

Strategic Communication Approaches for Enhancing Team Collaboration in Modern Business Organizations

Ana Tomova

Faculty of Technology and Metallurgy, Skopje, North Macedonia

Snezana Stavrova

Faculty of Technology and Metallurgy, Skopje, North Macedonia

Aleksandar T. Dimitrov

Faculty of Technology and Metallurgy, Skopje, North Macedonia

Bosko Boskovski

Faculty of Technology and Metallurgy, Skopje, North Macedonia

Beti Andonovic

Faculty of Technology and Metallurgy, Skopje, North Macedonia

Abstract

In today's dynamic business environment, teamwork is essential for productivity and organizational success. However, effective teamwork depends not just on collaboration but also on adaptive, psychologically aware communication strategies aligned with individual working styles. This paper explores the impact of communication on team dynamics, drawing on transactional analysis, Julie Hay's Work Styles Questionnaire, and Kahler's Process Communication Model. A comparative analysis of respondents from the Republic of North Macedonia and the Republic of Italy revealed differences in dominant working styles shaped by organizational culture. Styles such as *Be Perfect* and *Please Others* were common but often led to overcommitment and inefficiency under pressure. *Thinker* and *Harmonizer* profiles also prevailed but presented challenges in high-stress situations. The findings highlight that both individual working styles and organizational communication strategies significantly influence team effectiveness. The paper concludes with a proposed integrative communication model to reduce dysfunction and foster authentic team collaboration.

Keywords: working styles, teamwork, drivers, Process Communication Model, organizational behavior

JEL classification: M53, L22, L25.

Paper type: Research article

Received: 14 March 2025

Accepted: 21 July 2025

DOI: 10.54820/entrenova-2025-0072

Citation: Tomova, A., Stavrova, S., Dimitrov, A. T., Boskovski, B., & Andonovic, B. (2025). Strategic Communication Approaches for Enhancing Team Collaboration in Modern Business Organizations. *ENTRENOVA - ENTERprise REsearch InNOVation*, 11(1), <https://doi.org/10.54820/entrenova-2025-0072>.

Introduction

In modern business organizations, communication is no longer viewed merely as a technical tool or soft skill; it is a central mechanism of coordination, culture-building, and collaborative effectiveness. As teams become more cross-functional, multicultural, and digitally distributed, communication strategies must evolve to address emerging challenges related to interpersonal understanding, motivational diversity, and behavioral misalignment.

Teamwork today extends beyond the distribution of tasks and formal roles. It involves dynamic interaction, shared emotional investment, and synchronization of expectations. The quality of communication within teams determines not only efficiency, but also innovation capacity, resilience under stress, and psychological safety. In highly pressured organizational environments, communication failures, such as misunderstandings, passive resistance, or unclear expectations, are often the root causes of dysfunction, even when teams possess the technical expertise to perform their duties.

Traditional models that emphasize linear communication or top-down dissemination of information have proven insufficient in capturing the multidimensional character of modern team dynamics. As such, psychological and behavioral frameworks have gained relevance, especially in contexts requiring high adaptability and interpersonal sensitivity. Among the most influential are Transactional Analysis (TA), developed by Eric Berne (1972), Working Styles Theory, proposed by Julie Hay (2009), and the Process Communication Model (PCM), elaborated by Taibi Kahler (2008). These models share a focus on the internal psychological scripts, motivational drivers, and stress-induced behaviors that shape how individuals engage with others in a team setting.

Berne's TA introduces concepts such as ego states, life scripts, and drivers, which define the often unconscious mechanisms through which people give and receive messages in social contexts. Kahler expands this foundation through PCM by identifying six personality types, each with specific strengths, perceptual filters, and predictable behaviors under stress. Hay's building on both presents a simplified model where five internal drivers: *Be Perfect*, *Try Hard*, *Please Others*, *Be Strong*, and *Hurry Up*, are seen as learned behavior patterns that impact how individuals communicate, manage conflict, and handle responsibility (Hay, 2009; Kahler, 1975).

In the business context of Company A (North Macedonia), these dynamics are further influenced by legacy hierarchical structures, collectivist cultural values, and a prevailing reluctance to engage in open disagreement or assertive communication. Despite formal efforts to modernize and decentralize, many organizations retain centralized authority and communication flows. As a result, psychological safety, a condition where team members feel safe to speak up, express concerns, or suggest improvements, is often lacking. Employees may prioritize harmony over honesty or compliance over contribution, leading to teams that appear cohesive on the surface but are fragmented in execution.

