

FACULTY OF BUSINESS ECONOMICS

EVALUATION REPORT

July 2014

Team:

Winfried Müller, chair

Thierry Chevaillier

Emilia Todorova

Dionyssis Kladis, team coordinator

Table of contents

1	Introduction	3
2	Governance and institutional decision-making.....	9
3.	Teaching and learning	13
4.	Research.....	17
5.	Service to society.....	18
6.	Quality culture.....	19
7.	Internationalisation	20
8.	Conclusions	21

1. Introduction

This report is the result of the evaluation of the Faculty of Business Economics (FBE) in Bar, Montenegro. The evaluation took place in the framework of the project “Higher Education and Research for Innovation and Competitiveness” (HERIC), implemented by the government of Montenegro with the overall objective to strengthen the quality and relevance of higher education and research in Montenegro.

While the institutional evaluations are taking place in the context of the project, each institution is assessed by an independent IEP team, using the IEP methodology described below. FBE is one of ten higher education institutions in Montenegro which were evaluated by IEP in the framework of the above project.

1.1 The Institutional Evaluation Programme

The Institutional Evaluation Programme (IEP) is an independent membership service of the European University Association (EUA) that offers evaluations to support the participating institutions in the continuing development of their strategic management and internal quality culture. The IEP is a full member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and is listed in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR).

The distinctive features of the Institutional Evaluation Programme are the following:

- A strong emphasis on the self-evaluation phase.
- A European and international perspective.
- A peer-review approach.
- A support to improvement.

The focus of the IEP is the institution as a whole and not the individual study programmes or units. It focuses upon:

- decision-making processes and institutional structures and effectiveness of strategic management; and
- relevance of internal quality processes and the degree to which their outcomes are used in decision-making and strategic management as well as perceived gaps in these internal mechanisms.

The evaluation is guided by four key questions, which are based on a “fitness for (and of) purpose” approach:

- What is the institution trying to do?
- How is the institution trying to do it?
- How does the institution know it works?
- How does the institution change in order to improve?

In the case of the institutions in Montenegro, their evaluation by IEP has to address additionally the following four special issues:

- Implementation of the three-cycle system of the Bologna Process
- The academic staff - students ratio
- Quality and organisational framework of doctoral studies
- The application of gained knowledge through practical work.

1.2 The profile of the Faculty of Business Economics

Besides the public University of Montenegro in Podgorica there are nine private universities and independent faculties in Montenegro. The Faculty of Business Economics (Fakultet za Poslovnu Ekonomiju) situated in Bar is one of the private independent faculties. It has acquired the capacity of legal entity by registration in the Central Register of the Commercial Court in Podgorica. Having obtained the license and accreditation from the Higher Education Council of Government of Montenegro the faculty started working in the academic year 2012-2013 when it enrolled the first generation of students. The owners of the faculty are also its founders: the majority owner is Professor Božo Marđokić (the dean of the faculty) with an 80% share while the minority owner is Doc. Dr. Veselin Orlandić (one of the vice-deans of the faculty) with the remaining 20% share.

To the knowledge of the team, besides FBE there are two other faculties in Bar offering similar study programmes, namely the Faculty for Business Management (FBM) which was founded in 2005 and the Faculty of Tourism "Montenegro Tourism School" which has operated as an independent private institution since 2004 in Bar and currently operates as a branch of the Mediterranean University. All are private institutions.

The following two study programmes at undergraduate level have to date been accredited in FBE:

- Management
- Finances, Accounting and Banking

In addition, FBE is in the process of accreditation of postgraduate study programmes (Specialist and Master) in the areas of Management of Public Sector and Management of Private Sector.

Higher education in Montenegro is structured as a three-cycle system, including Bachelor studies (180 ECTS), Master studies (120 ECTS) and Doctoral studies. After one additional year, the graduate of any Bachelor study programme may be awarded a Specialist diploma after having obtained 60 ECTS credits. The Specialist study programmes are considered to be the first stage of postgraduate studies, while the Master programmes are considered to be second stage. Furthermore, the study programmes can be divided into two streams, "academic" and "applied". Only academic study programmes can lead to Doctoral studies, while applied study programmes can lead only up to an applied Master. However, the big

majority of study programmes in Montenegro, for both first cycle and second cycle, have been accredited as “academic”. This is the case also for the study programmes of FBE.

The educational profile of FBE is strongly practice-oriented. This profile came about through a specific component of its study programmes known as “Model of Student Practice and Practical Teaching at Academic Studies”. This component will be further elaborated later in this report, in the section on teaching and learning (section 3).

The students of FBE come from various places and not only from Bar. The total number of students is 314 for the academic year 2013-2014, distributed as follows:

- 135 students in the first year (enrolled in 2013-2014) - all students follow the general study programme, which is the same for both accredited programmes;
- 131 students in the second year (enrolled in 2012-2013) - 55 students in Management and 76 students in Finances, Accounting and Banking;
- 48 students in the third year (currently, only those who have acquired the right to enrol directly in the third year having recognised prior studies in Higher Schools/Colleges) - 24 students in Management, 18 students in Finances (a sub-programme of Finances, Accounting and Banking) and 6 students in Customs (another sub-programme of Finances, Accounting and Banking).

