Higher Education Reform in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Priorities for Integrated University Management

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Ambassador Michael B. Humphreys
Head of Delegation of the European
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The joint project between the European Commission and the Council of Europe has laid the foundations for the reform of the Higher Education sector in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This project constitutes the first step in a long road towards reform of higher education and indeed education as a whole in this country.

I am particularly pleased with the sense of ownership displayed by many of the principal actors and their dedication to reform.

Bosnia and Herzegovina has committed itself to the Bologna Principles and the Lisbon process but there is a growing realisation that it has a lot of catching-up to do in terms of aligning the country with the European acquis and of course preparing for eventual membership of the European Union. A number of initiatives have been taken during the lifetime of this project to remedy this. Graduates who have invested time, energy and resources to obtain their degrees deserve to have their efforts recognised both at home and internationally.

The European Commission will continue to accompany this process but the impetus must come from within.

I congratulate all associated with the project for their dynamism and professionalism and remain confident that, despite the difficulties ahead, Bosnia and Herzegovina is on the right track which will lead to a better future for its young people and indeed, for the country as a whole.

Gabriele Mazza
Council of Europe
Director General of School,
Out of School and Higher Education

Throughout Europe, Higher Education is undergoing a far reaching reform in the frame of the Bologna Process. In Bosnia and Herzegovina this challenge is even greater than elsewhere. This is why the European Commission and the Council of Europe have joined forces to make this process successful. Within the joint project "Modernising Governance and Management of Universities in BiH" we assist Higher Education Institutions and political authorities in BiH to develop jointly practical tools for the implementation of the required reforms.

Possibly the biggest impact of this project is that for the first time fora were provided in which all BiH Universities jointly analyse their problems and develop tools and perspectives for their respective institution's strategic development.

These collected recommendations for management priorities of Universities in BiH are such a joint tool, developed by staff members and students from all BiH Universities in a series of workshops and have helped the Universities to enter a constructive discussion on issues of common concern.

I wish to congratulate all those involved in this difficult but successful exercise, first of all the workshop participants from BiH.

At the same time our gratitude goes to the international experts who were assisting and guiding this process: Prof. Dr. Fuada Stanković, Prof. Dr. Ivan Ostrovský and Mr David Crosier from the European University Association.
I would also like to pay tribute to the European Commission, whose generous financial and political support has made this project possible. And last but not least, I would like to record my appreciation of the excellent work done by my colleagues in the Council of Europe project team, Ms Karen Roberts and Mr Nedim Vrabac.

Both the Council of Europe and the European Commission remain dedicated to assisting Higher Education reforms in BiH. We hope that this working document will encourage all individuals and stakeholders involved in Higher Education reform in BiH to meet the challenges outlined in the Bologna Process.

The joint project of the European Commission and the Council of Europe "Modernising Management and Governance Capacities of Universities in BiH" August 2003 - October 2005

The Bologna process that BiH joined in September 2003 serves as the framework of reform across Europe. It outlines the requisite steps to create a European Higher Education Area, introduce Quality Assurance and enhance the mobility and employability of European higher education graduates thus ensuring competitiveness of European higher education on a world scale.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina far reaching reforms lie ahead. They require a joint effort not only by the Universities themselves but also by the political and administrative authorities in charge of Higher Education. Jointly, the Universities of Bosnia and Herzegovina have committed themselves to this reform process and are trying to incorporate the principles defined by Bologna - in order to become full fledged members of the European Higher Education Area.

This process was made possible in the frame of a joint project of the Council of Europe and the European Commission: "Modernising Management and Governance Capacities of Universities in BiH". In a first step this project facilitated Institutional Reviews of each University in Bosnia and Herzegovina together with the European University Association. These peer reviews resulted in a cross cutting analysis of the current state of Universities in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in recommendations for priorities in the transformation process.

In a second step, these recommendations led to a series of support measures to develop tools and institutions for the implementation of the reform:

1. the establishment of a BiH Rectors' Conference in Spring 2005, an independent umbrella organisation of all BiH Universities to coordinate institutional reforms, to advise the relevant authorities regarding framework conditions for Higher Education and to represent BiH Universities in international Higher Education bodies and networks. The Rectors' Conference was successfully established.

