

Banja Luka University Report, Second Site Visit

The visit took place October 16, 2012 from 10:30 – 16:00h

Present:

Experts:

Dr. Attila Pausits, Danube University, Austria

Prof. Dr. Werner Schaal, Marburg University, Germany

Members of Banja Luka University:

Prof. Dr. Stanko Stanic, Rector

Prof. Dr. Simo Jokanovic, Vice-Rector

Prof. Dr. Jelena Rozic , International Relations

Prof. Dr. P. Maric, Dean

The visit at the University of Banja Luka was well organized. All the people we met were aware of our visit, of the objectives of the project and of the state of affairs. They all spoke in a very open and constructive way about the progress they made in the recent years, especially since our last site visit in March 2010, and about the problems they face and that they try to solve.

Rector's report

There exists a new law for the universities which gives a couple of improvements.

- a) Integration of the university is making relatively good progress and is supported by the government. Its realization still belongs to the main goals of the university management and there are many activities which have been taken over by the central administration.

There are regular self-evaluation reports by the university, supported by the faculties. Quality assessment measures are taken care of by the central administration and are also supported by the faculties. There are quality assurance coordinators in each faculty. The university carries out quality assessment with a staff of about five or seven people. Rector and Vice-Rectors discuss the outgoing results with faculties and institutions and try to find positive solutions out of these evaluations.

- b) Fees coming from the students now can stay completely with the university. Their total amount comprises about 20% of the university's overall budget. About two thirds of the overall budget are coming from the government, the rest from university activities (services). As far as we understand there is no lump sum budget for the university which makes it difficult to make special own decisions.
- c) The university is essentially free to enroll students. This does not mean that the university has not to ask the ministry for approving the enrollment numbers but during the last years there have not been any difficulties with the numbers suggested by the university. There is one main problem concerning enrollment: The unemployment rate in Srpska is very high, probably more than 30%. Consequently the academic unemployment rate is also high and a great deal of the graduates of this university does not find an appropriate job. Enrollment numbers, therefore, should take into account the situation of the labor market. On the other hand one is not free of conjecturing that the government is interested in a relatively long stay of students at the university.
- d) University tries to improve quantity and quality of research. There are certain benchmarks for checking the quality of research, e.g. number of publications in recognized journals, patents, organization of national and international conferences and, of course, watching the citation index of publication. The main obstacle for good research is the lack of funds. For getting such funds professors have to apply at the ministry and the amounts are fairly small. Obviously there exist yearly published research reports.
- e) Banja Luka University is involved in the furthering and supporting of LLL and also in improving didactical qualities of its teaching staff. Maybe there should be more efforts to improve the language qualities of professors and staff. Positively mentioned should be the exchange of administrative staff with other universities.
- f) The university is working very hard to install an information system which provides all of its members with relevant information.

International office, report by the Vice-Rector

Banja Luka has a very efficiently working foreign office although only two persons are employed in it. There exist cooperations with quite a few universities in the surrounding Balkan area, e.g. the University of Novi Sad concerning research in physics as well as with the University of Missouri in the US. Last year there were about 100 in- and outgoing students, most of them outgoing. The faculties have their own foreign coordinators who obviously work together very efficiently with the foreign office. The university tries to not only exchange academic but also administrative foreign staff. It is worth mentioning that the international work is not influenced by governmental restrictions. Banja Luka University signed 74 new cooperations since 2010.

Career Service

The career service of the university is connected to the entrepreneurship center. The main activities of the center are to develop students' entrepreneurship skills, to support startup companies and innovation. The "business garden" initiative helps students to establish new business especially in the rural regions from where they are coming. The center is funded throughout projects. Future plans are connected to the development of new facilities and infrastructure. At the moment it is located at a building, which is a temporary solution. The center is connected to the innovation center of the city as well as to academic units focusing on entrepreneurship issues at the university.

Final remarks by the experts.

Banja Luka University made a big step forward since the last visit and shows many remarkable results. It is on a good way into its future. The government, nevertheless, would be well advised to increase the autonomy of this university. We are convinced that the university will deal with it in a responsible way.

We wish Banja Luka University all the best for its future.

Attila Pausits

Werner Schaal