It is worth noting at this point that the number of students enrolled in the first year in 2013-2014 was slightly higher than in 2012-2013; this means that at least for the time being FBE does not face the problem of falling student numbers.

According to the updated data given to the evaluation team between the two site visits, the teaching staff of FBE comprises 35 members (24 male and 11 female), distributed by ranks and tasks as follows:

• Professors (Redovni Profesori).....	6
• Associate Professors (Vanredni Profesori).....	1
• Assistant Professors (Docenti).....	9
• Teaching associates (Saradnici u nastavi).....	15
• Collaborators in teaching.....	4
Total.....	35

Out of these, four members of the teaching staff are employed on a permanent basis and the rest are employed on a temporary basis, the majority of whom come from the region. However, all have a full-time teaching occupation in the faculty of up to six teaching hours per week. In accordance with the same data, there are five members of administrative staff, while the accounting and finance sector is covered by an external specialised agency.

FBE is located at the “Secondary School of Agriculture” in Bar. The existing premises are sufficient for the moment, but this will probably change in the future if the faculty will grow

with more study programmes and more students. At present, lectures take place from Monday to Friday in the afternoon hours and the whole day on Saturdays which is not ideal for regular full time students.

1.3 The evaluation process

The self-evaluation process

The self-evaluation process at FBE was carried out by a self-evaluation group of nine members representing the founders, the teaching and administrative staff as well as the students. The self-evaluation group prepared a very informative Self-Evaluation Report (SER), which was made available to the evaluation team on 25 February 2014, in due time before the first site visit.

As it was explained to the evaluation team, there were no problems with the preparation of the SER, since the faculty had already prepared its report and documentation for accreditation. Everyone in the faculty was informed of the process and students were aware of the SER since it was uploaded on the e-platform. The secretary of the faculty prepared the final text which was then sent for approval to the governance bodies of the faculty and to the Students' Parliament. During the elaboration of the SER the self-evaluation group also worked with four experienced professors from universities in Niš and Belgrade.

The evaluation team appreciated the work done in the SER. The report consists of 21 pages, illustrating the motivation for the foundation of FBE in 2012 and describing very well the development and present situation of the institution, presenting at the same time the vision and expectations of FBE for the future. The SWOT analysis that was included revealed adequately strengths and weaknesses and provided a good basis for further strategic planning. Data missing in the SER (details on budget, staff workload and equivalent staff full-time positions, student numbers in different programmes and years, etc.) was provided upon request during the first visit or in form of additional documents for the second visit.

The evaluation team feels that FBE has taken the self-evaluation process very seriously, using the overall process for an intensive discussion and reflection on the institution involving the whole FBE community. This must be attributed to the strong commitment of the leadership of FBE to quality and innovation and its openness to improvements. In its meeting with the self-evaluation group, the evaluation team was informed that the main positive aspect observed during the self-evaluation process was the small size of the institution and the possibility of interactive teaching of high quality, while one of the difficulties observed was the newness of the institution which prevents it from being sufficiently known and recognised.

The two site visits

The two site visits of the evaluation team to FBE took place from 25-to 27 March 2014 and from 6 to 8 May 2014. In between the visits FBE provided the evaluation team with additional

documentation as requested. During the two visits, the evaluation team had the opportunity to openly discuss the development of FBE with many of its actors and stakeholders, namely:

- the leadership of FBE;
- members of the teaching staff, both senior academics and teaching assistants;
- the coordinator of the student practice programme and main actors of the programme (students, mentors and co-mentors);
- students, the students' ombudsperson, members of the Students' Parliament and its president;
- members of the administrative staff; and
- the main stakeholders / external partners.

There were also informative and in-depth discussions with the dean of FBE and with the self-evaluation group. All meetings and discussions were efficiently organised by Ivana Mećikukić, M.Sc and teaching assistant, who acted as the liaison person between the institution and the evaluation team. The evaluation team wishes to emphasise the high number of members of teaching staff and students that took part in all meetings and in both site visits; during the various meetings the evaluation team met in total 23 out of the 35 members of teaching staff and 18 students of all three years of studies. At the end of the second visit the oral report of the evaluation team was presented by its chair to a wide audience composed of the whole leadership of the faculty, many members of the teaching and administrative staff and many students.

The evaluation team would like to express its sincere thanks to the Dean, Professor. Božo Marđokić, and his team for the organisation prior to and during the two visits and for their generous hospitality. The evaluation team also thanks the Vice-Dean for education, Doc. dr Sandra Đurović, for her overall assistance during both visits and Professor Ljiljana Jovković for her excellent translation work and for assisting the evaluation team on many organisational details. Last but not least the evaluation team would like to express its gratitude to the individuals in FBE for their openness and willingness to discuss all issues during our meetings.

The evaluation report

The present evaluation report is harmonised with the aims of IEP as outlined above, taking into consideration also the four special issues that have to be addressed additionally in the evaluations in Montenegro. The analysis of the four special issues is presented in the respective sections of the report. In this respect, the report focuses on the current strengths and weaknesses of FBE regarding its capacity for change, in view of the specific characteristics of the institution, but also of the surrounding opportunities and threats; it expresses a number of recommendations that may be taken into account for the future development of the institution.

