

LUTHER ACADEMY

DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY 2021-2025

APPROVED: At Academy Senate Meeting No. 7 of 29.06.2021, decision paragraph 10

AMMENDMENTS: At Academy Senate Meeting No. 12 of 20.12.2022, decision paragraph 10

INTRODUCTION

Development Strategy of the Luther Academy (LA) (hereinafter referred to as the Strategy or LAS) was developed for the period between 2021 and 2025 and it is LA's document of medium-term planning and development. LAS is a continuation of LA's Strategy 2016-2020.

LA considered the following planning documents in the course of developing Strategy of the Luther Academy 2021-2025:

- Sustainable Development Strategy of Latvia 2030 (https://www.vestnesis.lv/ta/id/191187);
- Order of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 436 adopted on 22 June 2021 Guidelines for the Development of Education 2021-2027;
- Order of the Cabinet of Ministers No. 746 adopted on 13 December 2017 On Priorities in Science 2018-2021;
- ELCL's Strategy for Development and Areas of Activity (approved at ELCL 27th Synod, 3-4 June 2016 <u>https://ej.uz/lelb_strategija);</u>
- ELCL Law (https://ej.uz/lelb_likums);
- ELCL Constitution (<u>https://ej.uz/lelb_satversme</u>).

The Strategy is aimed at LA's sustainable development through support for the necessary changes determined by challenges in the Latvian and European higher education area. The Strategy facilitates involvement of LA lecturers, students, general staff, employers, graduates, and partners in achieving the goals set.

The Strategy stipulates the following:

- guidelines of the mission;
- strategic priorities and their goals;
- the most important indicators and results to be achieved;
- the main objectives and actions to achieve them;
- implementation phases and those in charge.

Strategic planning process is initiated by the management of the Academy in consultation with the Founder, LA's Convent of Advisers by involving LA staff of all levels as well as student representatives.

1. GENERAL

Luther Academy is an institution of higher education founded on 1 February 1997 by the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia (ELCL) aimed at preparing pastors and laymen for service in the area of spiritual care and education at congregations of ELCL as well as public, local and non-governmental institutions.

LA has adopted traditions of the Theology Seminary founded after World War II (1969-1991). According to ELCL mission in Latvian society and culture, LA is aware and respects the historical and social aspect of Latvian theological education in the current context.

Thus, studies at the LA are based on Christian faith and Lutheran tradition to encourage and prepare people for fulfilling their and God's calling. Goals of LA's activity are in line with the strategic specialization of LA determined by the ELCL. Main goals of LA's activity:

- offer students comprehensive higher education (academic and vocational) in theology;
- develop theology science in Latvia in order to facilitate spiritual healing of society;
- preserve and create the spiritual intellectual potential that Latvia needs and facilitate its development.

LA educates students in the field of theology, academically and practically, specializing in the Lutheran theological tradition.

LA's <u>sustainability</u> is ensured by:

- society's need for experts in mental and spiritual health;
- student motivation based on the calling of Christian faith;
- lasting and solid presence of the Lutheran Church in Latvian society;
- programme offer recognized in Latvia and by foreign partners;
- quality advantages given by accreditation;
- existence of an accredited study programme;
- the need to care for the cultural environment and religious legacy of the country;
- stability of finances and infrastructure guaranteed by ELCL and its partner churches.

Important <u>unique advantage</u> that makes LA stand out among other theological universities is Lutheran education rooted in the Church which allows to implement a holistic study process in close cooperation with the main employer – the ELCL.

<u>Study programme of theology implemented by the LA has a solid niche</u> which is proven by the stability of admission results and the number of students despite the lack of state funding as well as various demographic and secularization challenges faced by Latvian society.

Success of implementation of LA's mission is proven by the stable number of students and employment of graduates as well as appreciation by the employers.

Regular discussions between the LA and the main employer show that the demand from society and the specific nature of professional employment of graduates point to the need to apply not only knowledge but also suitable skills and competencies to practical theology.

LA modernizes its study content and improves its study management process as well as renews its academic staff and develops their competencies, engages foreign academic staff, cooperates with partners and employers, organizes events to attract students and takes other appropriate measures.

LA's academic staff conducts scientific research and implements a research-based study process. Research aims of the LA are: gaining scientific research results, substantiating scientific activity of the study process and developing it further, solving the current issues with research methods.

