

Designing Effective Leadership Development in Higher Education: The LEADALKO Case in a Broader International Context

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Abstract

Leadership in higher education is widely acknowledged as a vital catalyst for institutional resilience, creativity, and quality in a context marked by rapid transformation, internationalisation, and evolving governance demands. Contemporary higher education institutions are necessitating leadership that is strategic, adaptable, and ethically principled. Leadership in higher education is best conceptualised as a multidimensional construct that incorporates transformative, distributed, authentic, and adaptable paradigms.

In numerous rising and transitional higher education institutions, leadership development is inadequately institutionalised, frequently depending on informal or experiential advancement instead of defined competency frameworks. This gap highlights the need for context-sensitive and systemically embedded leadership development approaches that align individual capacity building with institutional and policy-level transformation.

Within this landscape, the Erasmus+ project LEADALKO (Leadership Capacities Development in Higher Education across Albania and Kosovo) represents a focused effort to strengthen leadership competencies through a structured, competency-based, and contextually adapted approach grounded in the HELQS framework. At the same time, complementary Erasmus + projects—including MORHEL in Morocco, MED.HEL in Tunisia and Algeria, and LEADHEGA in Azerbaijan and Georgia—demonstrate how leadership development models can be tailored to diverse national and regional contexts while maintaining a shared conceptual foundation.

These experiences collectively highlight that successful leadership development in higher education necessitates the amalgamation of theory and practice, institutional grounding, and cross-regional cooperation. By cultivating leadership skills that are contextually pertinent and globally aware, higher education systems can enhance their capacity to manage complexity, facilitate reform, and promote sustainable social advancement.

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