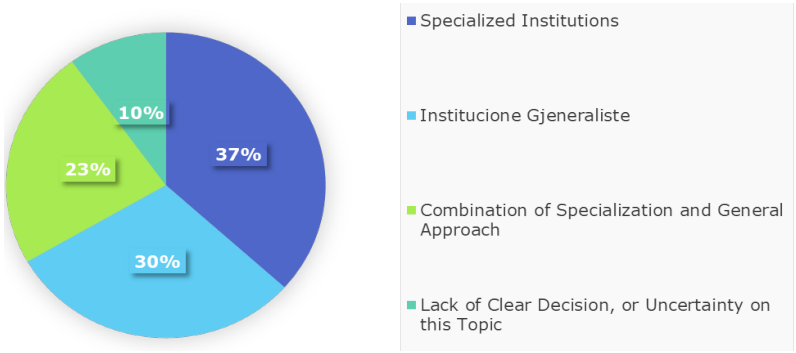
Option 2 (21%): Innovation Centers - Some higher education institutions have established innovation centers and hubs within their campus to promote innovation and entrepreneurship among students and academic staff.

Option 3 (13%): Structures at Departmental Level - Some higher education institutions have specific departments or sectors dedicated to innovation within their organizational structure of Departments/Faculties.

Option 4 (8%): Lack of Structures for Innovation - Some higher education institutions are in the process of developing innovation structures, or do not yet have dedicated functional structures at least for the moment.

Option 5 (4%): Student Clubs and Centers - Some higher education institutions promote innovation through student clubs and centers, offering platforms for students to explore their creative-entrepreneurial ideas.

QUESTION 8: DO YOU AIM TO BE A LOCAL/REGIONAL "SPECIALIZED" INSTITUTION (FOCUSED), OR A NATIONAL "GENERALIST" (WORLD CLASS UNIVERSITY)?



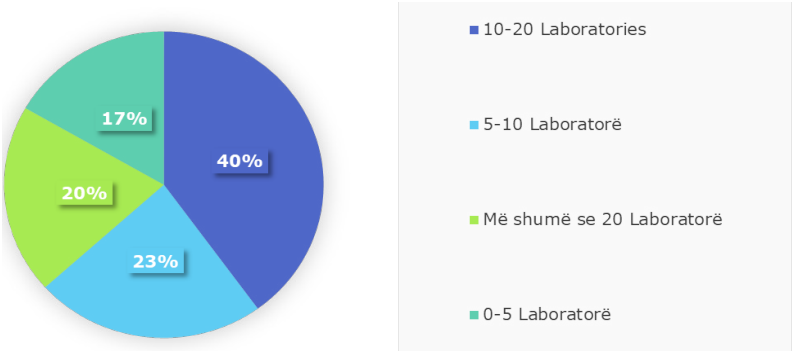
Option 1 (37-60% of the respondents): "Specialized" Institutions - Some institutions aim to be specialized in certain fields, focusing their resources and efforts to become leaders in those areas.

Option 2: (30-53%) "Generalist" Institutions - Some higher education institutions aim to maintain a broad range of academic programs and research fields, striving to succeed in many disciplines simultaneously.

Option 3: (23%) Combination of Specialization and General Approach - Some higher education institutions pursue a combined approach: specializing in certain fields while also offering a broad range of academic programs in other areas to meet diverse student/institution needs.

Option 4: Lack of a Clear Decision or Ambiguity on this Issue - Some higher education institutions have not yet decided whether to pursue specialization or to maintain a general approach, facing also undecided positions in their strategic direction. Some others are not sensitized to this discussion.

QUESTION 9: HOW MANY LABORATORIES DO YOU HAVE? ARE THEY FUNCTIONAL/CERTIFIED FOR MARKET SERVICES?