This study investigates how communication strategies, especially those rooted in psychological self-awareness and behavioral modeling, can enhance teamwork in such transitional environments. By assessing internal drivers, dominant communication styles, and behavioral tendencies among participants from Company A (North Macedonia), the research aims to uncover both obstacles and opportunities for authentic collaboration. The ultimate goal is to develop evidence-based recommendations for communication training, team development, and management practices that align with the psychological realities of modern teamwork.

Methodology

The research was designed to explore the psychological and communicational dynamics within teams operating in two contemporary organizations: Company A in North Macedonia and Company B in Italy. Specifically, the aim was to identify dominant communication styles, internal behavioral drivers, and their implications for teamwork efficiency. To accomplish this, the study adopted a mixed-methods approach, predominantly focused on structured self-assessment questionnaires, underpinned by theoretically grounded psychological models. The research instruments were chosen for their ability to reveal both surface-level behaviors and underlying motivational patterns that affect team interaction.

The study was conducted in two organizations: Company A from the Republic of North Macedonia and Company B from the Republic of Italy, both operating in different sectors and cultural environments. Participants were selected from various hierarchical levels and functions within each company.

At the core of the research design was the integration of Julie Hay's Working Styles framework and Taibi Kahler's Process Communication Model. Hay's theory, drawing upon Transactional Analysis, focuses on five internal drivers—*Be Perfect*, *Please Others*, *Try Hard*, *Be Strong*, and *Hurry Up*—each representing deep-seated motivational forces acquired early in life and reinforced through professional and social environments. These drivers often act unconsciously, influencing how individuals behave under pressure, approach collaboration, and communicate within teams (Hay, 2009).

Kahler's Process Communication Model added a complementary perspective by categorizing communication behavior into six distinct personality types: the *Thinker*, *Persister*, *Harmonizer*, *Rebel*, *Promoter*, and *Imaginer* (Kahler, 2008). A unique perceptual filter, preferred mode of expression, and stress behavior characterize each type. This model was instrumental in identifying how personality diversity in teams could either foster or hinder effective collaboration, depending on the communication context.

Participants were asked to complete a combined instrument that included elements of both models. The first section included statements related to the five internal drivers, where respondents had to indicate the frequency with which they exhibited behaviors typical of each driver. The second part included descriptors from Kahler's model that allowed respondents to self-identify their predominant communication style based on emotional tone, preferred interaction mode, and response to conflict or ambiguity.

The participant pool consisted of 82 individuals, balanced by gender and spanning various age groups and organizational functions. A considerable portion of the sample included middle managers and team leaders, whose responses were particularly valuable for analyzing how communication styles cascade through hierarchical layers. Respondents from operational roles were also included, ensuring a multilayered view of communication dynamics within teams. Half of the participants were from Company A (North Macedonia), and the other half from Company B (Italy), ensuring balanced cross-country representation.

The data were processed using descriptive statistical techniques, and the results were analyzed to determine the prevalence of specific working styles and communication types. Comparative insights were drawn between groups based on role, sector, and observed communication challenges. Beyond raw frequencies, the analysis sought to uncover patterns of behavioral alignment or conflict within teams, including how internal drivers such as *Be Perfect* or *Please Others* might interact with communication types like *Thinker* or *Harmonizer* in daily teamwork scenarios.

The interpretive phase of the analysis was equally important, as it allowed the research to move beyond numbers and uncover psychological narratives that underlie team behavior. Special attention was given to the congruence—or lack thereof—between self-perception and team needs, particularly when teams experienced stress, low cohesion, or communication breakdowns.

In designing this methodology, the research followed a pragmatic epistemological stance: one that seeks to understand the subjective realities of communication through measurable constructs, while remaining sensitive to the cultural and organizational context of the workplace environments of Company A (North Macedonia) and Company B (Italy). The resulting findings offer both diagnostic clarity and a practical foundation for intervention, including training, team restructuring, or reform of communication policies.

Results and Discussion

The analysis of communication patterns and internal behavioral drivers within the teams of Company A (North Macedonia) and Company B (Italy) revealed a complex interplay between psychological tendencies and interpersonal dynamics. The data collected from 82 participants across both the public and private sectors presented distinct behavioral trends shaped by cultural norms, hierarchical structures, and the broader transitional context of Macedonian institutions.

