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Vilniaus universiteto
**STUDIJŲ PROGRAMOS *POLITIKA IR MEDIJOS* (*valstybinis*
kodas - 621L20010)**
VERTINIMO IŠVADOS

EVALUATION REPORT
OF *POLITICS AND MEDIA* (*state code - 621L20010*)
STUDY PROGRAMME
at Vilnius University

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DUOMENYS APIE ĮVERTINTĄ PROGRAMĄ

Studijų programos pavadinimas	<i>Politika ir medijos</i>
Valstybinis kodas	621L20010
Studijų sritis	Socialiniai mokslai
Studijų kryptis	Politikos mokslai
Studijų programos rūšis	Universitetinės studijos
Studijų pakopa	Antroji
Studijų forma (trukmė metais)	Nuolatinė (1,5)
Studijų programos apimtis kreditais	90
Suteikiamas laipsnis ir (ar) profesinė kvalifikacija	Politikos mokslų magistras
Studijų programos įregistravimo data	2012-06-11

INFORMATION ON EVALUATED STUDY PROGRAMME

Title of the study programme	<i>Politics and Media</i>
State code	621L20010
Study area	Social Sciences
Study field	Political Science
Type of the study programme	University studies
Study cycle	Second
Study mode (length in years)	Full-time (1,5)
Volume of the study programme in credits	90
Degree and (or) professional qualifications awarded	Master of Political Science
Date of registration of the study programme	2012-06-11

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I. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the evaluation process

The evaluation of on-going study programmes is based on the **Methodology for evaluation of Higher Education study programmes**, approved by Order No 1-01-162 of 20 December 2010 of the Director of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (hereafter – SKVC).

The evaluation is intended to help higher education institutions to constantly improve their study programmes and to inform the public about the quality of studies.

The evaluation process consists of the main following stages: 1) *self-evaluation and self-evaluation report prepared by Higher Education Institution (hereafter – HEI)*; 2) *visit of the review team at the higher education institution*; 3) *production of the evaluation report by the review team and its publication*; 4) *follow-up activities*.

On the basis of external evaluation report of the study programme SKVC takes a decision to accredit study programme either for 6 years or for 3 years. If the programme evaluation is negative such a programme is not accredited.

The programme is **accredited for 6 years** if all evaluation areas are evaluated as “very good” (4 points) or “good” (3 points).

The programme is **accredited for 3 years** if none of the areas was evaluated as “unsatisfactory” (1 point) and at least one evaluation area was evaluated as “satisfactory” (2 points).

The programme is **not accredited** if at least one of evaluation areas was evaluated as “unsatisfactory” (1 point).

1.2. General

The Application documentation submitted by the HEI follows the outline recommended by the SKVC. Along with the self-evaluation report and annexes, the following additional documents have been provided by the HEI before, during and/or after the site-visit:

No.	Name of the document
1.	Selection of research publications of the academic staff
2.	Development plan of Vilnius university 2015-2017
3.	Methodological requirements for written assignments and final theses of the Institute of International Relations and Political Science, VU
4.	Alumni feedback survey results
5.	Selected sample of Minutes of the Study Programme Committee Meetings

1.3. Background of the HEI/Faculty/Study field/ Additional information

Vilnius University (hereinafter also University or VU), founded in 1579, is the oldest and largest institution of higher education in Lithuania. Presently, the University has about 3670 employees and 21 000 students. The University implements study programmes of three study cycles in the areas of the humanities, social, physical, biomedical and technological sciences; students may enrol in more than 70 bachelor study programmes, 110 master and integrated study programmes and almost 30 doctoral study programmes.

The Institute of International Relations and Political Science (hereinafter also IIRPS or Institute) is a core academic unit of Vilnius University that implements 1 first cycle (*Political Science*), 6 second cycle (*International Relations and Diplomacy, European Studies, Contemporary Politics, Public Policy Analysis, Eastern European and Russian Studies, Politics and Media*) and 1 third

cycle (*Political Science*) study programmes. The Institute has about 60 staff members and about 660 students.

The master programme *Politics and Media* (hereinafter also PM/SP or Programme) has been implemented 4 years ago. In 2012 it went through registration and accreditation procedure. PM/SP has 26 students taught by 15 academic staff members (2015). The language of study programme is Lithuanian.

1.4. The Review Team

The review team was completed according *Description of experts' recruitment*, approved by order No. 1-01-151 of Acting Director of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education. The Review Visit to HEI was conducted by the team on 22nd September, 2016.

1. **Prof. Anu Toots (team leader)**, *Professor of Social Policy, School of Governance, Law and Society, Tallinn University, Estonia;*
2. **Dr. Stefan Ganzle**, *Associate Professor, Department of Political Science and Management, University of Agder, Norway;*
3. **Prof. Geoffrey Swain**, *Honorary Professor, Emeritus, University of Glasgow, Professor of European History, University of the West of England (until 2006), United Kingdom;*
4. **Ms. Judita Akromienė**, *director of public organization "Eurohouse", Lithuania;*
5. **Ms. Julija Stanaitytė**, *student of Kaunas University of Technology study programme Human Resource Management, Lithuania.*

Evaluation coordinator – Ms. Dovilė Žeimienė

II. PROGRAMME ANALYSIS

2.1. Programme aims and learning outcomes

According to the SER (p.7), the Master programme in *Politics and Media* is designed “to prepare highly skilled experts with an advanced understanding of multiple interactions between media and politics”. Graduates should be able “to analyse the contemporary mass media and its role in the political process, to understand the relationship between power and the media, and to create, implement and evaluate different communication projects and civic campaigns” (ibid). The programme thus aims to provide students with the knowledge of the role of communications and the media in the contemporary political process. One of its objectives is to explain how the “mediation” of politics is increasingly becoming a major object of policy research, having an impact on the relations between political leaders and citizens, and how a government uses the media to promote and implement its decisions.

A conscious effort has been made to link the learning outcomes and competences of the study programme with the *Description of Study Cycles* (approved by the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania, 2011 November 21, No. V-2212) which include comprehensive theoretical knowledge of the discipline and ability to apply this knowledge (study outcomes No. 2.1 – 3.2), advanced research skills (study outcomes No. 2.1-3.2), ability to creatively solve specific practical issues (study outcome No. 2.2), social abilities (study outcomes No. 1.1-1.2), ability to work independently and take responsibility for ones actions (study outcome No. 1.1).