The evaluation report takes into account all the data provided to the evaluation team in the SER and corresponding additional information. Furthermore, it should be taken into account

that the overall analysis, comments and the recommendations are based on two intense but rather short site visits to the institution. The recommendations, together with the corresponding reasoning and analysis, appear in italics in the text of the evaluation report, while a summary of recommendations is presented in the last section of the report. Finally, it should be noted that throughout the body of the report many ideas of the evaluation team appear which should not be considered as real recommendations but as reflections that FBE may wish to consider.

1.4 The evaluation team

The evaluation team (hereinafter named “the team”) consisted of the following members:

- Winfried Müller, former Rector, University of Klagenfurt, Austria, team chair
- Thierry Chevaillier, former Vice-Rector, University of Bourgogne, Dijon, France
- Emilia Todorova, Master student, University of Glasgow, United Kingdom
- Dionyssi Kladis, professor emeritus, University of the Peloponnese, Greece, former Secretary for Higher Education in Greece, as team coordinator.

2. Governance and institutional decision-making

2.1 Philosophy of FBE: Norms and values / Vision - mission – strategy

According to the dean the concept behind the establishment of FBE was the will and intention to implement the Bologna principles in actual terms: shorter studies, modernisation of curricula, and integrating practical training/knowledge with theoretical, interactive teaching as much as possible. Accordingly, FBE is strongly committed to the Bologna ideas. It has established very special study programmes which combine theoretical education with compulsory practical work and research work for the students in a way unique in higher education in Montenegro, as stated by the leadership of FBE. The leadership's explanation why the study programmes of FBE are "academic" and not "applied" is that Bologna does not provide for such a distinction in the study programmes at any level. As it was explained to the team, the mission of FBE is to teach young people how important research work and excellent practical education are for future professional and independent work to the benefit of the community. In this regard, FBE considers its programme for student practice as its major strength and its comparative advantage in relation to other higher education institutions in Montenegro.

The assurance of adequate human resources is one of the key prerequisites to fulfil this mission. Teaching follows those principles. The philosophy of the leadership of FBE - in fact, its strategy for human resources - is to combine the existence of senior teaching staff from other universities in Montenegro and Serbia with younger teaching staff from the region. The presence of experienced professors from other universities is believed to help, on the one hand, with training younger and less experienced members of the staff and, on the other hand, to act as catalysts for research initiatives. FBE aims at creating its own teaching staff gradually from the available human potential of the region of Bar. Teaching assistants are a good example to that direction. Many of them are part-time teachers who already work in firms in the area, in parallel with preparing their PhDs. Actually, they constitute the group of teaching staff who have the closest contact and the most creative and interactive cooperation with the students.

The leadership of FBE also has a clear view for the future stages. As mentioned already, FBE is in the process of accreditation of postgraduate study programmes (Specialist and Master) in the areas of Management of Public Sector and Management of Private Sector. The dean of FBE is aware that the structure whereby there are two kinds of diplomas in the second cycle is not consistent with the principles of the Bologna Process. However, almost all higher education institutions follow that structure in Montenegro. This issue will be further elaborated later in this report, in the section on teaching and learning (section 3). A question here might be whether the accreditation and operation of the Specialist programmes at postgraduate level may affect the importance and significance of the programme for student practice at the undergraduate level. The team did not have the opportunity to discuss this specific issue during the two site visits. However, from the content of the curricula that have

been included in the proposal for accreditation it can be concluded that the two Specialist programmes can be considered as specialised supplements to the curricula of the Bachelor programmes without affecting the role and significance of the student practice programme during the sixth undergraduate semester.

The team understands that the emphasis will continue to be on the “Model of Student Practice and Practical Teaching at Academic Studies”. This is where FBE is planning to focus its interest, efforts and investments, aiming to stabilise and further improve the model. With that aim, FBE has already developed good links with external stakeholders, enterprises and public institutions, which naturally will also have to make improvements. The team raised the issue of competition among the higher education providers in the region. According to the dean, FBE is not afraid of competition since “the market is free and global”. However, FBE must be ready to meet the challenges but without considering them to be threats. Finally, FBE is confident that it can cope with any competition, based on its comparative advantages derived from the programme for student practice and on its future plans.

The team shares these views of FBE. It also understands that the long-term and mid-term objectives to meet the challenges of the new (postgraduate) study programmes on the one hand, and the need for continuous improvement of the already operating programmes on the other hand, reflected the need for:

- a) a sustainable solution of the problem of space (through acquiring its own building);
- b) a better and more effective management of human resources (making the most of the local human potential); and
- c) a more effective relationship with external partners.

As already mentioned, point c) already is one of the strengths of FBE, although still open for further improvement. The team had the opportunity to realise this when they met the external partners of FBE, but also during the meeting with mentors and co-mentors in the context of the programme for student practice (where the stakeholders act as co-mentors). As far as points a) and b) are concerned, the team refers to the following statement of the SER (p. 8):

Concerning the strategic choices made by the institution, one of the main priorities is to ensure our own space as well as our staff from Montenegro in foreseeable future in favour of economical operation given that Montenegro possesses a large number of educated and successful people who are entirely capable of fulfilling our needs and demands in an adequate manner.