LA has chosen Lutheran theological anthropology in the context of the current developments as its strategic research area by 2025.

LA is situated in a historic building with the total area: 592 m² on Alksnaja street 3, Riga (*Alksnāja iela 3*, Rīga).

1.1. Description of the General Situation of the Luther Academy

Since 2012 LA had been implementing a study programme *Theology* of accredited study field Religion and Theology and study programme *Church Music* of the study field of Arts. Currently, the Luther Academy has one accredited study field: Religion and Theology with a study programme Theology. Luther Academy also implements the Open Academy study programme Theology and Ministry (formerly known as Education programme for church workers) recognized by the ELCL (but not accredited) that provides education for Church-recognized service as evangelist, lecturer, member of the diaconate, Sunday school teacher as well as fulfilling other calling for service at the congregation and society. This study programme prepares students for further studies in theology or church music. As of academic year 2021-2022 study programme Theology and Ministry is also available in English.

Luther Academy also has an accredited study field Arts with study programme Church Music which is closed at the moment. In the course of implementation of this programme valuable experience was gained regarding organization of the study process and expectations of employers (congregations). The analysis conducted showed that graduates of the study programme Church Music are active in ELCL congregations (some also abroad) as leaders of musical life and organize and give concerts at their congregations, get involved in local artistic activities and keep contact with educational institutions of music and musical units outside the congregation. However, the specific nature of the programme implementation reduced the number of applicants, therefore, it shall be restructured in two parts: first 4-semester and then 8-semester. Due to the fact that applicants also reside in remote towns and rural areas which does not allow them to participate in classes in Riga fully, the new programme shall be designed so as to bring the study process closer to the homes and workplaces of students.

Student Numbers

Analysis of data on student numbers over the past 5 years shows quantitative stability. LA has an average of 27-30 students in its study programme Theology per year. 4-11% of the students drop out yearly.

Results of Student Monitoring

47 students have graduated from LA's study programme Theology of the accredited study field Theology and Religion. 87% of them are pastors of ELCL.

Some of the graduates are working successfully as chaplains at public and local institutions.

Research

Strategic goal of LA's scientific research is to ensure and develop quality scientific and applied research according to the laws and regulations of the Republic of Latvia and guided by the respective documents of the ELCL: ELCL Constitution (http://www.lelb.lv/lv/?ct=satversme), ELCL mission (http://www.lelb.lv/lv/?ct=par_lelb), ELCL Regulations on Ministry (http://www.lelb.lv/lv/?ct=noteikumi_instrukcijas) and other documents that express ELCL service needs as well as guided by the current trends in theology and religion in relation to involvement of the Church in society. LA implements this research goal through involvement by lecturers, students, local and international partners.

The goal of LA's research is gaining scientific research results, substantiating scientific activity of the study process and developing it further, solving the current issues with research methods.

LA's budget has seen growth over the past 5 years.

1.2. Characterization of Target Groups

Target groups should be analyzed in order to speak to potential students in an appropriate and effective manner and to attract them as well as to identify the needs of the target group by ensuring an experience that is as comprehensive as possible in association with the Academy. In the course of developing student attraction strategy LA is focusing on a number of target groups

In the course of developing student attraction strategy LA is focusing on a number of target groups shown on Table 1.

Table 1			
Target group	Characterization of the target group		
People offered to take	o take - Have a clear vision of what they hope to achieve with studies		
a spiritual office	- Experience as active members of the Church and congregation		
1	- Motivated to serve which might influence the intensity of studies		
People interested in	- Want to acquire additional education to use the knowledge, skills		
serving the Church	and competencies in order to improve their work at the Church		
and the congregation	institutions and congregations		
People interested in	- Want to work in order to implement social responsibility of the		
charity work and	Church and social care responsibilities in society		
chaplain service	- Motivated by the awareness of their mission they see the need to		
1	serve the country and society as representatives of the Church		
	- Want to facilitate cooperation between the state and the Church		
People interested in a	- Do not begin studies right after high school		
second profession	- Employed		
	- Seek to change their professional activity or start an additional one in another field		
	- Value gaining professional skills more than academic achievements		
	- Appreciate opportunities for distance learning		
People interested in	- Have former study experience		
professional and	- Are convinced that an academic or vocation degree shall ensure		
academic growth	broader future opportunities		
	- Use studies as an opportunity to improve their professional activity		
	- Want recognition for formerly acquired academic and vocational		
	experience		
People motivated by	- Want to contribute more to serving the Church and society		
lifelong learning	- Are interested in Christian culture		
	- Are interested in interdisciplinary connection		