Dominant Working Styles: Internal Psychological Drivers

One key finding concerns the prevalence of specific working styles, as defined by Hay's model. The style *Be Perfect* was by far the most dominant across the sample, exhibited in more than 40% of the responses. A constant need for precision, correctness, and control characterized individuals who scored highly on this driver. Their approach to team communication was marked by formality, insistence on structure, and a reluctance to delegate unless strict standards were met.

While this driver contributed positively to accountability and quality assurance, it also introduced rigidity into team environments. Managers or team members driven by *Be Perfect* tendencies often set unrealistically high expectations, both for themselves and others, leading to frustration, micromanagement, and difficulty tolerating ambiguity. Moreover, these individuals were frequently self-critical and vulnerable to stress when outcomes fell short of their internalized standards.

The second most prevalent driver was *Try Hard*, present in approximately 23% of the sample. This style manifested as a strong work ethic coupled with a tendency to overcommit and diffuse focus across multiple tasks. Participants exhibiting this pattern often emphasized effort and perseverance in their responses but struggled with prioritization and consistent follow-through. Although their enthusiasm was evident, these individuals were prone to burnout and often failed to recognize when continued effort became counterproductive.

The *Please Others* style, observed in nearly 19% of the participants, was another significant contributor to the group dynamic. These individuals prioritized interpersonal harmony and the emotional well-being of others, often at the expense of their own needs or opinions. While they played a valuable role in maintaining a supportive climate, their aversion to conflict often led to the avoidance of difficult conversations and the undercommunication of dissenting views.

Less frequently observed were the *Be Strong* and *Hurry Up* drivers, though their presence was still notable. *Be Strong* types showed a clear preference for emotional independence and task orientation, but often suppressed vulnerability. *Hurry*

Up individuals emphasized speed and efficiency but were more susceptible to impulsivity and impatience in group contexts.

Taken together, these findings suggest that teams from Company A (North Macedonia) and Company B (Italy) are primarily composed of individuals whose working styles prioritize control, harmony, and effort—but often struggle with assertiveness, adaptability, and emotional transparency. These internal drivers, while rooted in early developmental scripts, are reinforced by workplace expectations that reward loyalty, caution, and procedural compliance.

Communication Personality Types

In parallel with the working styles assessment, participants also identified their dominant communication types based on Kahler's Process Communication Model. The most prevalent type was the *Thinker* (36%), characterized by logical analysis, structured thinking, and a strong emphasis on responsibility and organization. Thinkers tended to communicate with clarity and precision, making them reliable in planning and documentation. However, their communication often lacked emotional nuance, leading to perceptions of coldness or inflexibility, especially during interpersonal conflict.

The second most represented type was the *Harmonizer* (24%), known for their warmth, empathy, and relational focus. Harmonizers brought emotional intelligence into teams and were often viewed as stabilizing figures. However, under stress, they could become overly accommodating, suppress their own needs, and avoid conflict to preserve peace, even when assertiveness was needed.

The other communication types—*Persister*, *Rebel*, *Promoter*, and *Imaginer*—were represented in smaller proportions, suggesting that expressive, visionary, or unconventional communication styles are less culturally embedded in the workplace environments of Company A (North Macedonia) and Company B (Italy). This could be attributed to long-standing organizational norms that favor predictability and consensus over risk-taking or spontaneous expression.

An important insight from the analysis was that communication mismatches frequently arose between *Thinker* and *Harmonizer* types. For instance, while Thinkers preferred objective feedback and direct critique, Harmonizers were more sensitive to tone and often internalized even constructive criticism as personal rejection. Without mutual awareness and adaptive strategies, such differences led to misunderstandings, passive resistance, or emotional withdrawal.

Communication Challenges in Team Contexts

The intersection of internal motivational drivers and individual communication styles uncovered several recurring challenges that impeded effective team dynamics. One notable issue was the widespread avoidance of feedback, particularly among individuals with dominant *Please Others* and *Harmonizer* profiles. These team members often hesitated to provide negative or corrective feedback out of fear of damaging interpersonal relationships. This reluctance contributed to the buildup of unresolved issues and led to persistent misalignments in task execution.

Another prominent challenge involved over-commitment and perfectionism, primarily associated with the *Be Perfect* and *Try Hard* working styles. Individuals influenced by these internal drivers frequently overextended themselves or imposed excessively high standards on their colleagues. These tendencies increased stress levels within teams and limited both their adaptability and responsiveness to changing demands.