The learning outcomes were also developed in accordance with the *Descriptor of the Study Field of Political Science* approved by Order No V-828 of the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania (23rd of July 2015). The Descriptor specifies that upon completion of the second cycle studies of the study field of Political Science, among other skills, students should have a specific knowledge of the ongoing scientific discussion in the selected Political Science specialisation (study outcomes No. 3.2, 4.1,4.2,5.1), to be able to implement research projects of political phenomena, using methodological approaches and means available in the chosen field of specialisation (study outcomes No. 3.2,3.3,4.2); to communicate correctly in the official language and one of foreign languages in writing and orally both with experts in the field and persons who are not professional experts in that field (study outcome No. 2.3).

The programme aims and learning outcomes are well defined, clear and publicly accessible. The generic and subject-specific competences and learning outcomes are set out clearly in SER, Table 1, and this is broken down to course level in the Study Plan Matrix on pp. 13-14. Within the SER, then, every effort has been made to ensure that the programme's aims and learning outcomes are consciously developed throughout the programme. The SER (chapter 1.2.) outlines how the study programme is made available on the university and institute websites, as well as through recruitment initiatives. During the visit, no student raised the invisibility of the programme as an issue.

The programme aims and learning outcomes are based on the academic requirements, public needs and the needs of the labour market. As the SER makes clear, the programme has been developed to meet a perceived gap in academic provision. Although there are plenty of politics programmes and communications study programmes, this is the only programme in Lithuania that combines both fields of politics and the media in the context of a political science degree. At a time of widespread political manipulation of the media, there is a self-evident need for such explorations. As to the labour market, the lack of interest from social partners in the validation process must raise a certain level of concern.

The programme aims and learning outcomes are consistent with the type and level of studies and the level of qualifications offered. The programme offers a combination of courses which are all of Master level in terms of the reading and participation expected, and in the way that they provide prerequisites for the final master's thesis. It is clear from the CVs produced in the SER that tutors are teaching according to their research expertise. The list of dissertations written, and the final dissertations themselves and the marks and comments awarded show clearly that students are expected to work at masters quality and are penalised by lower grades when they do not do so.

There is an important issue with the compatibility of the programme on offer and its content and learning outcomes. The SER states clearly that the aim of the programme, when providing students with knowledge about the role of communications and the media in the contemporary political process, is to explain the interaction (Review Team emphasis) between the media and politics and the "mediation" of politics. However, when the generic and subject specific competences and learning outcomes are considered, politics and the media are rigidly divided into separate boxes. So, in SER (p.8, table 1) the general competence No.4 "The ability to understand and analyse the relation between power, politics and different types of media" is followed by five separate learning outcomes – power analysis, theories of media analysis, political change, visuality and historical memory – without offering any way for melding these together so that the "mediation of politics" is understood. With the exception of the course "Power and Communication" it is not clear how, through the learning process, students will pull together what they have learnt about the interaction of politics and the media. What emerges is a two-discipline course, rather than an interdisciplinary one. During the site visit, teachers

commented that they are “agonised over the meaning of inter-disciplinarity” and worried that they only offered “a constellation of isolated courses”. This is, in fact, what they offer.

2.2. Curriculum design

The study programme design meets the legal requirements in terms of volume of the programme (90 ECTS) credits, allocated to the MA thesis and focus on the study field. The PM/SP has 40 ECTS assigned to the core subjects of the study field, and 20 credits – to electives. Credits, allocated to the preparation (MA seminars 10 ECTS) and writing the MA thesis (20 ECTS) are the minimum level of national standard (no less than 30 ECTS). All 6 core subject courses are within the field of Political Science or Media and Communication, which is in concordance with the programme aims and meets the national requirement (no less than 60 ECTS) if 20 ECTS allocated to electives is also taken into account.

The share of individual work significantly exceeds the legal standard (no less than 30%). According to the SER (p.12, table 2) in PM/SP the individual work composes for compulsory courses 78% at average. This kind of curriculum design presumes that: a) students are well familiarized with self-guided leaning and possess relevant skills from the very beginning of their studies; b) teaching staff is well skilled in guiding extensive amount of individual work. During the site visit the Review Team saw that some students do not feel confident in having such high amount of individual reading. Based on this observation the RT advises to monitor closely how students are coping with individual workload.

Study subjects and/or modules are spread evenly across the three semesters, the last semester is devoted to MA thesis preparation and writing. The workload is equally 30 credits per semester allowing studying full time. The content of compulsory subjects is not repetitive and covers main themes in politics, media and communication.

The previous two track design has been transformed into single track in 2016, which can be seen as a positive development facilitating academic progress and securing (fiscal) sustainability of the programme. Currently two different versions of the study plan are in effect and therefore 1st and 2nd year students have different arrangements. Second year students still have two modules – Module of Political Communication and Module of Power and Media, most of the subjects are allocated within the modules. Due to the low number of students and administrative complexity the modular structure has been abolished in recent SP reform and all students admitted in 2016 to have the same list of compulsory subjects and institute-wide list of electives. The ratio of compulsory and elective subjects is now better balanced across the semesters. Also, the choice of electives is wider. Students met by the reviewers expressed their support to the new programme design that gives them more freedom in shaping their individual profile.

The content of the subjects is adequate to the second cycle programmes; there are no introductory or very basic courses. Course titles, content descriptions and learning outcomes indicate analytical and problem-driven approach required for the second cycle study programmes. MA seminars (10 credits in total, 5 credits in 2nd and 3rd semesters) serve as a good arena to develop analytical skills and prepare for successful thesis writing. In order to achieve these goals students' work in Master's seminars comprises of individual research work; work with a tutor as well as in the group of students and lecturers. Members of the student panel appreciated the difference between the masters and bachelors level of work, welcoming in particular the emphasis on creativity, respect to different opinions, and argumentation.

The content and methods of compulsory and elective courses provide opportunities to achieve intended learning outcomes. Besides lectures, oriented mainly towards theoretical knowledge, strong emphasis is put on seminars and individual work. As evidenced by the SER, course descriptions and interviews, the dominant learning tool is textual analysis and critical thinking. Interviews with alumni and social partners made clear that these learning tools have been efficiently applied, since critical thinking, especially in the area of visual imagery; understanding of political campaigns and ability to think creatively have been mentioned as the assets gained from the PM/SP.