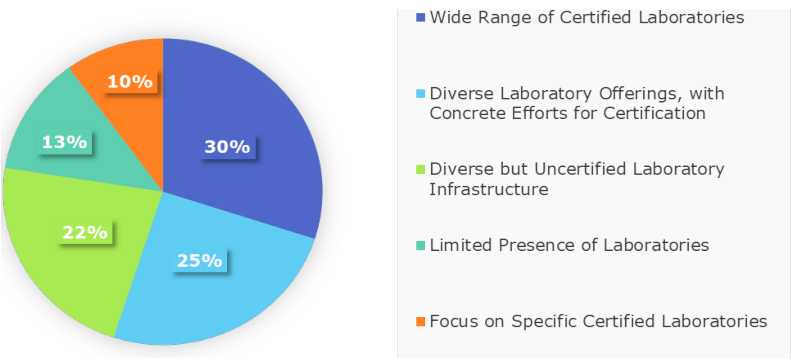
Option 1 (40% of the respondents): 10-20 Laboratories - Some higher education institutions declare a significant number of laboratories, providing substantial resources for practical-scientific sessions. These institutions prioritize practical experience with considerable investment in laboratory infrastructure. The technological level and functionality remain to be seen.

Option 2 (23%): 5-10 Laboratories - Some higher education institutions have a sufficient number of laboratories to provide basic resources for practical sessions and research activities. Although not as numerous as the institutions above (depending also on the institution's size), these institutions ensure adequate infrastructure to support academic and research needs and M3.

Option 3 (20%): More than 20 Laboratories - Some higher education institutions are noted for their rich laboratory infrastructure, offering a wide range of resources for practical sessions, research efforts, and M3. These institutions usually have a strong commitment to practical research and innovation.

Option 4 (15%): Fewer than 5 Laboratories - Some higher education institutions are less equipped with laboratory infrastructure, which may limit the extent of practical-scientific work they can offer. These institutions might rely more on other means of facilitating practical experiences and research.

QUESTION 9: HOW MANY LABORATORIES DO YOU HAVE? ARE THEY FUNCTIONAL/CERTIFIED FOR MARKET SERVICES?



Option 1 (30% of the respondents): Wide Range of Certified Laboratories - A significant number of higher education institutions have a wide range of laboratories, most of which are functional and certified to offer various services, including healthcare, computer-based testing, and scientific research.

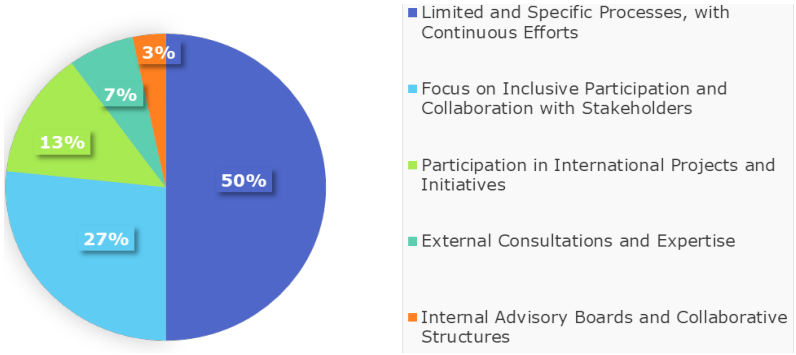
Option 2 (25%): Various Laboratory Offerings with Concrete Certification Efforts - Some higher education institutions offer a number of laboratory facilities, including those for healthcare, computer sciences, and engineering. While most are functional, serious efforts are being made to achieve certification and offer market services beyond academic use.

Option 3 (22%): Diverse Laboratory Infrastructure but Still Uncertified - Many higher education institutions have diverse laboratory initiatives serving various teaching fields. While most are functional, they are usually still uncertified to offer specialized market services.

Option 4 (13%): Limited Presence of Laboratories - Some higher education institutions have a limited number of laboratories, primarily focused on specific areas of study/teaching. While they are functional, they are often still uncertified for services beyond academic purposes.

Option 5 (10%): Focus on Specific Certified Laboratories - Some higher education institutions prioritize certain types of laboratories, such as computer, medical, engineering, or artistic labs, aiming to make them unique and certified to offer highly specialized services. The total number of laboratories in these institutions is limited, but they are fully functional albeit costly.

QUESTION 10: DO YOU HAVE INDUSTRY COLLABORATIONS? HOW MANY PRODUCTS/PATENTS DO YOU OFFER IN THE MARKET?



Option 1 (33% of the respondents): Collaboration Without Patents-Some institutions have collaborations with various industries but don't offer patents products in the market.