A pervasive lack of psychological safety was also identified across teams. Many participants expressed discomfort with voicing disagreement or introducing unconventional ideas, particularly in environments with rigid hierarchies. This discomfort fostered communication patterns rooted in conformity, stifling creativity and inhibiting innovation.

Additionally, the study revealed that stress often triggered regression into less effective communication styles. For instance, individuals with *Thinker* tendencies tended to withdraw or resort to controlling behaviors under pressure, whereas those with *Harmonizer* inclinations sought emotional reassurance without explicitly articulating their needs. These stress-induced shifts typically went unrecognized in real time, thereby intensifying interpersonal tension and conflict.

Overall, the findings underscore the crucial importance of self-awareness and diversity in team communication styles. Teams that cultivated a balanced mix of personalities and implemented shared understanding protocols exhibited higher resilience, more efficient conflict resolution, and improved decision-making capacity. These characteristics collectively contributed to greater overall team effectiveness.

Interpretive Reflections

These results suggest that while participants from Company A (North Macedonia) possess strong discipline and relational intent, the interplay of internalized behavioral drivers and communication styles can either facilitate or undermine team cohesion. When unmanaged, drivers such as *Be Perfect* and *Please Others* create environments of silent tension, emotional exhaustion, and performance anxiety.

However, the presence of *Harmonizers* and *Thinkers* in dominant roles also offers a powerful opportunity: when adequately trained in interpersonal adaptability, they can form highly synergistic pairs. *Harmonizers* bring warmth and intuition, while *Thinkers* provide structure and logic. By fostering awareness of these roles and offering communication training tailored to these psychological profiles, organizations can move toward healthier, more functional team cultures.

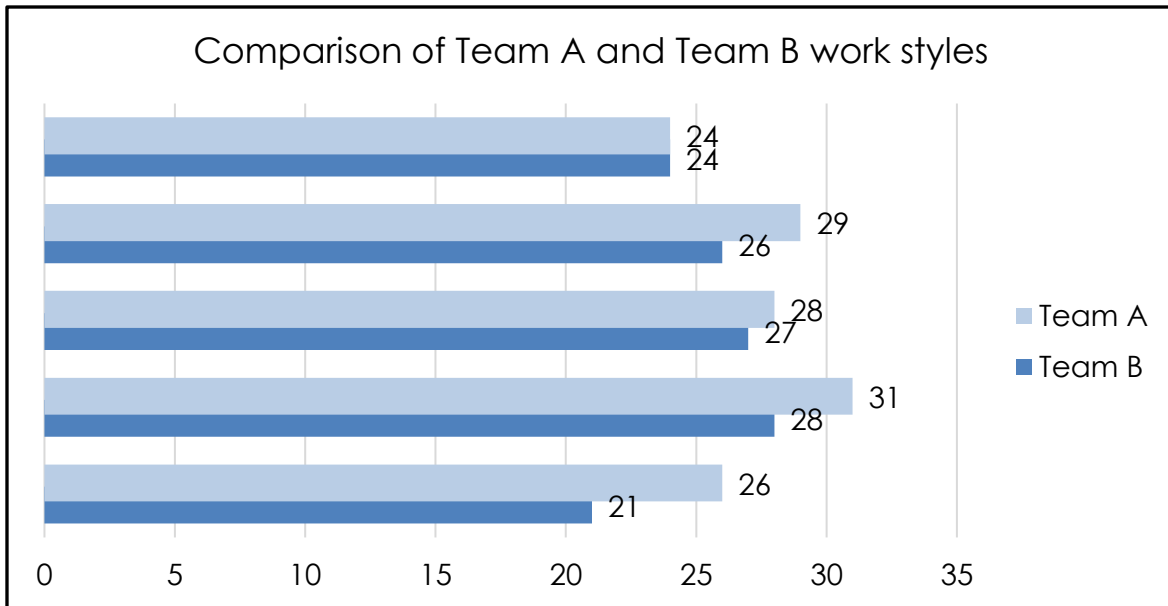
The comparative analysis between Team A and Team B highlights how cultural and organizational environments shape team dynamics, communication strategies, and role distribution. Team A is characterized by a diverse range of working styles, with a dominant PAel Adizes profile among its members (Table 1). This profile reflects a team that is goal-oriented, innovative, structured, and empathetic—qualities well-suited for managing complex project environments where both execution and interpersonal sensitivity are critical (Adizes, 2004, Figure 1).