2. the establishment of the future BiH ENIC office (in cooperation with the Austrian Development Agency) in June 2005, an office providing relevant information for the recognition of qualifications from Bosnia and Herzegovina and abroad

3. the development of a prototype statute for BiH Universities - accomplished in June 2005 - in accordance with European Trends and the pending legal provision for the integration of Universities to become one legal body. All Universities delegated members to the drafting committee and endorsed the final product.

4. a series of training sessions for managers and staff from all BiH Universities, on issues related to institutional management in preparation of a comprehensive institutional development strategy.

This publication was prepared to further disseminate the core issues and solutions from the management training sessions and to initiate a discussion on a broader scale, using as a basis the four workshops in the frame of the joint project of the European Commission and the Council of Europe.

Preamble

This publication should be read as a practical manual addressing, in summary form, key issues of University management examined through a series of management training seminars. It does not attempt to provide easy answers to deeply rooted problems, and should therefore be read critically in the context of a University-wide debate on the whole process of higher education reform.

Priorities for Integrated University Management

During all the training seminars with BiH University representatives, the elaboration of priorities and tools for effective and quality oriented University management started with taking stock of encountered problems.

The unsatisfactory framework conditions were a recurrent and dominant issue: the fragmentation at all levels of society - legal provisions, directives, authorities, and most importantly the fragmentation of the Universities themselves - combine with political deadlock to block any state-level development including the much-needed state level Higher Education Framework Law for BiH.

However frustrating these environmental circumstances are, both for individuals and institutions, the BiH Universities are determined to move forward with reforms. Awareness is rising that there are very few legal obstacles that can prevent self-initiated reforms that are supported within the Universities. This increasing self-initiative of Universities deserves and requires practical support, while the Universities also need to coordinate reforms among themselves to maintain a compatible and open higher education system in BiH.

In this context, the management seminars were a self-evaluation exercise undertaken by University representatives while at the same time aimed to provide support and orientation for key staff members involved in University management.

The major institutional deficits identified by the participants are:

- Lack of human resources management
- Unsatisfactory student progression
- Lack of international contacts and cooperation
- Scant academic research
- Absence of research strategies, priorities and incentives
- Lack of attention to real needs of learners
- Lack of "customer-orientation" regarding stakeholder and local

community cooperation, including the fostering of employable skills, competences and relevant knowledge

- Outdated understanding of curricula and study programmes, and of the approach to teaching and learning
- Lack of long-term institutional vision, and of realistic mid-and long-term planning
- Lack of effective monitoring within Universities
- Lack of institutional responsibility and accountability for obvious shortcomings,
- Lack of cohesive University community identity among staff and students
- Inadequate age structure of teaching staff
- Where it exists, quality culture developed at faculty level instead of throughout the University
- Unmotivated and professionally stagnant administrative staff
- Outdated managerial approach (i.a. to data collection and use of data)

The following chapters summarise the participants' suggestions for improve-ment, translate them into performance indicators and suggest the different levels and/or University bodies responsible for improving and implementing these indicators.

The precondition for this improvement is that the University finds a means to set targets:

- The Senate needs to agree there is a certain problem and assume responsibility.
- The Senate needs to determine the objectives, set policy goals and determine the relevant performance indicators.
- The Senate needs to set annual targets over a period of several years and follow up on and support their implementation systematically, through developing and monitoring the relevant performance indicators.

The following chapters outline the most important issues that need to be addressed. They cannot, however provide a tool box for "repairing" a specific management related institutional short-coming.

Bosnia and Herzegovina is exceptionally challenged by the Bologna requirements. While implementing reforms that are undertaken throughout Europe, BiH also needs to make up for specific deficits of its Higher Education system rooted in the country's recent history: its political and economic transformation and the legacy of a war torn society.

At the same time the Bologna reform process presents a unique opportunity to cope with this task since it provides a comprehensive concept and tools for a systematic curricula reform. The focus on the relevance of Higher Education for society, on learning outcomes and the development of competences presents the key to curricula reform and subsequently to programme development.

The concrete implementation however, poses a variety of intertwined problems, such as the lack of a comprehensive country wide framework or joint institutional guidelines that would enable a compatible approach by the individual Universities. While the political framework is still under negotiation, the niversities in BiH are facing their responsibility and have started to implement Bologna-compatible curricular reforms.