The SER (p. 16) stresses the importance of developing skills for conducting independent research, as well as theoretical and methodological tools to analyze interconnections between politics and media. Yet, the documents reveal that in result of the 2016 curriculum reform the course *Communication Theories and Research Methods* has been excluded from the SP. The only course aimed at developing research skills is an option *Introduction to Political Science Research*. As the reviewers learned during the interviews, the function of this course is mainly to level up those students who do not have BA in political science. This is certainly a necessary and helpful approach. Beyond that the Review Team found lack of conceptual and adequate understanding on methodology and research methods in the PM/SP. This impression has been supported by the interviews. Students have the feeling that teaching staff wrongly assumes everyone possessing good research skills and therefore the courses provided (for example on electoral statistics) turned to be too sophisticated for students. Furthermore, the awareness of 2nd year students on methodological choices and tools appropriate for their MA theses is uncertain and fragile, especially for performing empirical analyses. The deficit of applied research skills has been raised also by alumni and employers. Employers stressed that research and data handling skills are absolutely necessary to work in contemporary media market. “Not a mad man, but a math man is today needed”, one of them phrased the issue. Based on all the facts and observations the Review Team is deeply concerned about opportunities to achieve skills’- related learning outcomes. The RT strongly recommends rethinking the status of research methods subjects in the academic programme and to include a core course on research methodology and methods.

The second area of concern, which partly overlaps with the aforementioned one, is the balance between theoretical and practical subjects in the programme. Currently the SP is inclined towards theoretical and philosophical approach that is reflected in the wording of course titles (*Critical History and Theory, Contemporary Conception*). The academic staff and employers recognized the importance of theoretical knowledge but emphasized the need to have more applied learning in order to better meet the labour market needs. The Review Panel finds these concerns well justified and recommends ensuring that opportunities to gain practical analytical skills are properly met in the PM/SP.

The scope of the programme is sufficient to ensure learning outcomes. The programme provides opportunities to gain good knowledge on politics, power and communication in modern societies. Moreover, generic skills are developed within various subject specific subjects. 90 ECTS do not provide a lot of room, therefore selection of optional courses should be carefully and personally guided.

The content of the programme reflects the latest achievements in political science and communication studies. The core courses have a good selection of up to date sources, both monographs and peer reviewed journal articles. Most courses have excellent sample of key classical texts.

2.3. Teaching staff

The study programme is provided by the staff meeting legal requirements in terms of the percent of lecturers with a doctoral degree (80%). In two criteria the national requirements are exceeded. This holds on congruence of teaching and research profiles (87% against 60%) and the share of experts with practical work experience (13%, against 40% as upper limit allowed). The share of subjects' volume taught by professors is somewhat lower the national standard (18% against 20%).

The qualifications of the teaching staff are adequate to ensure learning outcomes. Teaching staff is delivering lectures and seminars in the area that corresponds to their qualification and research area. Majority of them are active in doing research projects and publishing research results what ensures their competence in supervising students' research work. The Review Team points out that interaction of politics and media is not listed among the main research areas of the Institute (SER, p. 6). It is advised to consider linking teaching activities related to this particular SP into research strategy of the IIRPS.

The number of the teaching staff is large enough to ensure learning outcomes. PM/SP is implemented by 15 academic staff members, including 2 full professors, 6 associate professors, 4 lecturers with PhD degree and 2 assistants. This allows individual approach to students and efficient supervision of seminars, course works and final theses. The proportion of students to teaching staff is very low (between 4 and 7 to one) the ratio is somewhat higher if other IIRPS MA programmes are also taken into account. In two years out of four in 2012-2015 the number of staff exceeds the number of admitted students (SER, p. 26, table 14). Such ratio has certainly several advantages, but bears also the risk of staff cuts due to low number of students. Thus, some strategic plans are needed to increase the number of students and to widen the international study options.

The teaching staff turnover enables to ensure an adequate provision of the programme. The turnover has been minimal, and for senior staff it is nil. Beyond that, some positive tendencies reveal themselves – two staff members upgraded their qualifications, and a practitioner joined the programme. The age distribution of staff is favourable, majority of lecturer being in the age group 35-44.

The VU and IIRPS create adequate conditions for the professional development of the teaching staff. Standard requirements for academic positions are firmly kept, but personal preferences and carrier plans are also taken into account. Every staff member can annually negotiate his/her work plan and chose to orient himself/herself whether more towards research or towards teaching. Such a personal approach has been highly appreciated by the academic staff.

Since 2004 IIRPS applies the System of Motivation Promotion, which is intended to encourage teachers to increase their qualification. Each high rank scientific publication results in financial premium for the employee. Staff members, met by the panel were well aware of the system and found it being transparent, fair and efficient.

To enhance teaching skills of the academic staff, the IIRPS organises methodical and didactical seminars (Moodle, problem based learning, adaptive leadership, agent based modelling), around 20 invited lectures from abroad are annually giving lectures and seminars related with media, political and strategic communication. As SER (p.22) describes, previously the professional development depended to a significant extent on individual initiative, but since 2016 IIRP organises regular training seminars (two to four times during the semester) for the employees. This is clearly a positive development.

As the SER (p. 24) reveals, the academic staff of PM/SP shows outstanding results in academic mobility. During the period 2013-2015 overall nine lecturers of the programme (out of 15) have participated in different conferences, seminars and projects abroad. There is no tradition of a regular sabbatical at the Institute, but both administration and staff members appreciated the current tailor made approach (for example, it is possible to postpone the provision of an elective course in sake of academic mobility). No complains on limitations or restrictions of academic mobility or conference participation have been heard during the site visit.

The teaching staff of the programme is widely involved in research directly related to the study programme being reviewed. According to SER, table 10, during the period 2012-2015 the academic staff of *Politics and Media* programme published 14 books and 60 different articles and book chapters. This is quite substantial number, though – to estimate the quality (share indexed journals, share of international peer-reviewed articles, level of citations in Google scholar, etc.) is not fully feasible based on information available. CVs reveal that most staff members (except I. Lavrinec) publish almost exclusively in Lithuanian academic journals and edited volumes. Increasing the volume of international high level academic publications is clearly an area for improvement. Academic staff voiced remarkable enthusiasm in publication activities but pointed also that research driven by short-term projects is not favorable for producing high level research papers. The Review Team encourages the IIRPS and VU to continue and intensify administrative support and all incentives already established to enhance research output of staff.