Table 1
Summarised results for teams A and B

	Hurry up	Be perfect	Please others	Try hard	Be strong
Team B	21	28	27	26	24
Team A	26	31	28	29	24

Source: Authors' work

Figure 1
Comparison of Working Styles of Teams A and B



Source: Authors' work

However, despite these strengths, Team A showed notable weaknesses related to time management, multitasking, and rapid decision-making. These shortcomings suggest a deficiency in the Producer (P) function among certain team members, which impacts their ability to meet deadlines and maintain efficiency without compromising quality. These findings are consistent with literature emphasizing the role of the Producer in task completion and time-sensitive execution (Hay, 1996; Andonovic et al., 2014).

Team B, in contrast, demonstrated a strong collective inclination toward the Integrator (I) role, consistent with a work culture that values emotional intelligence, empathy, and strong interpersonal bonds. The uniform PAel profiles observed in Team B members suggest a collaborative and supportive environment, enhancing psychological safety and morale. However, this emphasis on harmony occasionally led to decision-making bottlenecks and delays in task completion, particularly in high-pressure scenarios. Furthermore, overlapping interpersonal styles blurred the emergence of clear leadership, making it difficult to establish authority and accountability (Dimitrov & Andonovic, 2019).

Despite the differences, both teams share a strong orientation toward teamwork, empathy, and structural awareness. These shared values provide a solid foundation for cultivating high-functioning, resilient team cultures. The findings affirm that communication strategies and psychological role preferences must be consciously managed to align with organizational demands and foster sustainable collaboration (Hay, 1996; Kahler, 2008).

Conclusion

This study set out to examine the psychological and behavioral foundations of communication within teams in two contemporary organizations – Company A from North Macedonia and Company B from Italy - to identify patterns that either support or obstruct effective collaboration. Drawing on the theoretical frameworks of Transactional Analysis, Working Styles Theory, and the Process Communication Model,

the research provided a multidimensional understanding of how individuals' internal drivers and communication tendencies shape their participation in teamwork.

The results clearly demonstrate that internal motivational patterns, such as the drive to *Be Perfect* or *Please Others*, profoundly influence how team members express themselves, receive feedback, and respond to stress. These drivers are not merely personal habits; they function as subconscious behavioral scripts that profoundly affect team dynamics. For instance, individuals driven by perfectionism tend to introduce high standards and structure but may simultaneously hinder spontaneity or flexibility. Similarly, those who prioritize pleasing others contribute to a supportive environment, yet often at the cost of open disagreement or transparent decision-making.

Complementing these behavioral insights were the communication profiles derived from Kahler's model. The predominance of *Thinker* and *Harmonizer* types among the participants indicated a communication culture that values order, reliability, and empathy, important traits in any collaborative setting. However, without conscious efforts to balance logic with emotional expression, or assertiveness with diplomacy, these same traits can devolve into rigidity or avoidance, especially under pressure. What emerges from this analysis is a picture of organizational teams that are well-intentioned, structured, and cooperative, but also vulnerable to emotional undercurrents, unspoken frustrations, and a reluctance to engage in direct, constructive conflict. These tendencies are amplified in professional contexts of Company A and B, where formal hierarchies and cultural norms often discourage open dialogue and innovation through disagreement.

To address these challenges, the study advocates for the intentional development of communication competencies that go beyond generic "soft skills" training. Organizations should invest in programs that enhance psychological insight, helping individuals recognize their own drivers, accurately interpret others' styles, and learn strategies for adaptive communication. This includes fostering environments where feedback is normalized, emotional literacy is valued, and differences in communication style are seen as assets rather than obstacles.

Furthermore, team composition should be approached strategically, with awareness of communication diversity. Teams that integrate *Thinkers*, *Harmonizers*, and less-represented types such as *Promoters* or *Rebels* can achieve higher creativity, resilience, and engagement, provided that mutual understanding is cultivated.

This research confirms that both Team A and Team B possess strong collaborative potential, rooted in different yet complementary strengths. Team A's innovation and structured orientation position it well for goal-driven environments, but it requires targeted development in execution, decision-making under pressure, and project ownership. Team B excels in emotional intelligence and interpersonal cohesion but must strengthen its leadership clarity, execution consistency, and communication during conflict situations.