Observed problems

- Very few state of the art curricula exist.
- The offered programmes and curricula are determined by the existing and limited teaching capacities instead of aiming to meet learner needs.
- The introduction of the three cycle system and ECTS risks becoming a technical exercise of reorganising existing practice instead of identifying and introducing relevant learning outcomes as a teaching objective.
- The newly introduced study structures risk varying from University to University, and even from faculty to faculty.
- At times the transformation of study programmes requires extra teaching capacities to cover courses for students from the "old" and the "new" programs.

For curricular reform it is crucial to improve coordination and coherence, particularly by ensuring that the rectorate and senate oversee and manage the complex process.

As a non-governmental organisation of all BiH Universities, the newly established BiH Rectors' Conference has an important role to play in this process, by developing a country-wide model for Bologna structures and by issuing relevant guidelines (e.g. regarding the length of the

study cycles), thus ensuring a compatible approach by the individual Universities.

Objective

- Develop or adapt a mission statement for the University with relevance to societal and learner needs.
- Re-think and redefine the purposes of curricula before changing them, in line with the University's mission statement.
- Set priorities for curricula reform and for study programs in line with the requirements of the labour market and taking account of the human resources available at the University.
- Introduce quality assurance and monitoring mechanisms in the new programs.

Suggested performance indicators

- comparable curricula within BiH - particularly within the same disciplines (Rectors Conference to oversee)
- curricula comparable with other European Universities (diploma supplement)
- correct use of ECTS as a credit accumulation and transfer system, and systematic introduction of the Diploma Supplement (Rectors Conference to oversee)

Possible means

- Draw upon experience from outside the University and country in reforming curricula.
- Consult with business and industry stakeholders.
- Establish cross faculty working groups to develop a joint frame that will be implemented by the faculties. Coordination by the rectorate and senate.
- Introduce ECTS University-wide in a coherent manner (no individual solutions from individual faculties).
- Develop internal quality assurance mechanisms at University level, including student evaluation.
- Develop external quality assurance, taking account of the professional quality of graduates.
- Develop joint programmes with foreign Universities.
- Generate learner oriented curricula including
  - generic skills development (oral, written, IT, language, communication, team work),
  - discipline related skills,
  - programs developing skills and competences for a knowledge society (instead of memorising facts),
  - rationalised course contents (to the length of one semester),
  - flexible programmes with (more) optional courses,
  - (more) interdisciplinary, interdepartmental/interfaculty programs,
  - (more) written exams,
  - small groups oriented to problem solving.

Initially, the project had dedicated one of four workshops to the issue of staff progression. During the self-evaluation exercise it became clear that a broader perspective is necessary to cover this issue - the management of human resources, referring to both academic and non-academic staff.

Observed problems

- The absence of human resources management at all University levels.
- A traditional approach to data collection and to data use regarding human resources.
- A lack of vision, initiative and motivation on the management side.
- No guidance for academic staff as to what is expected from them.
- Too many excuses for not taking initiative (low autonomy, lack of finances, dependence on external stakeholders, lack of legal framework, etc.).
- A lack of rewarding mechanisms for good performance.
- A lack of international and internationally qualified academic staff.

On the positive side, some Universities have developed strategies on paper, at institutional or at a lower level. But many are still awaiting implementation and where they are - usually at the level of a faculty or below - put in practice they are not always shared University wide.

The initiative and practicable guidelines for a coherent human resources management must come from a central University body, the rectorate and or senate, defining objectives, performance indicators and the means to achieve them but also assuring their implementation by delegating tasks and following up on their progress.

Objective

- Develop a vision for the University's future human resources and capacities - as an open University with dynamic, well connected and younger staff, stable age structure etc..
- Clarify specific responsibilities of all University levels - University, faculty, department.
- Define performance indicators, set targets for their implementation and decide upon easures to build up the desired internal competences.
- Develop a system of efficient information management which enables strategic policies and decision making to be effectively implemented.