6 national and 2 international R&D projects have been implemented by the SP academic staff in 2012-15. Topics of international projects are more closely related to the EU and area studies than to the politics and media. Thus, the Review Team advises putting more efforts in applying for international and EU research grants explicitly linked to the field of this particular SP.

2.4. Facilities and Learning Resources

All of the lectures and workshops of the programme are arranged in the premises of the Institute. The premises and facilities for studies have been recently renovated and have basic equipment, i.e. the computer and multimedia projector. There are different types of rooms, both auditoriums and classrooms, available for the programme students since the classes take place in the evenings. Considering that the student groups are small (13 to 17), the size of rooms seems adequate. As pointed out in SER, until now the issue of shortage of seminar and group work classrooms is addressed efficiently by the administration approaching lecturers individually. The IIRPS administration pointed out that the availability of classes in general might become more problematic because of the need to prolong classes for BA students due to increased admission. Based on the situation, the Review Team advises to develop in time a plan how to address the issue of space availability.

The library is located in the premises of the Institute. It is rather small and closes at 6 pm. However, there are a few other spaces available for students' individual and group work, in particular two computer rooms with 50 computers open throughout the day and the winter garden. There are also other learning spaces provided by Vilnius University for its academic community, namely the Vilnius University library, located within walking distance from the Institute premises, that is open till 9 pm and the National Open Access Centre of Academic Communication and Information (Vilnius University), open 24 hours a day.

Apart from teaching and learning materials accessible to the students from the Institute library, they have also access to the materials of the Library of the Lithuanian Open Society Fund (which boasts the richest social sciences library in the region and contains 40 000 publications in

English, Lithuanian, French, German and Russian languages) and Vilnius University Library (which subscribes major international digital academic databases such as JSTOR, Sage, Willey Online Library). Besides books and journals, films and videos are also purchased. The teachers confirmed that the yearly budget allocated to update the materials (appr. 400 to 530 EUR) satisfies their needs (materials are updated twice a year). Additionally, literature resources are acquired from ongoing research projects. Usually, the reading materials are provided to students electronically by lecturers via email. Although the academic personnel is encouraged to use Moodle (last spring training was organized for them), it is not widely used yet.

As pointed out in the self-evaluation report, the absence of wireless internet in the premises of the Institute (Eduroam is accessible only in the library) is a drawback. It is recommended to address this issue at an earliest convenience and secure necessary funding from the central office of Vilnius University.

The programme does not include a professional internship into the official student's workload, apparently because of the two reasons: most of the students being employed and a short duration of the programme. Only one programme student used the opportunity to conduct an internship under Erasmus+ during the reported period. Although SER states that the programme students are offered different opportunities to develop their practical skills and to get involved into research, they did not effectively participate in any research activities. Students noted that they have heard about teachers' research from the media and during lectures.

Students and alumni, met by the Review Team noted that the internationalisation of the SP should be given more attention by, for example, bringing more guest lecturers, more actively promoting student exchange programmes). Also, it is strongly advised to expand and diversify the network of partner institutions, both national and international. The expansion of partnership network will speed up attractive carrier paths of graduates, especially in perspective of growing international competition at the high end jobs.

2.5. Study process and students' performance assessment

Admission requirements for the candidates are well – founded and publicly available on IIRPS webpage and in the *Rules of Admission to the Second Cycle Study Programmes of Vilnius University*. The admission grade depends on the exam (50%) and average of grades from diploma supplement (50%). This admission formula is new, aiming to give an opportunity for students from different study fields to join the programme. This aim has been clearly achieved since the PM/SP has a student body with truly mixed backgrounds. Second purpose to amend the admission regulation is according to SER (p.29) effective selection for the most motivated students who are well prepared and for this programme. Based on the interviews and students dropout statistics in SER, the Review Team is not convinced that this aim has been achieved. The dropout at this SP is high and interviewed students did not demonstrate clear understanding what they are willing to achieve by master studies.

The organisation of the study process needs to be improved in order to ensure an adequate provision of the programme and the achievement of the learning outcomes. All main study information, such as timetables, contact hours and course descriptions are provided by the study programme administrator, and is publicly available on IIRS website. After the curriculum reform, the amended list of electives was provided for students in order to allow timely planning. However, as it became evident during interviews, first year students were confused because of lack of academic guidance on selection process. Professors are available for consultation during their office hours and by e-mail. Provision of study materials, at the same time, is quite confusing. Students were not sure where the materials are located (“somewhere in Google”), or how to find the assigned reading if just the title of an article is given by the teacher. The Review

Team strongly recommends ensuring adequate access of students to the study materials, for example via Moodle as a single learning platform for all courses.

Regarding the achievement of learning outcomes and added value of studying at PM/SP the Review Team got mixed statements. Some interviewees were positive, pointing out that they have learned critical thinking and creativity, whereas others could not name any additional skills or knowledge useful in their professional work. Students and alumni could hardly identify the political part of the SP whereas majority of them reflected on media and communication aspects. The Review Team sees the low added value as explicitly associated with the weak conceptualisation of the entire PM/SP, highlighted in the chapter 2.1. of current report. In addition to streamlining the concept of the programme, providing clear information about the learning outcomes and potential professional paths will be an improvement.

SER (p.35) highlights that IIRPS aims to encourage student participation in research and academic staff introduces these opportunities to students. Academic staff introduces their research topics and encourage students to publish their articles. Students confirmed this information, but added that in reality none of them is participating actively in these activities because of full time jobs or other interests. The Students' Research Association is not known among the PM/SP students. Further area of concern is the uneven quality of master theses. Observation revealed that dissertations have no common structure, methodological justification of the work is often absent and references include mainly Lithuanian sources. The Review Team strongly urges to pay more effort in establishing and following a rigorous standard for students' research work that is a necessary prerequisite for their future engagement into research.

Students have multiple opportunities to use mobility programs for one semester or one academic year for studies or internship abroad. VU has Erasmus co-operation with large number of universities in different countries. Yet, the interviews supported the information provided in SER that only very few students have participated in ERASMUS+ studies (p.37). The reasons of non-participation are related to work and family obligations of the students; short duration (1,5 years) of the study programme complicates the situation even more.