The financial sustainability of FBE is perhaps one of the more important issues for the future. The main financial resources of FBE are derived from tuition fees and other student charges. This provides high autonomy but also makes the institution very vulnerable in regard to decreasing student numbers in the future. During the first two years of the operation of FBE, the number of students has remained stable. However, this situation cannot be secured for the future which means that the faculty has to search for additional and alternative sources

of income. In this regard, *the team recommends that FBE tries to increase, diversify and make sustainable its own income by formal contracts with local communities, enterprises and public entities, and also consultancies, applied projects and other services.*

In the SER it is stated that the faculty does not have an institutional strategic plan. However, there are open strategic issues for FBE which need to be addressed in a systematic way through a strategic plan. In this regard, *the team recommends that FBE takes the appropriate initiatives in that direction, aiming to transform the various existing strategic thoughts and ideas into a concrete strategic plan. The experiences of the accreditation procedures and the current self-evaluation process should be used to elaborate a strategic plan for FBE over the next years with clear goals and indicators. Founders, staff, students and stakeholders should be involved in this discussion.*

More precisely, *the team recommends that FBE should develop a coherent and comprehensive strategic plan which should set priorities for its development in the short-, medium- and long-term and which should be materialised through an action plan containing concrete actions that will be prioritised (in order to indicate which objectives are important and which are less important), linked to specific and realistic timelines (in order to make the overall process manageable), quantified through intermediate and final performance indicators (in order to make the implementation and the achievement measurable) and, finally, assigned to personalised tasks and responsibilities (in order to show the real owner/carrier of the respective action). The development of this strategic plan should be based on benchmark analyses with comparable institutions and its implementation should be monitored by appropriate instruments.*

Finally, and apart from the issue of competition, the team believes that the three private faculties operating in Bar could build some kind of cooperation and synergies. To that effect, but also in order to strengthen the links of the higher education institutions of the region with society and the world of business, *the team would recommend that FBE undertakes initiatives towards building a cooperative and synergic attitude between all faculties operating in Bar and promoting the idea of establishing a structure with the participation of the higher education institutions, the local/regional authorities and representatives of the world of business in order to, on the one hand, coordinate common activities of the faculties and, on the other hand, to ensure maximum mutual benefit from the cooperation of the faculties with external partners from both sectors (private and public).*

2.2 Governance and decision-making

According to the Law on Higher Education of Montenegro, the governance structure of private institutions is regulated by their Statutes. The team has not been provided with the statutes of FBE but its governance structure is described in the SER. As was mentioned earlier the main founder of FBE is also the current dean and, as the team was informed, the two founders do not constitute a separate governance body of the faculty.

The dean is the head of the faculty and takes care of the everyday business assisted by two vice-deans (the vice-dean for organisation and the vice-dean for teaching). The dean is the equivalent to the rector of the universities (“managing body” according to the Law on Higher Education).

The faculty is run by the Steering Committee which is the collective governing body of FBE, responsible for its overall functioning and operational management; it is equivalent to the governing board of the universities (“governing body” according to the Law on Higher Education). The Steering Committee consists of six members, namely: the president of the Steering Committee, the two vice-deans, one member by invitation, the president of the Students’ Parliament by invitation and the secretary of the faculty. The dean is not a member of the Steering Committee. Among other responsibilities, the Steering Committee adopts the Statutes and the various rulebooks of the faculty. According to the Statutes, the dean is elected by the Steering Committee, while the members of the Steering Committee (with the only exception of the president of the Students’ Parliament) are appointed by the founders. It becomes evident therefore that since the current dean owns the 80% of the shares, it is he who appoints the members of the Steering Committee. The relationship between the Steering Committee and the dean could therefore be considered more or less self-consistent or self-dependent.

Finally, the academic policy is created and run by the Teaching and Scientific Council of the Faculty, which is the highest academic body, equivalent to the Senate of the universities (“professional body” according to the Law on Higher Education). The Teaching and Scientific Council is responsible for the overall teaching process and all academic issues. It consists of 34 members and is chaired by the dean.

At this point the team would like to raise the issue of managerial sustainability at FBE. The governance structures and processes at FBE are still in transition in order to optimise decision and governing procedures. In the team’s view, the respective governance bodies have evidently found an effective way to enable fast and efficient decisions and actions. However, at present, it is the dean (main founder) who guarantees the efficient management of the institution. In this regard, *the team would recommend that for the future a more stable and sustainable type of management should be considered in order to ensure continuity and coherence of management.*

The team would like to praise FBE for ensuring active involvement of students both in the governance bodies and in the overall activities of the faculty. From its various meetings with students, the team was able to ascertain the commitment of students to the overall operation of the faculty and the important role played by the Students’ Parliament. It is worth noting that the Students’ Parliament has among its members a president, who participates in all decision-making bodies, and an ombudsperson, who is also a student.

3. Teaching and learning

The educational philosophy of FBE

As was mentioned earlier in this report, the mission of FBE is to teach young people how important research work and excellent practical education are for future professional and independent work to the benefit of the community. Furthermore, in implementing its educational philosophy, FBE is strongly committed to the Bologna ideas. In this regard, it has established very special study programmes which combine theoretical education with compulsory practical work and research work in a way unique in higher education in Montenegro, as stated by the leadership of FBE.