Suggested performance indicators
related to:
- external exposure of University staff
- international exposure of university staff
- IT and language skills
- University staff support to learners and the learning process (instead of pure traditional teaching)
- International staff members
- Internal comparison between the academic and non academic staff performance from different units

Possible means
- Establish a human resources office at central University level (with precise terms of reference, tasks and competences).
- Set targets for the next 5 years - both for the office itself and for the University as a whole.
- Establish minimum standards for academic career levels and performance in research and teaching.
- Introduce and maintain internal audit & evaluation (according to the performance indicators and set targets).
- Introduce systematic University support tools for staff and performance development (training opportunities, special fund for young academics).
- Introduce work load oriented wages and incentives for good performance (e.g. University wide scheme for wages, bonuses, awards).
- Reduce duplicating functions at faculty level.
- Restrict the teaching staff's absences (when lecturing at other universities) and other activities that conflict with the University's interest.

The University has a role in educating people with the concept of Life Long Learning. If it doesn't assume this education mission and respond to labour market demands, academic degrees and careers will soon lose their value for society. The institution needs to be thinking very carefully about the developments on the labour market and needs to formally and informally cooperate with employers.

Observed problems

- Rigid and out-dated study programmes and teaching methods.
- Slow student progression, high drop-out rates during exams and long duration of studies.
- The University lacks a feeling of institutional responsibility for unsatisfactory student progression.
- Lack of practical and job related teaching and training.
- Weak academic and non-academic support mechanisms.
- Low and inadequate student participation in decision-making, evaluation of teaching and student support services.
- High enrolment rates and unsatisfactory teacher-student ratio.
- No monitoring of student progression at University level, little support for students who have difficulties, no follow-up after graduation.
- An inconsistent/non-transparent system for study and tuition fees.

Guided by the institutions' responsibility for students' success during their academic career and later on, the rectorate and senate can provide effective guidance when defining the relevant objectives, performance indicators and the means to improve their students' progress.

Objective

- Formulate the University's mission statement as an education facility For future professionals in the relevant public and private sector as well as the European labour market.
- Establish formal and informal cooperation with employers and stakeholders.
- Identify performance indicators, set targets for improvement, introduce rewards and penalties related to these targets, and decide upon measures to build up the desired competences within a set time frame.

Suggested performance indicators

- demand for the offered study programmes
- employment rates of University graduates
- drop-out rates / success rates
- ratio of theoretical and practical length of study
- results of evaluations carried out by students
- internship rates in industry and public sector
- percentage of faculty with relevant non-academic, professional experience
- percentage of externally funded projects at the University
- formal and informal cooperation with external stakeholders

Possible means

- Carry out or commission a market analysis
  (Who are the key employers locally? Which are the potential international employers? Which are the general trends on the European Labour Market? What learning outcomes are required? What formal and informal cooperation exists?) combined with an analysis of the existing study programmes and the development potential.
- Identify priority sectors/subjects in which to invest and develop as a centre of excellence.
- Develop a standardised package for collecting and monitoring relevant data (coordination through the Rectors' Conference would add value to the exercise).
- Formulate the relevant targets in the Institutional Development Plan and set time lines for their achievement.
- Develop a communication strategy towards external stakeholders.
- Create an advisory board with external employers (public and private sector).
- Explain the University's objectives to the employers and gain their support.
- Establish a career office for
  - mediating student employment, scholarships and internships,
  - liaison with employers,
  - maintaining an award system for outstanding teaching,
  - maintaining a database (employers, best students ...),
  - career oriented PR.
- Establish an office for student services
  - providing economic, social, health related and cultural support services for students,
  - involve students.
- Introduce an academic advisor at each faculty
  - to mentor students throughout their studies.
  - to provide initial guidance before and right after enrolment
  - involve advanced students in the mentoring system.
- Introduce University wide monitoring of student progression (statistics).
- Introduce incentives for faculties with high success rates of students.
- Establish an alumni network.

Research is a core business of Universities and one of its service functions. It is also the basis for state of the art teaching at all academic levels. It is the main feature differentiating Universities from other schooling facilities.

The Universities' research performance is - despite positive exceptions - underdeveloped and one of the most urgent areas in demand of development, before the Universities lose their raison d'être.