An adequate academic and social support is ensured by the University staff. Teaching staff are available for consultation; their schedules are clear and could be easily found on the website. Students have a chance to get all relevant information from administrator of the study programme or head of the study programme committee. The main form of social support is financial allocations. Students are able to get scholarships from the university and state.

The assessment system of students' performance is adequate and publicly available. Assessment criteria are presented by lecturers during the first class and also stated in the course descriptions, which are publicly available on IIRS webpage. Unfortunately, students do not know where they can find this information. Another confusion became evident regarding the seminar based assessment system, which students did not fully comprehend.

Professional activities of the majority of graduates are quite adequate for the programme providers' expectations. According to the data of a survey, made by IIRPS and Alumni association, working places of graduates vary. Some graduates are working in international organisations, half of them in national level organisations, some in private sector. Most common career trends are related with communication and media, although interviewed students could not identify any other career path except the copywriter and journalist. It shows that students have quite vague understanding of career opportunities that the PM/SP can provide. The Review Team advises SC committee involving social partners more actively in the study process, as they could help students to understand the needs and opportunities of contemporary labour market.

2.6. Programme management

The responsibilities for decisions and monitoring of the implementation of the Politics and Media (PM) programme are clearly allocated. The bodies governing the study programme management are in place and operate in line with the VU mission statement and other university documents dealing with issues of quality insurance, such as *the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* and the *Vilnius University Quality Manual*. These documents are publicly available at <http://www.kvc.cr.vu.lt/site/?q=node/90>.

According to the SER, Vilnius University (VU) is active in the professional development of its academic staff. Despite the efforts in ensuring the professional development of its academic staff, however, discussions with faculty have revealed that faculty development courses are only offered on an *ad-hoc* basis and lack an overall strategic and long-term perspective.

The Study Programme Committee (SPC) and the Faculty Council (FC) are responsible for the management of the study programme. The SPC is the key body at the institute-level and is accountable to the FC. The SPC brings together representatives from academic staff, students and social partners. In its work, the SPC can rely on a highly efficient study department. According to SPC members, the meetings are held regularly complemented by “ad-hoc arrangements”. The review of minutes of the SPC made evident that although the meetings are held and important issues discussed, decisions are not made. The Review Team is concerned that no action was taken on such key issues mentioned in the minutes as vague motivation of candidates, admission arrangements non adequate for selecting best candidates, high dropout and MA theses’ topics not explicitly linked to the field of Politics and Media.

The information and data on the implementation of the programme are regularly collected and analysed both centrally by the Administration of Studies as well as by individual study programmes. The administration relies on the VU information system of studies which also collects information about the implementation of the study programme. Two feedback systems are in place: one managed by the VU, and another, by the IIRPS.

The outcomes of internal and external evaluation of the programme are used for the improvement of the programme. Stakeholders, such as social partners, students and alumni, reported satisfaction with the 2016/17 curriculum reforms allowing students to opt from an institute-wide pool of electives. Students have perceived this change as a consequence of their input and feedback. Despite the perceived lack of method-based training as confirmed not only by the SER but also in discussions with staff during the evaluation on the site, no specialized course(s) in methods was introduced during the most curriculum revisions. Instead it is expected that methodological training may be ensured by special assignments of certain study subjects.

The evaluation and improvement processes involve various stakeholders, including, in particular, social partners. At VU, social partners are members of the board of trustees and are involved in the Study Programme Committee and the Commission of Final Thesis Defence. Social partners have expressed satisfaction with taking part in these activities. In addition, many social partners, in particular those active in communication and public relations, often serve as employers of both currently involved MA students as well as future graduates. Social partners expressed a strong request to strengthen the methods’ and skills’ training as part of the MP/SP.

Overall, the internal quality assurance measures are effective and efficient. The SPC and the Administration work continuously on improving the measurement instrument and on encouraging students’ participation in surveys. The study programme has already started to address the low response rate among students by distributing and collecting questionnaires

during a class toward the end of a semester. By this change it is emphasised that regular feedback is an integral element of quality management in the study programme.

Although the PM study programme is formally well managed, it has not been able to address in a sufficient way the flaws resulting from the unspecified learning objectives and curricular deficiencies – in particular the lack of methodological training including those approaches close to the Politics and Media, such as discourse analysis or survey techniques.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Review Team recommends to work towards true integration of Politics and Media in the curriculum in order to achieve SP aims as declared.
2. The Review Team strongly urges rethinking the status and logic of subjects on research methods in the academic programme. The advice is to have a compulsory subject on research methodology and methods adequate to the programme students in terms of difficulty level and field-specific tools (survey techniques, data analysis, and discourse analysis).
3. The balance between theoretical and practical knowledge and training needs to be considered. The Review Team supports alumni and social partners' statements on increasing opportunities to learn applied skills needed at the labour market.
4. The management and academic staff has to put more efforts in making students aware of existing channels and locations of the study information. Wider use of Moodle as a single entry platform to the study materials is recommended.
5. The Review Team suggests bearing in mind the specificity of PM/SP (shorter duration, highly mixed studentship) when providing professional training to the staff. The recommendation is to have staff training on diversity management and more students' guidance in selecting options and writing the final thesis.
6. The Review Team urges paying close attention to the low level of international publications of the academic staff. The IIRPS and VU must ensure that all necessary support structures, incentive mechanisms and proper work and carrier arrangements are in place in order to boost research activities.
7. The Review Team advises to ensure that regular meetings of the SPC guided by the strategic and long term goals become the backbone of study programme management. The decision making capacity of the SPC needs to be enhanced.
8. The Institute is recommended to streamline the student evaluation system and work towards making the evaluation process a truly interactive and ongoing communication between the lecturers and students as part of the programme's quality assurance.

IV. SUMMARY

The Institute of International Relations and Political Science (IIRPS) is responsible for six MA-level study programmes covering areas of Contemporary Politics, Eastern European and Russian Studies, International Relations and Diplomacy, Public Policy Analysis, European Studies and Politics and Media. The SP *Politics and Media* (PM/SP) has been one out of five under review.

PM/SP has been implemented since 2012 being among the youngest academic programmes in the IIRPS. It benefits from the favourable environment and capacity of the IIRPS, such as highly qualified staff, good literature resources and well established study guidelines. Beginning from the academic year 2016/17, several important changes of the study programme have been implemented, including merging electives of all IIRPS second cycle study programmes into one pool. MA students are thus granted greater flexibility in the sharpening their individual study

profile or, alternatively in broadening their disciplinary perspective. So far, the reform enjoys strong support by all parties involved – students, teachers, alumni and employers. However, the effects of the reform need to be closely monitored and evaluated over the next few years.