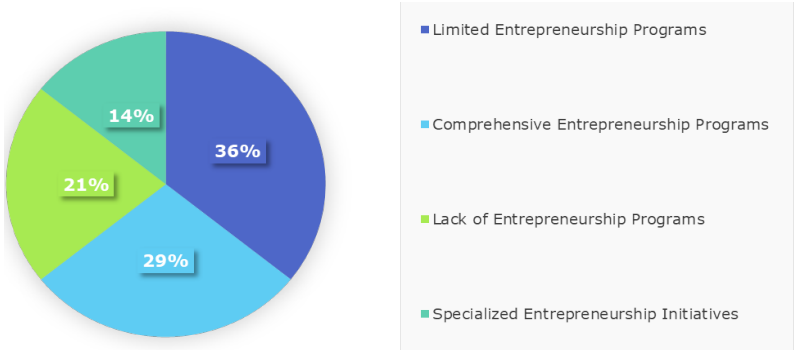
Option 2 (23%): Industry Collaboration with Patent Offerings - Some higher education institutions claim to have industry collaborations and offer products or patents in the market, though in limited numbers.

Option 3 (20%): Partnerships with Industry and New Patents - Some higher education institutions claim to have started partnerships with industrial partners and are in the process of developing joint products or patents for the market.

Option 4 (17%): Limited Industry Collaboration and Products/Patents - Many institutions do not report real collaboration with industry (or have limited involvement) and thus do not offer any products/patents in the market.

Option 5: Extensive Industry Collaboration and Patent Offerings - A minority of institutions have established extensive collaborations with industrial partners and offer many products or patents in the market.

QUESTION 11: DO YOU HAVE ENTREPRENEURSHIP PROGRAMS? HOW MANY? WHAT "SPIN-OFF" SERVICES DO YOU OFFER IN THE MARKET?



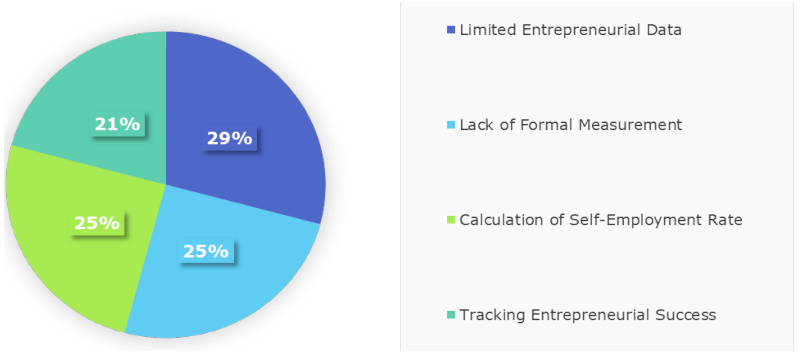
Option 1 (36% of the respondents): Limited Entrepreneurship Programs - These institutions offer limited entrepreneurship programs, such as specific courses or modules within existing study programs, combined with services like seminars, workshops, or mentoring.

Option 2 (29%): Comprehensive Entrepreneurship Programs - These institutions offer full entrepreneurship programs, including several dedicated study programs (BSc, MProf, MSc, ME, or PhD) in entrepreneurship, as well as advanced training modules, innovation hubs, and business incubators.

Option 3 (21%): Lack of Entrepreneurship Programs - These institutions declare that they do not have formal entrepreneurship programs as part of their curriculum or extracurricular activities.

Option 4 (14%): Specialized Entrepreneurship Initiatives - These institutions declare that they have specialized initiatives or projects for entrepreneurship, such as participation in EU-funded programs, government initiatives, or collaborations with industrial partners to promote entrepreneurship, etc.

QUESTION 12: WHAT PERCENTAGE OF YOUR GRADUATES HAVE STARTED BUSINESSES COMPARED TO THE TOTAL GRADUATES? HOW DO YOU MEASURE THIS?