Implementing the three-cycle system of Bologna Process

FBE is a new higher education institution which has been operating since 2012. To date, it has not yet implemented the three-cycle Bologna structure with Bachelor, Master and Doctoral programmes. Only the first cycle exists with two Bachelor programmes, while two postgraduate study programmes (Specialist and Master) are in the process of accreditation. The existence of two kinds of diplomas in the second cycle (Specialist and Master) is not consistent with the principles of the Bologna Process. However, almost all higher education institutions follow that structure in Montenegro. As it was explained to the team during the site visits, the reason is that the social and economic environment in Montenegro still demands graduates with four years of studies as was the case in the past. It was further explained that employers from both sectors of economy (public and private) consider the three years of studies inadequate and insufficient. This is the real reason why in Montenegro the Specialist diploma (i.e. one additional year of studies at postgraduate level after obtaining the Bachelor) is popular among the students and among the institutions. However, it should be noted that the meeting with stakeholders did not support this interpretation. On the contrary, the stakeholders advised the team that they consider the three-year undergraduate studies to be sufficient, but only if this includes a strong component of practical education, as in the case of FBE. Accordingly, they consider quite adequate the theoretical knowledge obtained from five semesters of studies at FBE, as well as from their experience with students of sixth semester carrying out students practices in their companies. It was only in discussions with representatives of the public sector where both qualifications (Bachelor diplomas and Specialist diplomas) were discussed and it was said that candidates with Specialist diplomas have better chances to be employed. As for the above tendency among students, this is something that the team had the opportunity to verify in all its meetings with students. The majority of them plan to continue for Specialist studies but not for Master studies. The team believes that the problem is rather complex. In principle, it is the national legislation that offers the possibility for Specialist study programmes in the second cycle of studies. *In this regard, the team would recommend that FBE should continue lobbying the potential employers of its Bachelor graduates on the value of their diplomas in view of the overall European context.*

Practical training

As mentioned earlier in this report, the educational profile of FBE is strongly practice-oriented. This profile is materialised through a specific component of its study programmes known as “Model of Student Practice and Practical Teaching at Academic Studies”. This component, which, as the team was informed, is accredited separately by the Higher Education Council of Montenegro as an integral part of the study programmes corresponding to 30 ECTS, is the comparative advantage of FBE in relation to all other higher education institutions in Montenegro. More specifically, the sixth semester in the third year of studies is completely devoted to practical activities without classes. These activities take place in the so-called “centres for practical training” (which are companies ranging from a mini-market to a corporation) and provide the students (students-practitioners) with detailed practical instructions which they need to follow while carrying out the professional practice. In the process of professional practice and practical teaching, the primary aim is that students gain additional knowledge, skills and techniques in a certain professional field, without however undermining the importance of generic skills. It must be mentioned that the students-practitioners have strict obligations in the centres for practical training through contracts that they sign. The preparation of the students for the practice programme of the sixth semester takes place in the fifth semester under the supervision and guidance of mentors (or tutors) who are members of the teaching staff of the faculty and co-mentors (or co-tutors) who are persons from the employment sector where the practical training will take place. As the team was informed, there is a pool of co-mentors who are no longer active and who can be called upon when the number of students-practitioners will be increased. This instruction phase refers on the one hand to principles, procedures, methods and techniques of the students’ professional engagement at compulsory practice, and on the other hand to key principles and rules of business culture.

What is interesting with the programme for practical education is that it contains a research component. The results which a student-practitioner obtains from his/her work conducting the practical education - professional practice takes place are at the end of the process outlined and analysed in a diploma paper and defended by the student. These results can have practical significance not only for the student-practitioner but also for the enterprise or centre for practical education in which the professional practice has been conducted. In this sense, the results obtained in the professional practice may have a research character. Nevertheless, the overall training for the students so as to write their diploma paper also has a research dimension. It should be noted that at the end of the process the assessment of the students is done on the basis of their diploma papers.

The team had the opportunity to discuss extensively and in depth all issues related to the practical education - professional practice of the students with the dean, the coordinator of the programme, the teachers-mentors and co-mentors, the students themselves and finally with stakeholders. The impression of the team is that both students and stakeholders appreciate the work done in this respect. The students stated that the programme for practical training is the main reason that made them choose FBE for their studies. On the

other side, the stakeholders stated that they can see the difference between students-practitioners who are trained in their companies during the current semester and the graduates from other faculties who they employ and who do not have any practical training during their studies. They also consider as a general problem in Montenegro the fact that beside the recently established FBE the practical component is not sufficiently visible in the curricula. Finally, they mentioned that it is important to have the possibility to see students before they graduate when considering them as future employees. Some of them added that they are ready to employ graduates with practical training, even without a Specialist diploma.

Student-centred learning, ECTS, learning outcomes

As mentioned earlier in this report, the Bologna principles and their implementation are at the centre of the educational philosophy of FBE. With regard to the implementation of the concept of student-centred learning, the team is pleased to note that from all its meetings with students and teaching staff it became clear that the close and creative cooperation between them, focusing on interactive teaching and learning, work in smaller groups, provision of more learning choices through optional courses and enhancing critical attitude of students, are the main concerns of the faculty. Beyond the difficulties created by the limited hours that are available for lectures during the week days and the fact that not all teachers are available on a daily basis, the above educational aspects are fulfilled quite sufficiently thanks to the commitment of the professors of all ranks, the teaching assistants staying in Bar and the students. Similarly, the genuine implementation of ECTS on the basis of the student workload and the learning outcomes are also among the educational objectives of FBE.