The key objective of the PM programme is “to prepare highly skilled experts with an advanced understanding of multiple interactions between media and politics”, able “to analyse contemporary mass media and its role in the political process, to understand relations between power and media, and to create, implement and evaluate different communication projects and civic campaigns” (SER, p.6). The core and option structure of the SP is formed so as to develop that knowledge and the competences relevant to the fields of politics and media.

The programme aims and learning outcomes are well defined and publicly accessible; they are based on the academic and professional requirements and public needs. The Review Team endorses architecture of the curriculum and selection of the subject topics, which cover important aspects of the field in politics and media. The compatibility of the programme on offer and its content and learning outcomes is problematic. When the generic and subject specific competences and learning outcomes are considered, politics and the media are rigidly divided into separate boxes and it is not clear how, through the learning process, students will develop understanding of interaction between the politics and the media. The programme is a two-discipline course, rather than an interdisciplinary one.

The content of the subjects is adequate to the second cycle programmes; there are no introductory or very basic courses. Course titles, content descriptions and learning outcomes indicate analytical and problem-driven approach required for the second cycle study programmes. A real concern for the Review Team is the absence of the research methods’ subjects in the programme, as well as lack of conceptual understanding what the role and place of research methods in the PM/SP must be. Students were ill prepared to the statistical tasks and more broadly, to the final thesis; alumni and employers similarly voiced concern that graduates might be confronted with a lack of methodological, analytical and data handling skills when starting their employment. The RT strongly recommends rethinking the status of research methods’ subjects in the academic programme and to include a core course on research methodology and methods. The balance between theoretical and practical subjects in the programme begs also attention. Currently the SP is inclined towards theoretical and philosophical approach, which without any doubt is important. Yet, in order to better meet the labour market challenges, the Review Panel recommends ensuring that opportunities to gain practical analytic skills are properly met in the PM/SP.

A minor concern of the review panel is the arrangements for students that come from other departments or disciplines. Supplementary studies are based on individual and *ad hoc* counselling, which may be non sufficient to level up less advanced students. The review panel believes that for these students it might be hard to cope with heavy load of individual work. The high dropout rates confirm this presumption. Based on these observations, the Review Team advises to keep close eye on the counselling system and practices in order to provide timely and adequate assistance for those in need.

The qualifications of the teaching staff are adequate to ensure learning outcomes. Most staff members are actively involved in research projects and publishing. National publications heavily dominate over international ones. The Review Team advises the management to continue developing incentives aimed at increase of high level international publications, set up by the System of Motivation Promotion in early 2016. Besides these incentive structures, it is recommended to pay more attention to the comprehensive and long term outlook of academic

staff development including regular professional training in academic writing, publication skills and English language.

Classrooms, computer facilities, software and media equipment of IIRPS are sufficient both in their size and quality. The library is not large, but handy. Moreover - electronic scientific databases are widely accessible and regularly used in the study process. Absence of the Wi-Fi in the Institute's building may pose some limitations to the internet based learning. The Review Team is somewhat concerned about little awareness of PM/SP students regarding access to the study resources as well as very modest use of web-based learning platforms (such as Moodle). Infrastructure for group work is somewhat limited. It is necessary to extend the number of small classrooms, computer labs and team-work spaces. The review panel advises the management to invest in facilities and digital learning resources, in particular infrastructure for group work and one-stop-shop learning platforms.

The admission requirements are well-specified and publicly available. However, high dropout rates and modest enthusiasm regarding professional career among students raise the question whether the current admission principles are adequate enough for selecting motivated and work-oriented candidates.

The university has implemented quality assurance procedures, including student feedback through regular surveys. The general assessment system of students' performance is clear, adequate and publicly available. Regarding the assessment of seminar sessions there are discrepancies across the subjects in terms of balance between the assignments and rewards. The assessment of seminars was felt by students as not always fair and understandable. Based on these observations the Review Team advises to professionalise the assessment procedures including some formal rules about allocating hours and rewards for typical work tasks.

The willingness of social partners to contribute to the programme is impressive. They are involved in programme development, final theses defence, and in teaching. In order to successfully meet future challenges (such as the increasing competition at the labour market) the review panel recommends the IIRPS to be responsive to suggestions and observations of social partners.

V. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

The study programme *Politics and Media* (state code – 621L20010) at Vilnius University is given **positive** evaluation.

Study programme assessment in points by evaluation areas.

No.	Evaluation Area	Evaluation of an area in points*
1.	Programme aims and learning outcomes	2
2.	Curriculum design	2
3.	Teaching staff	3
4.	Facilities and learning resources	3
5.	Study process and students' performance assessment	2
6.	Programme management	2
	Total:	14

*1 (unsatisfactory) - there are essential shortcomings that must be eliminated;

2 (satisfactory) - meets the established minimum requirements, needs improvement;

3 (good) - the field develops systematically, has distinctive features;

4 (very good) - the field is exceptionally good.

Grupės vadovas: Team leader:	Prof. Anu Toots
Grupės nariai: Team members:	Dr. Stefan Ganzle
	Prof. Geoffrey Swain
	Ms. Judita Akromienė
	Ms. Julija Stanaitytė

**VILNIAUS UNIVERSITETO ANTROSIOS PAKOPOS STUDIJŲ PROGRAMOS
POLITIKA IR MEDIJOS (VALSTYBINIS KODAS – 621L20010) 2016-11-10
EKSPERTINIO VERTINIMO IŠVADŲ NR. SV4-222 IŠRAŠAS**

<...>

V. APIBENDRINAMASIS ĮVERTINIMAS

Vilniaus universiteto studijų programa *Politika ir medijos* (valstybinis kodas – 621L20010) vertinama **teigiamai**.