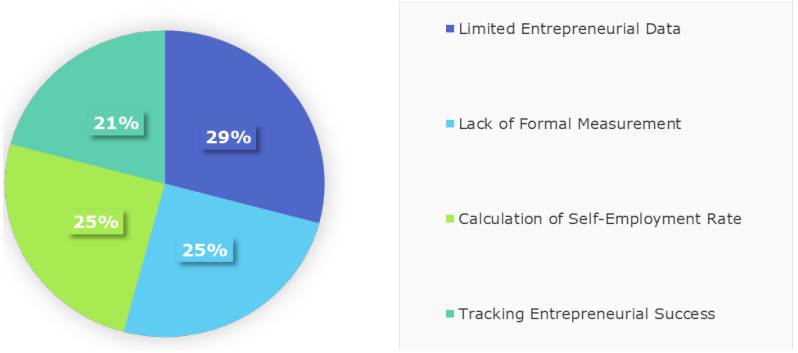
Option 1 (29% of the respondents): Limited Entrepreneurial Data - These institutions have limited data on graduates who have initiated entrepreneurial ventures but lack systematic tracking systems. They measure the percentage of entrepreneurial graduates based on possible data from Career Offices and Alumni or periodic surveys.

Option 2 (25%): Lack of Formal Measurement - These institutions do not have specific methods to measure the percentage of graduates who have started businesses. Although they may actively encourage entrepreneurship, they lack formal mechanisms to track entrepreneurial outcomes among their graduates.

Option 3 (25%): Calculation of Self-Employment Levels - These institutions calculate the percentage of graduates who are self-employed, including those who have started businesses. They measure this through employment data and surveys with Alumni, focusing on those pursuing entrepreneurial paths.

Option 4 (21%): Tracking Entrepreneurial Success - These institutions actively track the entrepreneurial success of their graduates through updated Alumni databases, periodic meetings with this community, surveys, and collaboration with local government units.

QUESTION 13: IN WHICH SECTORAL REFORMS OR LAWS HAVE YOU PARTICIPATED AS A HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION IN DRAFTING, COMMENTING ON, AND PUBLIC DEBATING THEM?



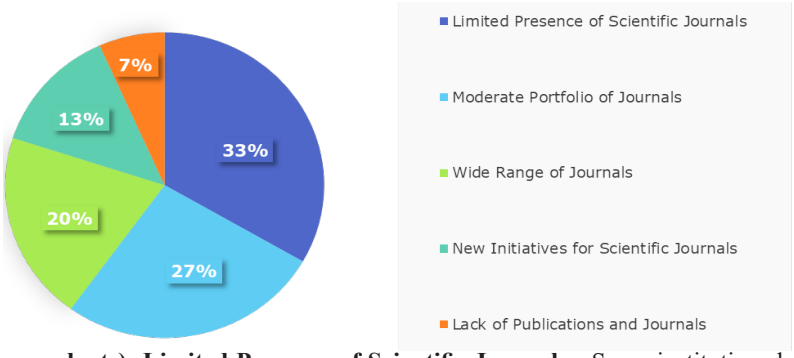
Option 1 (44% of the reforms): Active Participation in Various Reforms and Laws - Some institutions have actively participated in sectoral reforms and laws, including those related to higher education, scientific research, public administration, justice, and other sectoral areas.

Option 2 (25%): Limited Participation in Reforms and Laws - Some institutions have participated in specific reforms or laws, such as those related to justice, fiscal policies, mental health, and gender equality.

Option 3 (22%): Absence of Actual Participation - Some institutions have not reported participation in any sectoral reforms or laws.

Option 4 (9%): Participation Only in Higher Education Reforms - A few institutions declare that they have participated only in reforms and laws related to higher education, particularly the Higher Education Law and the Science Law.

QUESTION 14: HOW MANY SCIENTIFIC JOURNALS DO YOU HAVE IN YOUR INSTITUTION? WHAT ARE THEIR FIELDS? HOW ARE THEY RECOGNIZED / CLASSIFIED?



Option 1 (33% of the Respondents): Limited Presence of Scientific Journals - Some institutions have a limited number of scientific journals, with 1-2 publications per year. These journals usually cover a wide range of fields for practical research needs of the institution and rarely focus on specific academic research disciplines.