- Want to deepen the understanding of faith
- Want to prepare for starting a new professional activity

1.3. Analysis of LA's Strategic Development Areas 2016-2020

Assessment of implementation of the previous LA's Strategy 2016-2020 was conducted in order to determine the extent to which the strategic objectives were achieved, to summarize information on the main objectives set in the previous strategic period, to identify the strengths and weaknesses of LA's activity, to analyze aspects that require improvement as well as to determine the objectives that should be included in the strategy for the next period and what changes, improvements are required. Assessment of the Strategy was conducted within the framework of strategic planning with the involvement of all parties engaged and interested in LA's study process. Indicators that were not included in the description of the previous strategy shall be included in the development of strategy for the next period in order to assess the extent to which it has been implemented. This chapter gives a summary of assessment of implementation of the strategy 2016-2020 by strategic areas of activity.

Areas of development of the strategic period 2016-2020 were:

- development of study programmes;
- further education of LA's academic and other staff;
- improvement of LA's material and technical resources;
- increasing the capacity of LA's scientific work;
- building relationships with the existing and potential partners.

1. Study Programmes and Their Quality

SWOT analysis of overall implementation of LA's programmes found a number of strengths: evening studies help students combine studies with work and family life, studies on Skype as well as video and audio recordings allow to take some courses remotely, the small number of students facilitates individualized and student-centered approach to the educational process.

Study programme Theology.

In the academic year 2019-2020 LA graduate survey Assessment of the Accredited Theology Programme Implemented by the LA was conducted together with employers. All respondents rated their satisfaction with systematic, historical and biblical theology courses with 81-83%. Whereas the percentage of satisfaction with all the practical theology courses was lower -73% was the highest. The survey showed that in areas of theology where it is more important to develop skills and competencies the evaluation was lower.

Objective for the next strategic period:

Considering the main areas of professional activity of LA graduates, the need to choose or develop an appropriate professional standard should be considered together with employers and possibly a transition to a vocational study programme should be made. In 2020 the content of the study programme was assessed in order to prevent fragmentation of study courses and the Academy Senate decided to transition to gradual consolidation of study courses over a period of 3 years.

For the purpose of improving the programme, study courses were assessed, hospitations, graduate surveys and meetings with employers were organized on a regular basis. However, quality assessment system is fragmentary.

Objective for the next strategic period:

Internal quality management policy should be developed and implemented for improved quality of analysis of the results achieved and continuous improvements to the programme.

Change and development of 'Small LA' concept.

Historically since 2005 'Small LA' was created in order to offer theology studies to people who are not ready to begin academic studies and to use the high qualifications of LA lecturer resources more effectively. Analysis of the reporting period shows that there were more applicants for 'Small LA' than for Theology programme every year and it has proved itself to be a significant resource for the development of lifelong learning.

Objective for the next strategic period:

'Small LA' should be transformed into a separate internal structural unit of LA and developed as a platform for lifelong learning in the are of theology offered by the LA.

Programme Church Music.

In the reporting period this programme has allowed to examine the needs of the employer and the potential students more clearly as well as to assess its financial efficiency. 3 students graduated from this programme in the last 5 year. Considering the specific nature of this study programme it also does not have a sufficient number of applicants to be financially viable.

Objective for the next strategic period:

For this reason, the following should be considered: the need to close the study programme Church Music and to transform it into a 1st level vocational programme so that it would match the interests of the employer and the potential students as well as the specific nature of implementation of such study programme.

Development of Human Resources.

In the course of this period 2 LA lecturers continued their PhD studies in Germany and Latvia. 2-3 foreign lecturers with a PhD are engaged each year which increases LA's academic capacity. Measures for the improvement of vocational education of lecturers have been taken on a yearly basis.

In 2017 re-election of the academic staff took place and 5 representatives of the academic staff were elected. The elected lecturers comprise 25% of all lecturers and implement 45% of the study

courses. The large number of guest lecturers makes it more difficult to create a united team and increase the capacity of scientific research work.