Eil. Nr.	Vertinimo sritis	Srities įvertinimas, balais*
1.	Programos tikslai ir numatomi studijų rezultatai	2
2.	Programos sandara	2
3.	Personalas	3
4.	Materialieji ištekliai	3
5.	Studijų eiga ir jos vertinimas	2
6.	Programos vadyba	2
	Iš viso:	14

* 1 – Nepatenkinamai (yra esminių trūkumų, kuriuos būtina pašalinti)

2 – Patenkinamai (tenkina minimalius reikalavimus, reikia tobulinti)

3 – Gerai (sistemiškai plėtojama sritis, turi savitų bruožų)

4 – Labai gerai (sritis yra išskirtinė)

<...>

IV. SANTRAUKA

Tarptautinių santykių ir politikos mokslų institutas yra atsakingas už šešias magistrantūros studijų programas, apimančias šias sritis: *šiuolaikinės politikos studijos, rytų Europos ir Rusijos studijos, tarptautiniai santykiai ir diplomatija, viešosios politikos analizė, Europos studijos ir politika ir medijos*. Studijų programa *Politika ir medijos* yra viena iš penkių programų, kurios buvo vertinamos.

Studijų programa *Politika ir medijos* įgyvendinama nuo 2012 m. ir yra tarp naujausių *TSPMI* akademinų programų. Ji turi privilegiją būti dėstoma palankioje *TSPMI* aplinkoje ir naudotis jos pajėgumais. Tai aukštos kvalifikacijos darbuotojai, geri literatūros ištekliai, tvirtos studijų gairės ir standartai ir į sunkų darbą (pastangas) orientuota studijų kultūra. Pradedant 2016–2017 akademiais metais, atlikti keli svarbūs šios studijų programos pakeitimai, įskaitant tai, kad visų Instituto magistrantūros studijų programų pasirenkamieji dalykai sujungti į vieną bloką. Taigi magistrantūros studentams suteikiama daugiau lankstumo stiprinant individualų studijų profilį arba, kitaip tariant, išplečiant disciplinų prizmę. Šią reformą iki šiol tvirtai palaiko visos dalyvaujančios šalys – studentai, dėstytojai, absolventai ir darbdaviai. Tačiau akivaizdu, kad dar kelis metus reikia atidžiai stebėti ir vertinti jos poveikį.

Pagrindinis studijų programos *Politika ir medijos* tikslas – „parengti aukštos kvalifikacijos, pažangiai mąstančius specialistus, suprantančius daugialypes medijų ir politikos sąsajas“, gebančius „analizuoti šiuolaikinę žiniasklaidą ir jos vaidmenį politiniame procese, suvokti

valdžios (galios) ir medijų santykį ir kurti, įgyvendinti bei vertinti įvairius ryšių projektus ir pilietines kampanijas“ (savianalizės suvestinė, p. 6). Pagrindinių ir pasirenkamųjų dalykų visuma suformuota taip, kad studentai įgytų politikos ir medijų srities žinių bei gebėjimų.

Programos tikslai ir numatomi studijų rezultatai yra apibrėžti ir viešai skelbiami; jie pagrįsti akademiniais ir profesiniais reikalavimais ir visuomenės poreikiais. Ekspertų grupė pritaria programos sandarai ir parinktiems studijų dalykams, kurie apima svarbius politikos ir medijų srities aspektus. Siūlomos programos, jos turinio ir numatomų studijų rezultatų darna abejotina. Kai svarstomos bendrosios ir dalykinės kompetencijos ir numatomi studijų rezultatai, politika ir medijos griežtai atskiriamos, ir neaišku, kaip studentai mokymosi procese įgys supratimą apie politikos ir medijų sąveiką. Ši programa greičiau yra dviejų disciplinų nei tarpdisciplininis kursas.

Studijų dalykų turinys atitinka antrosios pakopos (magistrantūros) programoms keliamus reikalavimus; nėra įvadinių ar pačių pagrindinių dalykų. Dalykų pavadinimai, turinio aprašai ir numatomi studijų rezultatai rodo, kad magistrantūros studijų programoms reikia taikyti analitinį ir į problemas orientuotą metodą. Ekspertų grupė labai susirūpinusi, kad į šią programą neįtraukti studijų dalykai apie mokslinių tyrimų metodus, be to, trūksta conceptualaus suvokimo, koks turėtų būti mokslinių tyrimų metodų vaidmuo ir vieta studijų programoje *Politika ir medijos*. Studentai buvo blogai pasiruošę statistikos užduotims ir, platesne prasme, baigiamiesiems darbams; alumnai ir darbdaviai taip pat išreiškė susirūpinimą, kad pradedant dirbti, absolventams gali pritrūkti metodologinių ir analitinių įgūdžių ir gebėjimo tvarkyti duomenis. Ekspertų grupė primygtinai rekomenduoja persvarstyti dalykų apie mokslinių tyrimų metodus statusą šioje programoje ir į ją įtraukti pagrindinį kursą apie mokslinių tyrimų metodologiją ir metodus. Dėmesio reikalauja teorinių ir praktinių dalykų pusiausvyros šioje programoje klausimas. Dabar šios studijų programos kryptis yra labiau teorinė ir filosofinė, ir tai neabejotinai svarbu. Vis dėlto, kad būtų lengviau susidoroti su darbo rinkos keliamais uždaviniais, ekspertų grupė rekomenduoja tinkamai užtikrinti galimybę įgyti praktinių analitinių gebėjimų studijuojant šią programą.

Nedidelį rūpestį ekspertų grupei kelia studentams taikoma tvarka, atėjusi iš kitų katedrų arba susijusi su kitomis disciplinomis. Papildomos studijos yra grindžiamos individualiu arba *ad hoc* konsultavimu, kurio gali nepakakti mažiau pažengusių studentų lygiui pakelti. Ekspertų grupė mano, kad šiems studentams gali būti sunku susidoroti su dideliu individualaus darbo krūviu. Didelis studentų nubyrėjimas patvirtina šią prielaidą. Remdamasi šiais pastebėjimais, ekspertų grupė rekomenduoja labai atidžiai stebėti konsultavimo sistemą ir tai, kaip ji įgyvendinama, kad galėtų laiku suteikti tinkamą pagalbą tiems, kuriems jos reikia.