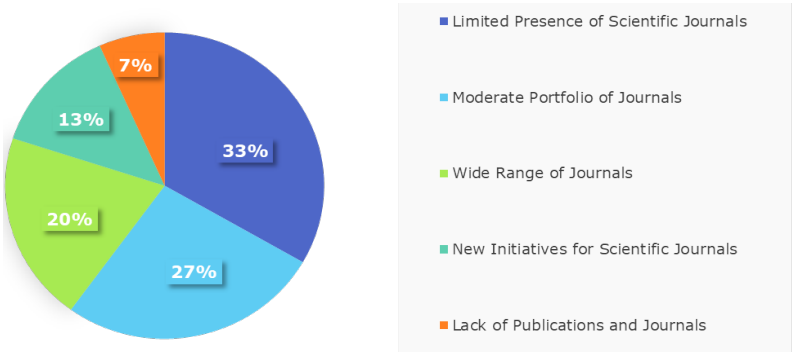
Option 2 (27%): Medium Portfolio of Journals - Some institutions maintain a medium portfolio of scientific journals, with 3-5 publications per year. These journals cover various fields such as social sciences, natural sciences, humanities, and technology, and are usually focused.

Option 3 (20%): Wide Range of Journals - Some institutions have a broad range of scientific journals, with more than 5 publications per year. These journals cover a wide spectrum of disciplines, including social sciences, natural sciences, humanities, technology, and specialized fields. Few are recognized by the Ministry of Education or in neighboring countries/regions.

Option 4 (13%): New Initiatives for Scientific Journals - A small number of institutions are actively developing new scientific journals or planning to launch publications in the near future, aiming to expand their academic dimensions and efforts to stimulate/ distribute research.

Option 5: Absence of Publications and Journals - A small number of institutions either do not have their own scientific journals or have a very limited presence of publications overall, possibly due to being new/small institutions or focusing on other forms of academic/research production, such as fine and visual arts.

QUESTION 15: DO YOU ENGAGE IN "TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER"? WHAT AND WHERE? DO YOU HAVE A OFFICE FOR THIS AS AN INSTITUTION?



Option 1 (54% of the respondents): Use of Technology Transfer Mechanisms - Most institutions report engaging in forms of technology transfer, including permanent partnerships with businesses, design contracts, technical training, and collaborations with industrial partners. The exact understanding and consistent interpretation of "technology transfer" by institutions remain to be verified.

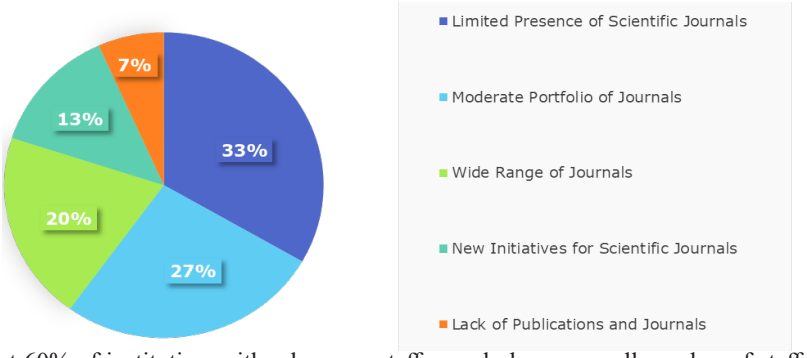
Option 2 (29%): No Technology Transfer Activities - Many institutions self-report that they do not engage in technology transfer activities and do not have dedicated offices for this purpose, although they may have awareness or have made efforts in this area through European projects focused on improving higher education quality by enhancing technology transfer.

Option 3 (11%): Absence of Dedicated Office - Three institutions declare that they engage to some extent in technology transfer but emphasize ongoing efforts to establish a technology transfer office, even though they have not yet achieved concrete results due to low interest from businesses.

Option 4 (3%): Technology Transfer Center - One university has established a “Technology Transfer Center” linked to the Faculty of Agriculture, aiming to collaborate with the “Agricultural Technology Transfer Center” within the Ministry of Agriculture.