Lecturers welcomed 3 LA graduates to their team in the analysis period.

Social media, Christian media has been used to attract applicants but there is no strategy for speaking to the potential students from various target groups in a targeted manner.

Objective for the next strategic period:

- Both LA's PhD candidates have to defend their theses.
- Motivate at least 1 of LA's lecturers to get a PhD.
- Increase the proportion of the academic staff and the courses they give.
- Develop and implement a policy for preparation of LA's future lecturers.
- Develop a student attraction policy for greater student involvement.

Image and Infrastructure

On 12 October 2017 LA's library was listed in the Library Register of the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Latvia. A reading room with 4 computer workstations and an Internet connection was fitted.

Each lecture room had a computer, projector and free Internet access for the study process during the analysis period.

LA's website and visual style is outdated.

Objective for the next strategic period:

- A single digital catalog of LA's library book collection should be developed in order to make LA's library resources more readily available.
- Renovation of the LA building, accessibility and renovation of the interior should be planned and implemented together with the founder.
- LA's visual image should be updated and its website should be modernized in order to increase LA's recognition.

Scientific Research Work

In the analysis period LA's scientific and applied research results include 18 scientific publications by the academic staff, 6 monographs, 5 conferences organized by LA, participation in 10 international conferences and applied research project Sustainable Development of Rubene Cultural and Historical Centre.

In 2018 statutes were approved and LA's Council of Science was founded. In 2019 a new position was introduced: Vice Rector for Sciences.

Objective for the next strategic period:

- Increase the funding for scientific research work from 3% to 7% of LA's annual budget.

- Define LA's strategic research areas.
- Publish a collection of LA's academic papers on a yearly basis.

Partnership and Internationalization

There has been cooperation with the Faculty of Theology of the University of Latvia and Lateran Pontifical University branch RARZI during the analysis period. International cooperation with St. Louis and Fort Wayne Concordia Seminaries, Oberursel Lutheran University of Theology and Lutheran School of Theology in Gothenburg has taken place.

Objective for the next strategic period:

- Renew the existing cooperation agreements with partners or enter into new ones.
- Obtain Erasmus+ Charter.
- Develop mobility of lecturers and students.

2. Strategy

2.1. Vision, Mission, Values, Goals

LA's Mission

LA's mission is to make academic theological education, that is based on the Holy Scripture and is practically applicable, more accessible in association with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Latvia as well as other churches and partners around the world.

LA's Vision

Luther Academy is an <u>internationally recognized</u> institution of higher education for theology in Lutheran tradition that prepares people to follow the calling to fulfil Christ's mission in the world.

LA is the center of Lutheran higher education ecosystem in Latvia and it contributes to fruitful long-term development of a single Christian education ecosystem in Latvia.

Values

- 1. Mission and responsibility
- 2. Tradition and openness
- 3. Relationship and belonging
- 4. Individuality and togetherness

Motto

Christ is present in faith.

Goals, doctrinal and financial basis, operational and management principles of the Luther Academy are defined in Statute of the LA (<u>https://ej.uz/la_statuti</u>) and Constitution of the LA (<u>https://ej.uz/la_statuti</u>).

2.2. Summary of Strategic Priorities, Goals, and Key Performance Indicators 2021-2025

Strategic goal of the Luther Academy (LA) 2025 is to ensure a modern, quality and research-based higher education in theology.

For the purpose of implementing its Strategy 2021-2025 LA implements its role at a local, national, and global level, therefore,

LA is developing as:

- ELCL education center;
- Builder of the ecosystem of theological higher education in Latvia;
- Partner in the global ecosystem of Lutheran theological education.

LA Strategy defines 3 <u>strategic priorities</u> and 6 horizontal <u>courses of action</u> that ensure achievement of these goals. /Table 3/

Table 3

Priorities

P1. Offer of higher education	P2. Scientific research	P3. Lifelong learning
cuteation		
	Goals	
Prepare suitable, competitive	Ensure and develop quality	Develop an offer of lifelong
professionals of theology and	scientific and applied	learning based on the needs of
religion who are able to use	research in line with the	the Church and society and
the knowledge and practical	laws and regulations of the	shape a culture of lifelong
skills acquired to facilitate	Republic of Latvia and	learning in theology and
spiritual health of the society,	trends in theology and	religion.
according to the trends in	religion through the	
higher education and the	involvement of lecturers,	
current needs of society.	students, local and	
	international partners.	