Dėstytojų kvalifikacija yra tinkama numatomiems studijų rezultatams pasiekti. Daugelis dėstytojų aktyviai įsitraukę į mokslinių tyrimų projektus ir publikavimo veiklą. Nacionalinių publikacijų yra daug daugiau nei tarptautinių. Remdamasi šiais pastebėjimais, ekspertų grupė rekomenduoja vadovybei toliau plėtoti 2016 m. pradžioje pagal motyvacijos skatinimo sistemą numatytas priemones, kuriomis siekiama padidinti aukšto lygio tarptautinių publikacijų skaičių. Be šių priemonių, rekomenduojama daugiau dėmesio skirti visapusiško ir ilgalaikio dėstytojų tobulinimo (įskaitant profesinį akademinį rašymą, anglų kalbos mokymą ir publikavimo įgūdžių ugdymą) perspektyvą.

TSPMI auditorijos, kompiuterinė technika, programinė įranga ir medijų įranga yra tinkama ir pakankama. Biblioteka nėra didelė, bet patogi. Be to, plačiai prieinamos elektroninės mokslinės bazės, kuriomis nuolat naudojamosi studijų procese. Tai, kad Instituto pastate nėra belaidžio interneto (*Wi-Fi*), gali kažkiek trukdyti mokymuisi naudojantis internetu. Ekspertų grupė yra šiek tiek susirūpinusi dėl to, kad studijų programos *Politika ir medijos* studentai mažai žino apie

studijų išteklių prieigą, be to, labai nedaug naudojasi internetinėmis mokymosi platformomis (pvz., *Moodle*). Grupiniam darbui skirtos infrastruktūros mažoka. Būtina didinti mažų klasių, kompiuterių laboratorijų skaičių ir grupiniam darbui skirtą plotą. Ekspertų grupė rekomenduoja vadovybei investuoti į priemones (įrangą) ir skaitmeninius mokymosi išteklius, ypač į grupiniam darbui skirtą infrastruktūrą ir vieno langelio principu veikiančias mokymosi platformas.

Priėmimo reikalavimai yra aiškūs ir viešai skelbiami. Tačiau kai nubyrėjimas didelis, o studentų entuziazmas, susijęs su profesine karjera, nedidelis, kyla klausimas, ar šiuo metu taikomos priėmimo taisyklės užtikrina galimybę atrinkti motyvuotus ir į darbą orientuotus kandidatus.

Universitetas įdiegė kokybės užtikrinimo procedūras, įskaitant studentų grįžtamąjį ryšį nuolat organizuojant apklausas. Bendroji studijų rezultatų vertinimo sistema yra aiški, tinkama ir viešai skelbiama. Kalbant apie seminarų vertinimą, pastebima, kad tarp atskirų dalykų nėra bendros sistemos skiriant užduotis ir jas vertinant. Studentai mano, kad ne visų dalykų seminarų įvertinamai yra teisingi ir suprantami. Remdamasi šiais pastebėjimais, ekspertų grupė rekomenduoja profesionaliai parengti vertinimo procedūras, nustatant kai kurias formalias taisykles dėl užduočių valandų paskirstymo ir užduočių vertinimo.

Socialinių partnerių noras prisidėti prie šios programos daro įspūdį. Socialiniai partneriai dalyvauja programos tobulinimo, baigiamųjų darbų gynimo ir mokymo procese. Kad Institutas galėtų sėkmingai priimti būsimus iššūkius (pvz., didėjančią konkurenciją aukštojo mokslo srityje ir darbo rinkoje), ekspertų grupė rekomenduoja jam reaguoti į socialinių partnerių pasiūlymus bei pastabas.

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III. REKOMENDACIJOS

1. Ekspertų grupė rekomenduoja stengtis, kad politika ir medijos tikrai būtų įtrauktos į studijų programą *Politika ir medijos*, kad būtų pasiekti deklaruojami šios programos tikslai.
2. Ekspertų grupė primygtinai ragina persvarstyti šios studijų programos dalykų apie mokslinių tyrimų metodiką ir metodus statusą bei nuoseklumą. Patariama, kad dalykas apie mokslinių tyrimų metodiką ir metodus būtų privalomasis, atitinkantis šios programos studentų lygį, turint omenyje sunkumą ir su šia studijų kryptimi susijusias priemones (tyrimų metodai, duomenų analizė ir diskurso analizė).
3. Reikia suderinti teorinių ir praktinių žinių ir mokymo poreikių pusiausvyros klausimą. Ekspertų grupė pritaria alumnų ir socialinių partnerių pareiškimams apie tai, kad reikia didinti galimybes ugdyti darbo rinkai reikalingus taikomuosius gebėjimus.
4. Vadovybė ir dėstytojai turi labiau stengtis supažindinti studentus su esamais studijų informacijos kanalais ir vietomis. Rekomenduojama plačiau naudoti *Moodle*, kaip vienintelę programą, kurioje pateikiama studijų medžiaga.
5. Ekspertų grupė pataria, kad suteikiant profesinį mokymą dėstytojams būtų atsižvelgta į studijų programos *Politika ir medijos* specifiką (mažesnę programos trukmę, nevienodą studentų išsilavinimą). Rekomenduojama turėti dėstytojų, kurie mokytų įvairovės valdymo, ir daugiau konsultuoti studentus dėl dalykų pasirinkimo ir baigiamųjų darbų rašymo.

6. Ekspertų grupė ragina atkreipti dėmesį į mažą dėstytojų tarptautinių publikacijų skaičių. Tarptautinių santykių ir politikos mokslų institutas (toliau – TSPMI arba Institutas) ir Vilniaus universitetas (toliau – VU) turi užtikrinti, kad, siekiant paskatinti mokslinių tyrimų veiklą, būtų įdiegtos visos būtinos pagalbos struktūros, paskatų mechanizmai ir sudaryti tinkami susitarimai dėl darbo ir karjeros.
7. Ekspertų grupė rekomenduoja užtikrinti, kad šios studijų programos vadybos pagrindu taptų reguliariai rengiami Studijų programos komiteto posėdžiai, numatantys strateginius ir ilgalaikius tikslus. Reikia didinti Studijų programos komiteto gebėjimą priimti sprendimus.
8. Institutui rekomenduojama supaprastinti studentų vertinimo sistemą ir stengtis, kad vertinimo procesas taptų tikrai interaktyviu ir nuolatiniu dėstytojų bei studentų

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Paslaugos teikėjas patvirtina, jog yra susipažinęs su Lietuvos Respublikos baudžiamojo kodekso 235 straipsnio, numatančio atsakomybę už melagingą ar žinomai neteisingai atliktą vertimą, reikalavimais.

Vertėjos rekvizitai (vardas, pavardė, parašas)