

Joint EU/CoE Project
Strategic Development of Higher Education and Qualification Standards



1st meeting of the Advisory group for the analysis of the situation in higher education in Bosnia and Herzegovina

29-30 January 2014, Hotel Europe, Sarajevo

Conclusions

Welcoming and opening session:

The workshop was introduced with a series of brief statements by *Daria Duilović (BiH Ministry of Civil Affairs)*, *Jadranka Mihić (EU Task Manager)* and *Nedim Vrabac (CoE project manager)*. The aim of the meeting was to discuss the proposed methodology of the potential analysis of the situation in higher education in BiH as a preparation for the work on drafting priorities for development of higher education in BiH. In their statements the speakers emphasised the importance of the new joint project and its context and complexity. Special importance was given about the importance of MoCA and EUD work in the past few years on synergies of projects, efforts and results and that the Advisory group, when discussing the methodology of the analysis, should bear in mind that many projects and analyses were already done, perhaps even too many and the previous work should be used to the fullest possible extent in this project. The significance of the outcome of this meeting was pointed out as well as few principles the Advisory group should apply in its discussions: the outcomes should be realistic, pragmatic, implementable, duplication and repetition of work must be avoided, results of previous projects (such as Reform of Higher Education Financing should be used as basis).

The project manager presented the joint EU/CoE project and all of its components, providing a picture of the project's complex structure, set up and purpose of the Advisory group. He also emphasised that other components in the project would provide information on some of the key areas i.e. qualification standards.

The components of the joint project are:

1. Development of priorities for higher education in BiH
2. Development of qualification standards in 5 subject fields
3. Guidelines for recognition of qualification in line with results of component 2
4. Development of action plan for the implementation of Higher Education Qualification Framework in BiH.

Introduction:

This session gave an introduction to the planned work of the Advisory group meeting. Mr Bruno Curvale gave a presentation of Bologna process as a tool for development of higher education in any country, priorities development and coherence of action, necessity of evidence based priorities and importance of having information circulation about outcomes of actions and initiatives from all stakeholders. Prof. Jocey Quinn presented the proposed matrixes for 6 key areas for the envisaged analysis within the project: HE service to society, good governance and management, resources, student experience, internationalisation and qualification standards. She explained the logic behind the matrices, questions to be answered, criteria, indicators, data sources and possible methods to be used in obtaining information.

This session was followed by discussion per each topic with the purpose of looking in detail each key area and proposed matrix, main questions, and provide advice having in mind

principles stated at the beginning thus narrowing the number and scope of the analysis key areas.

Key area 1 – Higher Education service to society:

During the intensive discussion on this key area, various comments were made: it was commented that this topic is too wide to be analysed within this project, and that it would be of more relevance and immediate need to do the analysis on link between higher education and labour market, the issue of mechanisms for study programme development based on labour market needs, quality of study programmes related to inclusion of more practice, number of students and how to guide students to relevant study programmes. The advisory group agreed that the key area should be changed to “connection between higher education and labour market” and that potential analysis should focus on:

1. Mechanisms of linking universities, ministries and labour market
2. Mechanisms of study programmes’ development
3. Elements of enrolment policies and quality of teaching related to labour market
4. Feedback from employers

It was also pointed out that examples of good practice should be widely distributed and used by all universities in BiH.

Key area 2 and 3 – Good governance and management and Resource

It was strongly stated during the discussion in this session that there are many studies and results done by other projects. It was reiterated that results from previous projects and initiatives should be taken and that no additional analysis should be done in these areas. As primary examples results from EU funded project implemented by GOPA “Support to Higher Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina” and “Reform of Higher Education Financing” project were mentioned.

After the discussion it was agreed that these 2 areas will not be analysed further within the joint EU/CoE project. The project team together with EUD and MoCA will obtain results from GOPA project and RHEF project and distribute them to Advisory group members for their information. These results together with other relevant studies and recommendation done will be the basis for the development of priorities in these two areas.