2.4. Strategic Development Plan 2021-2025

The following 3 strategic priorities have been set for the implementation of LA's development:

- Offer of higher education (P1);
- Scientific research (P2);

– Lifelong learning (P3).

LA has identified the following **research areas** in the study field Theology and Religion considering the common factors in the development of theology and religious sciences and ELCL theological guidelines:

- General history and history of Latvian Church;
- Systematic theology;

- Biblical and exegetic theology;
- Practical theology.

LA's strategic research area 2025 is: Lutheran anthropology in the current context.

OBJECTIVES and **ACTIONS**

	OBJECTIVES	ACTIONS	Term	Person / department in charge
P1	1.1. Offer modern, quality research-based higher education	1.1.1. Successful accreditation of the field of study1.1.2. Implement and update study programme content based on the current trends in education and labor market	2023 Once a year	Rector Programme Director
		 1.1.3. Broaden the offer of study programmes in the existing fields of study: Professional Bachelor study programme; 1st level vocational higher education programme; Distance learning study programme in a foreign language; Master study programme 1.1.4. Increase the number of lecturers with a PhD 	Academic year 2024-25 Academic year 2025-26 Academic year 2024-25 Academic year 2025-26 2024	Programme Director Rector, Deputy Rector
		1.1.5. Develop mobility of LA's staff	Yearly	Programme Director
	1.2. Prepare suitable, competitive professionals of theology and religion for the current needs of society	1.2.1. Build cooperation with AII Latvia elective study course offer1.2.2. Continuous improvement of student support system to ensure good study experience and decrease the number of drop-outs	Yearly Yearly	Head of the Field of Study Vice Rector for Studies
		1.2.3. Conduct systematic surveys of students about the quality of studies, study methods and lecturer performance. Give feedback to students about the planned and implemented improvement measures	After each study course / once a year	Study Department
		1.2.4. Organize meetings with student representatives, graduates, employers and the Convent of Advisers as a platform for the development of various	Once a year	Rector, Deputy Rector

	initiatives.		
1.3. Introduce new study forms and approaches	 1.3.1. Increase the availability of study courses on CANVAS e-environment 1.3.2. Create a distance learning study programme and develop a suitable study environment for it 1.3.3. Consider and choose the most suitable study form for each study programme 1.3.4. Organize events to improve pedagogical and scientific competencies of lecturers 1.3.5. Ensure the use of modern and effective study methods and digital solutions in the study process 	2025 2024 2025 Every year Yearly	Study Department Programme Director Head of the Field of Study Vice Rector for Studies Vice Rector for Studies
1.4. Implement various types of cooperation to improve the quality of studies	 1.4.1. Develop an external cooperation plan that identifies all partners and stakeholders, defines the goals of cooperation and achievable results 1.4.2. Cooperate and communicate actively with LA graduates incl. through graduate surveys about the usefulness of the acquired knowledge and skills and application in the industry, employment, study plans and cooperation opportunities 1.4.3. Cooperate and communicate actively with employers incl. through employer surveys in order to find out their opinion about the preparedness and fitness of graduates to the requirements 	2023 2023, 2025 Once a year	Deputy Rector Study Department Study Department

	1.5. Implement student attraction policy	of the labor market, cooperation opportunities and involvement mechanisms 1.4.4. Obtain and use Erasmus+ Charter 1.4.5. Perform an external examination of the internal quality assessment policy 1.5.1. Develop a strategy to speak to the potential students from various target groups in a proper and effective manner and to attract them	2023-2025 2024 2023	Vice Rector for Sciences Head of the Field of Study Deputy Rector
P2	2.1. Develop and solidify scientific research capacity, quality in LA's strategic specialization	 2.1.1. Continue developing the strategic research area of LA's scientific research work: Lutheran anthropology in the current context 2.1.2 Increase the number of lecturers who participate in LA's scientific research activity 2.1.3 Integrate quality scientific research development into the study process 2.1.4 Facilitate the growth in scientific staff numbers by attracting foreign lecturers with a PhD and facilitating PhD studies of LA's lecturers 2.1.5 Involve scientific researches in interdisciplinary studies 2.1.6 Increase the proportion of scientific research work of LA's academic staff from pedagogical work and create an appropriate motivation system 2.1.7 Implement measures for the development of student research work 	2021-2025 2021-2025 2021-2025 2021-2025 2021-2025 2021-2025 2021-2025	Council of Science Council of Science Council of Science Vice Rector for Sciences Council of Science Deputy Rector
		 according to LA's student research work guide 2.1.8 Increase the number of research results of LA's academic staff: papers, publications, monographs 2.1.9 Promote the inclusion of LA's collection of scientific papers Credimus in internationally cited databases 2.1.10 Create scientific research interest groups among LA's graduates 	2025 2023-2025 2023	Council of Science Vice Rector for Sciences Council of Science