Strategic recommendations for both teams include:

- Reinforcing the Producer (P) and Entrepreneur (E) roles through tailored training programs;
- Introducing structured decision-making models;
- Implementing collaborative project management tools;
- Conducting leadership development and role simulation workshops based on Adizes methodology.

By implementing these strategies, organizations can bridge role-based and cultural gaps, improve internal communication, and align team behavior with broader

business goals. Ultimately, this will enhance the adaptability, performance, and resilience of both teams in dynamic and competitive environments.

References

1. Adizes, I. (2004). *Managing corporate lifecycles*. Adizes Institute Publications.
2. Andonovic, B., Spasovska, M., Temkov, M., & Dimitrov, A. (2014). Integral model for distributing functional roles within a working team. *Quality of Life (Banja Luka) - APEIRON*, 9(1–2), 5–12. <https://doi.org/10.7251/qol1401005a>
3. Berne, E. (1972). *What do you say after you say hello?: The psychology of human destiny*. Grove Press.
4. Dimitrov, A., & Andonovic, B. (2019). *Management of team's business communication* [In Macedonian]. University of St. Cyril and Methodius.
5. Edmondson, A. (1999). Psychological safety and learning behavior in work teams. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 44(2), 350–383. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2666999>
6. Hay, J. (1996). *Working it out at work: Understanding attitudes and building relationships*. Sherwood Publishing.
7. Hay, J. (2009). *Working it out at work: Understanding attitudes and building relationships* (2nd ed.). Sherwood Publishing.
8. Kahler, T. (1975). Drivers: The key to the process of scripts. *Transactional Analysis Bulletin*, 5(3), 280–284. <https://doi.org/10.1177/036215377500500318>
9. Kahler, T. (2008). *The process therapy model: The six personality types with adaptations*. Taibi Kahler Associates.

About the authors

Prof. Ana Tomova, PhD, is a Full Professor at the Faculty of Technology and Metallurgy at the Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje, North Macedonia, since 2024. She has been working at the Faculty of Technology and Metallurgy in Skopje since 2008, first as a research associate and later as a lecturer in metallurgy. She is a member of the Association of Metallurgists of Macedonia and the association NanoMak. She is the co-author of numerous publications in renowned scientific journals. She is currently the Head of the Master's Study Program in Extractive Metallurgy and the Head of the Career Center at the Faculty of Technology and Metallurgy, Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje. The author can be contacted at: anatomova@tmf.ukim.edu.mk

Snezana Stavrova holds a Bachelor's degree in Food Science and Biotechnology Engineering. She is currently pursuing two Master's degrees: one in Quality Management at the University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius – Skopje, and another in Environmental Engineering at the University "Goce Delcev" - Stip. She has nearly 20 years of experience in quality management, food safety, and occupational health systems. Based in the Netherlands, she works remotely, conducting quality management audits and volunteering at the Municipality of Zwolle. The author can be contacted at: stavrova.snezana@gmail.com

Prof. Aleksandar Dimitrov, PhD, is a Full Professor at the Faculty of Technology and Metallurgy, Skopje, North Macedonia, and Head of the Department of Extractive Metallurgy. His current research is focused on nanomaterials and nanostructures, particularly on the synthesis of graphene, MWCNTs, and other carbon nanomaterials, as well as on quality management. Prof. Dimitrov has been a leader of many international projects. The author can be contacted at: aco2501@gmail.com

Prof. Bosko Boskovski, PhD, is a Full Professor at the Faculty of Technology and Metallurgy at the Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje, North Macedonia, since 2024. He currently teaches courses in the Inorganic Engineering and Environmental Protection study program. His scientific research focuses on mineral raw materials and ecology. He has published more than 20 research papers in reputable scientific journals, conducted several studies, and participated in scientific research projects. He is also the author of several internal textbooks. The author can be contacted at: bboskovski@tmf.ukim.edu.mk

Prof. Beti Andonovic is a full professor at the Faculty of Technology and Metallurgy at the Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje, Macedonia. She holds a PhD in Mathematical Sciences, with a focus on algebraic topology, from the Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics in Skopje. She has participated in numerous international and national research projects, serving as a contributor, member of management committees, and Scientific Communication Officer. Prof. Andonovic previously served as Head of the Institute of Chemical and Control Engineering and currently holds the positions of Head of the Second-Cycle Study Program in Quality Management and Vice Dean for Science and International Collaboration at the Faculty of Technology and Metallurgy. The author can be contacted at: beti@tmf.ukim.edu.mk