Key area 4 – Student experience

This session started with the explanation of the term “student experience” and what it entails. “Student experience” is a holistic concept. It covers four main fields:

Studying and Learning-for example, access to high quality curricula and teaching.

Social and Personal Development: for example, opportunities to take part in sport and leisure, facilitation of peer networks, opportunities for volunteering.

Involvement in Decision Making: for example opportunities to take part in university committees and advisory groups, opportunities to form student unions.

Student Welfare: for example access to counselling services, access to healthcare, provision for students with special needs, good quality housing.

It was agreed that this needs to be analysed given that research in this field has never been done before. In that sense it was agreed that the terminology should be more precise in this matrix, but also in matrices for other areas.

The group also agreed that additional questions or criteria should be included – social welfare and also to include the experience of students with special needs in the analysis of this area and current practices in universities in that regard, especially since there are cases where students give up studies due to their disabilities and because equal treatment was not provided. It would be interesting to find out if universities have offices for students with special needs.

Joint EU/CoE Project
Strategic Development of Higher Education and Qualification Standards



It was pointed out that in terms of students' participation in development of curricula they participate de jure, based on regulations contained in statutes of all universities in BiH, but that in practice it is not satisfactory and that students' participation is of more formal nature.

Key area 5 – Internationalisation

The advisory group agreed that this area should also be analysed since no analysis was done before on the internationalisation of universities and due its importance, especially in sense of mobility. Numerous comments were given in the discussion on this topic: it was stated that the mobility is mentioned as one the priorities in EU 2020 strategy, SEE 2020 strategy, which increases the importance of this topic; mobility should be looked at within BiH and abroad; there is no harmonised system of mobility; key element for development of mobility in BiH is joint doctoral study programmes; the mobility is directly related to quality of education; a systemic solution should be found for financing of mobility of academic staff and students. For the next meeting of the Advisory group, the project should send relevant chapters related to mobility from EU 2020 and SEE 2020 strategies to the Advisory group members

Key area 6 – Qualification standards

The Advisory group was informed that there are currently many initiatives in this area. Most importantly the BiH Commission for Qualification Framework in BiH developed a proposal for the Action plan for the full implementation of QFBIH over the next 7 years, which needs to be yet adopted by the BiH Council of Ministers. There are currently two projects dealing with qualification standards related to higher education TEPMUS project "BiH Higher Education Qualification Framework" and as presented at the beginning of the meeting, the joint EU/CoE project "Strategic Development of Higher Education and Qualification Standards" in its component 2. It was agreed that is too early to analyse qualification standards before the implementation of the QFBIH and because this process is in progress, the Advisory group agreed that this area should not be analysed within this project.

General discussion:

The Programme manager explained that the joint project must prepare, based on this meeting of the Advisory group, documents for the analysis of higher education in BiH and development of priorities in HE in BiH, for the next meeting of the Project Steering Board where the final decision on the next steps in this component would be taken.

In that regard, the Advisory group requested that the project sends all documents again to the Advisory group, with changes agreed upon at the meeting, to be able to send written additional comments.

All documents should be reviewed in terms of terminology and more applicable to BiH language, understandings and concepts.

Several comments were made that the layout and the structure of matrices is confusing and that it should be changed if possible.

Proposal was given to use students in all parts of potential analysis for data gathering and other required activities.

Conclusions:

A number of conclusions were agreed:

- 3 key areas will not be analysed: Good governance and management; Resources; Qualification standards.
- Key area “HE service to society” will be more focused and called “connection between higher education and labour market” and international experts will propose questions relevant to the new focus.
- 2 key areas should be analysed – student experience and internationalisation, particularly because analysis of these areas wasn’t done before.
- The project team together with international experts will review the documents and include all the changes made and agreed at the meeting.
- The project will redesign the matrices and send them to all Advisory group members.
- The project will also include a column in the table where Advisory group members are asked to propose appropriate methods for the analysis of each question.

Attachments:

- Revised matrices for 3 key areas