		2.1.11 Build cooperation with ELCL Theology Commission	2023-2025	Vice Rector for Sciences
	2.2. Broaden national and international cooperation in science and research	2.2.1. Implement and participate in local and international research projects by getting involved in shaping the global ecosystem of Lutheran education	2021-2025	Council of Science
		2.2.2. Involve international partners and participate in their scientific research projects according to LA's external cooperation plan	2023-2025	Council of Science
		2.2.3. Organize international science events in line with LA's strategic research area	2023-2025	Council of Science
		2.2.4. Obtain Erasmus+ Charter and develop student and lecturer mobility	2022-2025	Vice Rector for Sciences
	2.3. Improve the infrastructure and availability of funding for LA's scientific	2.3.1. Increase the proportion of research funding from the total LA budget incl. attract external funding (partners, ERAF etc.)	2025	Deputy Rector
	research work	2.3.2 Develop LA's library resources incl. increase the proportion of e-resources with possibility of remote access	2021-2025	Vice Rector for Sciences, Librarian
P3	3.1. Develop an offer of lifelong learning suitable for LA's target audiences	3.1.1. Formulate the areas of LA's lifelong learning offer with topics and teaching forms demanded by the Church and society (courses, seminars, summer schools, lectures etc.)	2023	Head of the Open Academy
		3.1.2. Make a development plan for lifelong learning where the Open Academy as the center of the ecosystem of Lutheran education implements measures of lifelong learning	2023	Vice Rector for Studies Vice Rector for
		3.1.3. Develop LA's offer of lifelong learning according to LA's plan for lifelong learning	2025	Studies
	3.2. Build cooperation with people interested in volunteering to	3.2.1. Examine volunteering opportunities and training needs of the interested parties	2024	LA's Study Department
	research their educational needs and develop an offer	3.2.2. Develop and implement an offer for volunteer work training according to the demand	2nd half of 2024	Vice Rector for Studies

3.3. Use the opportunities of lifelong learning as a bond to build long-term relationship with LA graduates	3.3.1. Examine the need of LA graduates for further education3.3.2. Involve the LA Convent of Graduates into improving the offer of lifelong learning	2023 2023	LA's Study Department Chaplain
3.4. Improve recognition of offer of the Open Academy	3.4.1. Inform society and LA's partners in a targeted manner about the content offered by the Open Academy3.4.2. Ensure and develop the opportunities of Open Academy's offer in e-environment	On a regular basis By 2025	LA's Study Department LA's Study Department

2.5. Strategy Implementation and Control

Implementation of LA's Strategy 2025 and review of the areas of activity and objectives defined in it is based on operational result analysis. In the course of assessment of the indicative results achieved all values of the resultative indicators included in the summary of the strategy are summarized on a yearly basis.

Control, SWOT analysis and discussion of implementation of the development plan of the study field is conducted every year in order to follow the progress of implementation of the strategy. Head of the Study Field presents assessment of the plan at the Academy Senate meeting. Based on the analysis of achieved results it may be proposed to update the strategic action plan, make changes to the implementation plans of the study programme or to the plan for the study field, if necessary. Assessment of operational efficiency and the planned control are included in the annual self-assessment of the study field.

LA Rector is responsible for implementation of LA's strategy.

Control of the strategy is carried out via LA's Quality Management System and the processes described in it. Supervision of the strategy implementation is simultaneously carried out by LA's Constitution Assembly and Academy Senate.

In the course of implementing the strategy LA is aware of the continuously changing opportunities and challenges that may serve as contributing or hampering factors such as cooperation and partnership, availability of financial resources, administrative capacity etc.