



**Final Conference of the Joint EU/CoE project
“Strategic Development of Higher Education and Qualifications Standards”
6-7 July 2015, Sarajevo**

Sarajevo, 13 July 2015

The final conference of the joint EU/CoE project “Strategic Development of Higher Education and Qualifications Standards” was held on **6-7 July 2015 in Sarajevo**.

This conference was the first major event in Bosnia and Herzegovina organised under the BiH Chairmanship of the Council of Europe.

More than 120 representatives of the academic community, governmental institutions and agencies, students, employers, international organisations, embassies and development agencies gathered at the joint conference of the European Union and the Council of Europe to present and discuss the results of the project which supported Bosnia and Herzegovina in the fulfillment of its commitments since joining the Bologna Process in 2003.

The Project results were developed together with BiH stakeholders over the past two years and will facilitate higher education reforms through better quality education as well as increased student mobility, both within BiH and abroad. Specifically, BiH partners and international experts of the Council of Europe developed draft priorities for the development of higher education in Bosnia and Herzegovina 2016-2026 based on a thorough analysis of the situation in higher education in Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as a manual for the further development and use of qualifications and occupational standards in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Welcoming speeches were given by Mr Adil Osmanović, the Minister of civil affairs of BiH and Mr Massimo Mina, Head of operations section for social development, civil society and cross border cooperation of the Delegation of the European Union to BiH.

An overview of the status and prospects of the European Higher Education Area in the light of the Yerevan conference and its Communiqué was given by Mr Sjur Bergan, Head of Education Department and Director ad interim of Directorate for Democratic Citizenship and Participation, Council of Europe.

Further presentations covered:

- The overview of project activities and results by Nedim Vrabac;
- The draft “Priorities for development of higher education in BiH 2016 – 2026” by Esma Hadžagić;
- New European standards and guidelines for quality assurance in European Higher Education Area by Bruno Curvale;



- The vital role of expert trainers in the reform of European and BiH qualifications and occupational standards by Stephen Adam;
- The manual for the development and use of qualifications and occupational standards in BiH by Stephen Adam.

The project results were also discussed in two workshops, one dedicated to the draft document “Priorities for development of higher education in BiH 2016-2026” and the second one dedicated to the *Manual for development and use of qualifications and occupational standards in BiH*.

Certificates were awarded to 21 BiH trainers for the development and use of qualifications and occupational standards in BiH who were trained within the project to assist all stakeholders, in particular higher education institutions, in the reform and development of study programmes and qualifications.

After very interesting and intensive discussions the participants adopted **the conclusions of Conference** as recommendations to all stakeholders in higher education in BiH and more specifically to competent education authorities and higher education institutions.

Conclusions of the Conference

1. Conference participants agreed with and supported all project results and recommend their immediate implementation.
2. Regarding the “Priorities for development of higher education in BiH 2016-2026”, participants agreed with and fully supported the draft “Priorities for development of higher education in BiH 2016-2026”, with the recommendation to pay special attention to:
 - Harmonisation of laws on higher education with the Framework Higher Education Law in BiH;
 - Strengthening institutional autonomy of higher education institutions;
 - Introducing new ways of higher education financing with stable and equitable financing, taking account of the autonomy of higher education institutions and their responsibility;
 - Strengthening the BiH Rectors Conference as the highest advisory academic body in BiH, by including private higher education institutions as new members;
 - Strengthening research and innovation, paying particular attention to the necessity to base teachers’ salaries not exclusively on the number of teaching hours;
 - Strengthening the connection between higher education and the labour market.
3. Regarding the *Manual for development and use of qualifications and occupational standards in BiH*, conference participants agreed that:
 - All higher education institutions should use both the manual and trainers immediately without delay;



- All stakeholders should encourage current and future relevant projects to use the trainers trained within the framework of this EU/CoE joint programme;
- Higher education institutions - opportunity for trainers to inform senior management and colleagues;
- Higher education institutions should develop a training plan for all its staff and trainers should work with colleagues working on quality assurance;
- Higher education institutions and other relevant institutions should support and recognise trainers on development and use of qualifications and occupational standards trained within the framework of this EU/CoE joint programme;
- Trainers on development and use of qualifications and occupational standards in BiH should further train more trainers;
- Project team should distribute the Manual to all higher education institutions and other relevant institutions;
- All stakeholders should use trainers at local, regional and state levels;
- Link trainers to Quality Assurance body/agency and to programme/institutional accreditation;
- New study programme accreditation, as well as review of existing programmes, to be guided by the Manual;
- Engage local trained experts in future international projects;
- Support the trainer network;
- Trainers to have a key role in creating/testing/evaluating new Qualifications Standards and Occupational Standards;
- Manual and trainers to be presented to Rectors' conference and BiH Ministers of Education.

The Conference was evaluated by all participants as very useful and well organized. It is one of three important events in the area of education that Bosnia and Herzegovina will host in 2015 within BiH Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. From 2-3 November 2015, the conference 2015 Exchange on the Religious Dimension of Intercultural Dialogue – Building Inclusive Societies Together will be held followed by the Final Conference and regional education ministerial meeting of the joint EU/CoE regional project “Support to inclusive education” from 5-6 November 2015, both to be held in Sarajevo.