The team could not verify the extent to which these objectives have been achieved. Nevertheless, it is in a position to verify that the faculty as a whole (its leadership, staff and students) are aware and eager to work in that direction. In this regard, *the team endorses the efforts of FBE towards the genuine implementation of the basic Bologna principles (student-centred learning, ECTS, learning outcomes). The only recommendation would be to intensify these efforts, improving in parallel the conditions (for example, share of full time teaching staff and space for teaching, learning and research) in order to be more effective in achieving the goals. In particular regard of the issue of ECTS calculation, the team would recommend that FBE should continue efforts for a better adaptation of ECTS to the real student workload, considering also the relationship of ECTS with the respective learning outcomes. This is a recommendation which does not aim to be simple numerical re-calculations but to make the overall relationship "curriculum - learning outcomes - ECTS - student workload - assessment of students" fairer and more pragmatic.*

Academic staff/student ratio

The key characteristic of the teaching work in FBE is its diversity. The lectures, ex cathedra in parallel with exercises and consultations during the first five semesters, together with supervision, guidance and mentoring-tutoring in the context of practical training during the sixth semester (and partially also during the fifth semester) may give an idea of this diversity

(without mentioning the co-mentoring which is also part of the teaching work undertaken by externals). Under these circumstances, it is not easy to estimate the academic staff/student ratio, although FBE provided data concerning the workload of the teaching staff per semester. Nevertheless, the team believes that a quantitative indicator such as the “academic staff/student ratio” cannot in fact reflect the qualitative work carried out in FBE in teaching and learning.

Students and studying conditions

The students’ satisfaction with their studies and the overall teaching and learning environment in FBE has been mentioned earlier in this report. It is important to note here the significant role that the Students’ Parliament plays in the overall life and operation of students in FBE. What is even more important to note is that the leadership of the faculty gives full support to the operation of the Students’ Parliament and encourages the students to participate in it actively. More generally, it can be said that the active involvement of students in the governance and in the life of FBE is a reality, which becomes even more significant given that FBE is a private higher education institution. The team would like to praise the leadership of the faculty for succeeding in this, which appears to be one more proof of the commitment of FBE to the Bologna principles. The team would like to recall two related Bologna phrases: “Students are full members of the higher education community” (Prague Communiqué, 2001) and “Students are full partners in higher education governance” (Berlin Communiqué, 2003).

The day-to-day organisation of studies seems to be the only issue that requires some attention from the leadership of FBE, and this is because of the previously mentioned problems with the space of the faculty and the availability of teaching staff who does not live in Bar. The team was pleased to see that, apart from these difficulties, the timetable for the courses was known to the students from the beginning of the semester and was properly followed. For the team, this is an important element affecting positively the pedagogy of teaching and learning. Complaints raised by students relate to minor issues, such as the need for a better organisation of the oral examinations so that students do not have to wait for several hours, the need for more dedicated physical space where students can talk and practice self-learning, and the need for more support from the faculty for sport and social activities. In this regard, *the team recommends that FBE provides suitable physical space to the students (study-places for group work, social corners) with wireless Internet access in order to practice self-learning and taking full advantage of the existing e-learning platform. Furthermore, FBE should encourage and facilitate the extra-curricular activities of students on the premises of the faculty (e.g. sport and social activities). As for the organisation of the oral examinations, the team recommends that FBE draws up a more realistic timetable combining the needs of the teaching staff with the needs of the students so as to reduce their waiting time, which can last for several hours. Finally, improving students’ knowledge of foreign languages as well as among teaching staff should also be considered.*

4. Research

Research is a focus of FBE, but at the moment the faculty does not appear to be a visible research institution, nor does it appear to be institutionally recognisable in terms of its research activity and production. Research is being carried out individually and the teaching staff, both full-time and part-time, present their research results individually and not on behalf of the faculty. In general, the research activities of the part-time staff are identified with the institution in which they are fully employed. Although developing a research attitude among the students is one of the objectives of the programme for student practice, it seems that research policy is not in place at FBE and research priorities are not set.

In any case, FBE should not stand as a higher education institution without visible research activity and without satisfactory research performance which will help define its research profile and “brand”. This is not an issue of legal requirements but of conceptual and contextual requirements for a higher education institution to develop as such. In this regard, *the team recommends that FBE increases the visibility of its research by developing its own research profile and encouraging and stimulating its teaching staff to put their research activities under the “brand” of FBE. In parallel, FBE should establish research co-operation with other higher education and research institutions in order to be more visible and to reach a critical mass for research groups. The visibility of research is also meant to be related to its internationalisation perspective. In this regard, the recommendation of the team extends to also include international research teams as mentioned above and to support scientific publication in the English language.*

Furthermore, *the team recommends that FBE strengthens its links with public authorities, local communities and industry as well as enterprises by signing mutual contracts of cooperation, and helps collaborations to be sustainable in the form of applied research and consultancies. Of course, these collaborations should also focus on internships to improve the practical component of the studies.*

An issue that is directly related to the research deficit described above is the fact that there are no doctoral programmes in FBE, nor are they included in the near future plans of the faculty, which is rather natural for an institution that is this young. For the evaluation team, the development of doctoral studies is dependent on the research capacity of the higher education institution. Therefore, any plans for developing doctoral education should be integrated into the plans for building the appropriate research capacity.