Observed problems
- Very limited research activities and capacities in terms of funding, facilities and qualified staff.
- Research is perceived as an individual matter and not as the core business of the University.
- Insufficient alignment of research with external demands.
- No comparison with international research performance, no state of the art research and no reflection of state of the art science in the study programmes and teaching contents.
- Small number of PhD students and thus of future researchers.
- Students are not included in research projects.

A cooperative and interdisciplinary approach is necessary to re-establish a research friendly environment and thus one of the main characteristics of Universities. This can be achieved only though a joint effort with central coordination by the rectorate and senate of the University.

Objective
- Formulate the University's priorities for developing state of the art research activities and units (PhD programmes need to be part of the vision).
- Identify performance indicators, set targets for their improvement and decide upon measures to build up the desired competences within a set time frame.
- Develop a programme for cooperation with external stakeholders (e.g. entrepreneurial activities, spin-offs, University clusters).

Suggested performance indicators
- international recognition of research results (publications in international reviews, active participation in international conferences, exchange of guest lecturers and researchers with partners abroad)

- proactive research units
- external funding resources
- PhD programmes (i.a. for future academic staff in teaching and research)
- international benchmarking (procedures established)
- interdepartmental laboratories and research centres

Possible means

- Take a central decision on research priorities and funded projects (preceded by a discussion across the University) with external help.
- External help is crucial for the decision upon the University's priorities. It should comprise
  - a country - wide stock-taking of research capacities (with the Rectors Conference involvement),
  - a market analysis for potential and actual research demand.
- Lump sum funding from University resources and careful assignment of resources for selected priority areas.
- Transparent, competitive procedures for the allocation of research funds.
- Develop and implement a strategy for external cooperation.
- Develop and implement a strategy for international benchmarking (e.g. by introducing incentives and rewards for internationally peer reviewed research).

A central data base on research capacities, facilities and projects throughout BiH would enable all Universities to better coordinate their research priorities. Such an initiative could be launched by the BiH Rectors' Conference. The data base could build upon some already existing data in BiH (at entity and cantonal level) and profit from previous work in this field by international and national initiatives (e.g. the FP 6 National Information Point for BiH or the SEE-ERA.net).

The issue of internationalisation affects most issues related to institutional reform of Universities in BiH and therefore reoccurred in all topics treated during the manager training seminars. This chapter is therefore extracting the relevant points from the various sessions.

Observed problems

- lack of international cooperation and contacts
- lack of information on international cooperation possibilities
- under-equipped and understaffed international offices
- monopolisation of international contacts and opportunities by the upper hierarchy
- lack of language skills and IT communication facilities
- limited foreign interest in scientific cooperation with BiH
- unattractive study and work conditions for foreign academics
- limited awareness of regional, European and international developments in teaching and research
- no "strategic" use of alumni working in academic institutions abroad

Only if taken to an institutional level, can a strategy lead to the long term internationalisation of the University as a whole, instead of relying on the initiative of ╱ being of benefit for a few individuals or institutional bodies. Country-wide, the BiH Rectors' Conference can play an important in the process of internationalisation, acting as a centre for information and cooperation with partners abroad and political stakeholders in BiH.

Objective

- Formulate the University's vision as an open, internationally recognised and attractive academic institution.
- Identify performance indicators, set targets for their improvement and decide upon concrete measures to within a set time frame.

Suggested performance indicators

- the number of internationally experienced academic and non-academic staff
- number of incoming foreign students
- number of outgoing students during studies
- number of interdisciplinary, interdepartmental studies, joint courses, etc.
- foreign guest lecturers and scientists are involved in the University
- percentage of graduates who have studied or worked in an international

context during their studies
- international cooperation projects and teaching programmes (real academic or scientific work, not just "academic tourism")

Possible means

- Develop staff numbers and skills in international office.
- Set performance targets.
  - for the international office,
  - for mobility of staff and students (outgoing and incoming),
  - to prepare for the new generation of EU programmes (Socrates/Erasmus 2007-2013).
- Facilitate student involvement in the international office activities.
- University wide information strategy on international cooperation and opportunities.
- Introduction of criteria and incentives to send staff abroad.
- Implement strategy for foreign language and IT courses.
- Implement strategy for the use of IT communication facilities.
- Implement a strategy to cooperate with alumni working in academic institutions abroad.
- Data base at University level to monitor student progression.

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Further information

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