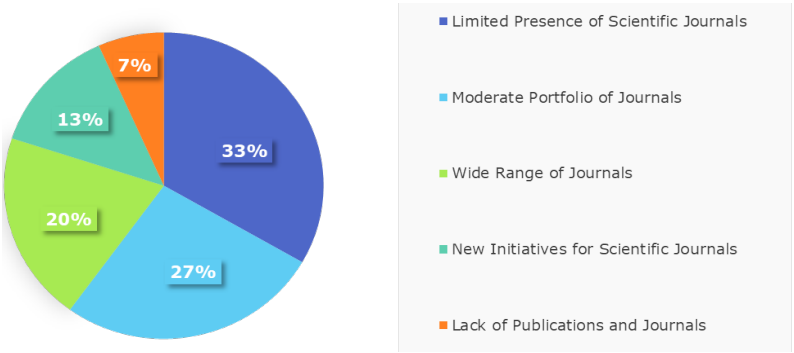
Option 5: Establishment of a Technology Transfer Unit - One university has established a “specialized technology transfer unit,” aiming to create close links between academic staff, the market, and industry.

QUESTION 16: WHAT PERCENTAGE OF ACADEMIC STAFF, OUT OF THE TOTAL, IS ENGAGED SOLELY IN RESEARCH/INNOVATION/SERVICE?



The conclusion here is that 60% of institutions either have no staff or only have a small number of staff dedicated solely to research, innovation, and service. This indicates a focus on traditional academic processes, such as PhD programs or article publications (with impact factors).

QUESTION 17: DO YOU HAVE INDICATORS TO MEASURE THE SUCCESS OR FAILURE OF THE THIRD MISSION? WHAT ARE THEY?



87% of institutions declare that they have mechanisms and instruments, contrary to what was mentioned earlier.

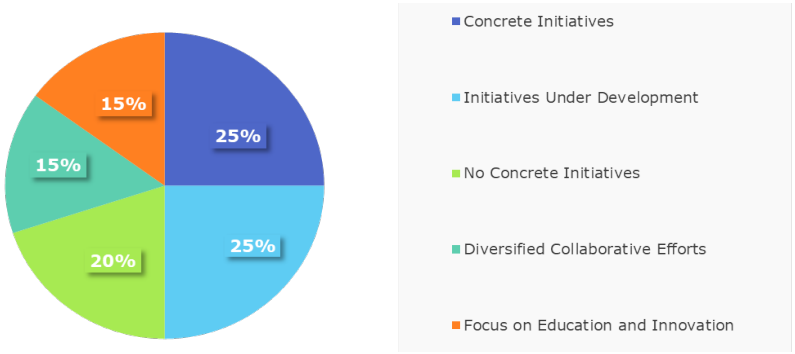
Option 1 (57% of the respondents): Use of Specific Instruments - Some institutions have developed specific indicators and instruments for measuring the success or failure of their third mission. These indicators include research impact, patent generation, student start-ups, and industry partnerships.

Option 2 (21%): Basic Indicators - Some institutions use basic indicators, such as numbers of publications, research grants, or student satisfaction metrics, to measure their third mission's success.

Option 3 (14%): No Established Indicators - A few institutions have no formal indicators in place to measure the success or failure of their third mission.

Option 4 (8%): Continuous Improvement - Some institutions are actively working on developing and improving indicators for assessing the success of their third mission.

QUESTION 18: HOW MANY INTERDISCIPLINARY SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH PROJECTS HAVE YOU INITIATED/ INVOLVED IN/COORDINATED?



Option 1 (25% of the resnpondets): Concrete Initiatives - Some higher education institutions have implemented concrete co-creation initiatives, such as projects, collaborations, and partnerships with various stakeholders including industry, government, and different organizations. These initiatives aim to drive innovation, address social challenges, and create value for all parties involved.

O**ption 2 (25%): Initiatives Under Development -** Some higher education institutions are currently in the process of conceptualizing or launching concrete co-creation initiatives. While these initiatives are not yet fully operational, they represent an institutional commitment to engage with stakeholders and foster collaborative efforts in the future.

Option 3 (20%): No Concrete Initiatives - A significant portion of higher education institutions have not undertaken any concrete co-creation initiatives so far. However, there may be plans or objectives to explore such initiatives in the future, demonstrating a potential for increased engagement with stakeholders.

Option 4 (15%): Diverse Collaborative Efforts - These institutions are involved in various collaborative efforts, including joint projects, workshops, and research activities with stakeholders from academia, industry, government, and civil society. These initiatives aim to address a wide range of social and economic challenges through innovative approaches.

Option 5: Focus on Education and Innovation - Some higher education institutions have launched initiatives focused on teaching, innovation, and skill development, particularly through partnerships with industry and government agencies. These initiatives