5. Service to society

Establishing strong and close links with society is one of the major aims of any university nowadays, notably because offering services to society is considered to be the third mission of modern universities. The team understands that FBE's primary service to society is the formation of well-educated and practically trained graduates for the regional labour market. In order to fulfil this mission, FBE has established very good relations with enterprises and public authorities in the region. The important thing is that these relations have been built on a rigid basis and on systematic co-operations. The team did realise that both stakeholders and employers appreciate the quality and especially the practical orientation of education at FBE.

The educational dimension of the cooperation between FBE and society (stakeholders from public and private sectors, employers, enterprises, authorities) is fully covered by the practical training processes, through placements and internships for the students-practitioners and through the involvement of the stakeholders under the roles of the co-mentors. Therefore, *a first recommendation of the team would be that FBE simply continues to establish and enhance its strong links with public authorities, local communities and industry as well as enterprises in order to allow the practical programme to be sustainable for the future. A second recommendation would be that FBE should also consider more systematically the even closer involvement of stakeholders in educational activities, both in the process of curricula development and in the process of teaching under the capacity of invited professional experts in a similar sense as for the case of co-mentors.*

However, the relationships of FBE with society should go beyond educational matters. In this regard, the faculty should present to the local and regional society the wide range of services which it can offer and also the wide range of issues in which the faculty anticipates cooperation with society for mutual benefit. Of course, education is at the top and at the centre. Therefore the team commends the initiatives of FBE to promote its study programmes (folder, national information brochure, etc.) In this regard, and going beyond education, *the team recommends that FBE should present examples of good consultancies and services to potential partners in the region and explore opportunities for strategic partnerships, co-operations and alliances. To that aim, FBE should sign formal agreements and contracts with stakeholders and employers (companies, enterprises, public institutions) for various types of cooperation including joint projects and offering services of various types. Finally, in the context of this strategy, the team recommends that FBE should also strengthen and formalise its relations and the information flow with its graduates (e.g. tracking of graduates and alumni association).*

6. Quality culture

As mentioned already in this report, FBE is strongly committed to the Bologna principles and to their implementation. Since quality assurance is one of the cornerstones of the Bologna Process, FBE is keenly aware of the importance of quality assurance and quality management, whilst knowing that the quality of its study programmes is its main advantage and its major strength. In this regard, FBE is firmly committed to quality provision and improvement along with the development of the quality culture. The team is aware of the accreditation procedures followed in Montenegro. Quality standards defined by the government through various acts - in accordance with European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) - are in the process of implementation for the needs of the accreditation and re-accreditation procedures of the study programmes. The team is also aware of the list of 16 standards used for the accreditation processes which has been created by the Council of Higher Education of Montenegro on the basis of ESG. In the context of this framework, FBE has developed its own means and instruments for internal quality management, the Board for Quality Assurance and Improvement and the Rulebook on Quality Assurance. Experiences gained from the accreditation and evaluation processes are also beneficial for the development of a quality culture. For FBE, internal quality assurance is a continuous procedure. In this regard, evaluations of programmes as well as of teaching staff, including professors of all ranks, teaching assistants and associates, are conducted continuously at least once a semester.

It is worth mentioning at this point that part of the active involvement of students in the operation of the faculty is their participation in the procedure of the assessment of teaching staff. The team was informed during its meetings with students that they all complete the respective questionnaires. It is important to note that the students value and trust this procedure and say that the impact of their opinions expressed via the questionnaires on the quality of teaching can be perceived. The leadership of the faculty also informed the team how greatly the students' opinions are valued and considered.

However, the creation and strengthening of a quality culture is a never-ending multi-task procedure. Certain internal quality arrangements at FBE could still be strengthened and improved and, in parallel, a quality culture attitude should be built among the entire community of FBE. In this regard, *the team recommends that FBE further strengthens and improves certain internal quality assurance measures (aiming at a more active involvement of all members of the institutional community). For that purpose, the overall community of FBE (staff and students) should be informed more clearly on the benefits and improvements that derive from quality assurance procedures so that they develop a common understanding and ownership for quality culture at FBE. Finally, the team recommends to FBE that its internal quality assurance should be built more firmly on the basis of the strategic planning and management of the institution and should make use of - and benefit from - existing good practices (e.g. benchmarking with comparable institutions nationally and internationally).*

7. Internationalisation

Internationalisation is a key issue in the European Higher Education Area; consequently, it should be high on the strategic agenda of any European university today. An internationalisation strategy may be based on the relationships established by a university with international partners at various levels. This relationship may be built at the institutional level (inter-university relationships, relations with international organisations, partnerships in international networks and consortia), at faculty level (joint or dual study programmes and degrees), at the level of research units/activities (participation in international research projects and financing by international resources) or at the level of individuals (mobility exchanges of students and staff, attractiveness of international students and staff, involvement of students and staff in international events and activities). Therefore, an important part of the internationalisation strategy of a university will be to develop the appropriate conditions that will help establish and/or further improve the above relationships.

