

Tuzla University Report, Second Site Visit

The site visit to the University of Tuzla took place on October 18, 2012 from 9:00-16:00h.

Present:

Experts:

Dr. Attila Pausits, Danube University, Austria

Prof. Dr. Werner Schaal, Marburg University, Germany

Members of Tuzla University:

Prof. Dr. Mensura Asceric, Vice-Rector for International Relations

Prof. Dr. Maurice Dug, Sports

Senada Karagbic, Assistant of the Secretary General

Prof. Dr. Amela Teskeredzic, Professor for Special Education

Selma Besic, Office for International Relations

Interpreter from English to Bosnian

The Rector was not present.

The meeting was headed by the Vice-Rector for International Relations. The schedule followed the one outlined by Mr. Moss, distributed to all eight WB universities of the project.

Report of the Vice-Rector

- 1) The Vice-Rector gave a report on essential developments which happened since the last visit in March 2010. As one of the important results she mentioned a new Rule Book on the academic recognition of foreign diplomas and degrees by Tuzla University. Another Rule Book was set up facilitating the mobility of staff exchange, both academic and administrative. In this context she mentioned that staff and student mobility are very low.

Very important is the installment of an office for quality assessment and a new career center. The latter one is not yet fully completed. But its existence is of great importance because of the high unemployment rate in BiH which amounts to about 40% overall. The university does not know the figures of the academic unemployment rate. The Vice-Rector mentions that enrolment numbers of students

are discussed yearly with the government and the founders in order to stay with them as close as possible to the market situation. These considerations do not imply the fixing of a "numerus clausus", but are given to students as information and help for their decision concerning the study program they want to choose.

There exists a new Framework Law which includes some changes in favor of academic affairs, meaning that the universities have more flexibility in this respect. But according to the Dayton Agreement the universities in BiH still depend to a high degree on a difficult and complicated legislation which involves the founders (government and cantons). The Vice-Rector does not see any essential change of this situation in the near future although the autonomy of the university is highly restricted by these laws.

2) Tuzla University is a fully integrated university. There existed some opposition by the faculties to this status in the beginning because they were afraid of losing too many privileges. But things have improved since the last visit of the experts in March 2010 and more and more responsibilities are transferred from the faculties to the central administration. Enrollment procedure is done by the faculties. The enrollment numbers have been approved before by the Academic Senate and the founders (cf. above). It is also important to know that salaries of academic and administrative staff obey general regulations, having as a consequence that the basic salaries for professors do not depend on the faculty to which they belong. But in addition to these basic salaries professors can increase their income by taking over additional teaching loads. The regular teaching load of a professor amounts to five hours per week and every additional hour is compensated separately. The question is allowed if this is a good regulation because research might suffer from too much concentration on teaching.

3) Management and governance

The Vice-Rector and Assistant of the Secretary General completely denied that new forms of management and governance were introduced since the last visit. Denied was also the question for employing external advisors. Reason: There are no funds for paying such advisors from outside.

Also denied was the question if the university employs specialists responsible for keeping contact to the EU and observing the development of the EU-budget for research and development.

Tuzla University has a Steering Board which is not responsible for academic affairs. Five out of its nine members are appointed by the government.

There are regular meetings between the Rectorate and the deans. But this group can only make recommendations to the Rector or to the government but is not allowed to decide on any problem.

4) Budget

There was a very intensive discussion with the persons responsible for the budget of Tuzla University. Since the last visit it decreased from about 35 million KM to 33 million KM (1 Euro~1,95583 KM) . About two thirds of the university's budget are coming from the founders, government and cantons, the remaining third comes from tuition fees and services done by the university. Fees stay now completely with the university. The university is not an "account holder" but part of the canton treasury. Consequently, the allocation of funds to different titles has to be approved by the founders in advance after negotiations about the budget have taken place between them and the university . Even the allocation of profits made by the university has to be approved by the government. Hiring of all kinds of staff, filling empty positions, decisions about creating new positions or giving up old ones in favor of other and new developments have to be approved by the government. Consequence: The university seems to be very restricted in making own decisions and it is not quite easy to start discussions about necessary reforms. It does not become clear to the experts if there are possibilities in the current legal framework to initiate essential changes of the university.

5) Quality Assurance

The newly established quality assurance office has five employees. The office responsibilities are: cooperate with quality assurance bodies and agencies within the country; collect around 60 performance indicators, develop a quality assurance rule book; run student satisfaction surveys; facilitate the Quality Board work (52 members including university and student representatives). The main activity of the office is connected to quality assurance in teaching and learning. The office developed also an integrated information management system, which helps to collect and manage quality assurance related information. For further developments it is

important to establish in the future a strategic body for quality assurance and development issues and to improve the information management at the university.

6) Bologna

Tuzla University has fully implemented the Bologna requirements in the form 4+1+3. There are revisions of the curricula and study programs every four years, always with respect to the changing developments of the market situation. This implies talks with industry and economy to improve the possibilities to find a job by the graduates. Experience shows that most of the students getting enrolled in an MA-program are doing this part time meaning that they already have a job. It is not known in how many cases employers pay for the tuition fees of their employees. It finally turned out that the PH.D.-program according to the Bologna requirements has started only this year and, consequently, nothing can be said about its success.

7) Research

The Vice-Rector for research reported about the research situation of his university. It is obvious that there are not enough funds available for research. Professors in practice have a relatively high teaching load (cf. above). Nevertheless they try to improve research conditions. Several initiatives existed by high-ranking Bosnian researchers like the initiative of the Academy of Science to tell the government and the political elite that this country cannot exist without good research conditions and that in the end a profound education of the students cannot be guaranteed without research in the universities. Moreover, it is impossible to run excellent PH.D.-programs under these conditions. In conclusion one must state that the situation since 2010 has not changed to the better, rather to the worse.

8) Internationalization

According to the report of the Vice-Rector for internationalization the university does not have an internationalization strategy. There is only one person working in the international office. Only since 2009 Tuzla University has mobility activities in the frame of EU-concepts. The numbers of in- and outgoing students are nearly negligible. The same holds true for academic staff and guest professors. There are

no modules or classes with English as language of instruction. But there is a degree seeking mobility especially from the neighborhood countries.

Final remarks by the experts

Tuzla University is not in a good condition. It works very hard to improve its present situation. Many of its difficulties are caused by the lack of autonomy. The responsible persons have the feeling that these difficulties will not be overcome in the foreseeable future. Nevertheless it is worth considering possibilities to overcome several of these difficulties inside the existing legal framework. One very important problem: The university must try to fight its weaknesses in scientific research. Otherwise it runs the risk to be ranked down to a pure teaching institution. This would not be good for the university and not be desirable for Bosnian and Herzegovina.

We have the feeling that the people to whom we talked are interested in improving the current situation. We wish them all the best for the future of their university.

Attila Pausits

Werner Schaal