The team is aware that Montenegro and FBE are committed to the Bologna ideas, with internationalisation being high on the agenda. Surprisingly, there is no detailed policy document on internationalisation at FBE. Mobility of staff and students is mainly between them and Serbian institutions. However, this cannot really be considered to be international mobility, given that many of teaching staff are anyway working primarily in the universities of Serbia. On the other hand, mobility of incoming students does not exist either. Of course, internationalisation is much more than simple mobility. For that reason, *the team recommends that FBE elaborates an action plan for internationalisation with clear goals and indicators (e.g. mobility, strategic partnerships, research collaborations, international activities) which would clearly reach beyond Serbia. In the context of this strategy, FBE should define a clear policy for the use of foreign languages including the provision of courses in English and text-books in English. In parallel, FBE should strengthen the knowledge of foreign languages and provide learning facilities to improve language skills of students and staff.*

Finally, as regards more specifically mobility, the team recommends that FBE should develop its policy in both directions (outgoing and incoming). As for outgoing mobility, stimulation of the students of FBE is needed. It is first of all an issue of attitude, but it also is an issue of motivation, of information on the benefits and opportunities that would be explored, primarily with the aid of the teaching staff. As for incoming mobility, FBE should try to attract more international students, also by taking advantage of its privileged geographical position, firstly by providing information in English (webpage and handbook) and secondly by providing opportunities for courses in English. With the aim to improve both incoming and outgoing student mobility, FBE could collaborate with the International Association of Students in Economic and Commercial Sciences (AIESEC) for international internships of students.

8. Conclusions

Although FBE is a young higher education institution, it already plays an important role in the region of Bar and moreover in Montenegro. This is the overall view, not only of its leadership and its staff but also of its stakeholders and its students. Its commitment to Bologna principles and their implementation as well as its focus on the practical part of education through the development of an innovative programme on practical training and professional practice, has already led FBE to be recognised and highly appreciated in the region by both sectors (public and private) but also by the society and the students. In this regard, FBE has begun to enjoy a very active and innovative role in higher education in Montenegro. In order to guarantee its continuity and its high quality of education it should maintain this successful path, continue its improvements (especially regarding premises, staff, internationalisation) and assure sustainability of the management. Through its motivated and committed leadership, staff and students, FBE has an excellent base with which to handle its present and future challenges.

The recommendations in the present report are intended to be the team's own contribution to improvement and to help FBE make the most of the opportunities open to it and to cope with the threats it may face in the future. At the same time, this evaluation report aspires to function as an inspiration for FBE as a whole, but more specifically for all the individuals - leadership, students and staff - who are concerned by its future. The team hopes that its evaluation work, including the present report, offers a real help to FBE in its future stages.

Summary of recommendations

In this section of the report the main recommendations are summarised as they have appeared in italics in the respective sections of the text. In order for the recommendations to stand autonomously in this specific section of the report, some rephrasing was necessary in a number of cases.

1. The team recommends that FBE tries to increase, diversify and make sustainable its own income by formal contracts with local communities, enterprises and public entities, expanding to that aim consultancies, applied projects and other services.
2. The team recommends that FBE takes the appropriate initiatives in that direction, aiming towards the transformation of the various existing strategic thoughts and ideas into a concrete strategic plan. The experiences of the accreditation procedures and the current self-evaluation process should be used to elaborate a strategic plan for FBE for the next years with clear goals and indicators. Founders, staff, students and stakeholders should be involved in this discussion.
3. The team recommends that FBE should develop a coherent and comprehensive strategic plan which should set priorities for its development in the short-, medium- and long-term and which should be materialised through an action plan containing concrete actions that

will be prioritised (in order to indicate which objectives are more or less important); linked to specific and realistic timelines (in order to make the overall process manageable); quantified through intermediate and final performance indicators (in order to make the implementation and the achievement measurable); and assigned to personalised tasks and responsibilities (in order to show the real owner/carrier of the respective action). The development of this strategic plan should be based on benchmark analyses with comparable institutions and its implementation should be monitored by appropriate instruments.

4. The team would recommend that FBE undertakes initiatives towards building a cooperative and synergic attitude between all faculties operating in Bar and promoting the idea of establishing a structure with the participation of the higher education institutions, the local/regional authorities and representatives of the world of business in order to coordinate common activities of the faculties on the one hand, and to ensure maximum mutual benefit from the cooperation of the faculties with the external partners from both sectors (private and public) on the other hand.
5. The team would recommend that for the future a more stable and sustainable type of management should be considered in order to ensure continuity and coherence of management.
6. The team would recommend that FBE should continue lobbying the potential employers of its Bachelor graduates on the value of their diplomas in view of the overall European context.
7. The team endorses the efforts of FBE towards the genuine implementation of the basic Bologna principles (student-centred learning, ECTS, learning outcomes). The only recommendation would be to intensify these efforts, improving in parallel the conditions (for example, share of full time teaching staff and space for teaching, learning and research) in order to be more effective in achieving the goals. Concerning more particularly the issue of ECTS calculation, the team would recommend that FBE should continue efforts for a better adaptation of ECTS to the real student workload, considering also the relationship of ECTS with the respective learning outcomes. This is a recommendation which does not aim to be simple numerical re-calculations but to make the overall relationship “curriculum - learning outcomes - ECTS - student workload - assessment of students” fairer and more pragmatic.
8. The team recommends that FBE provides suitable physical space to the students (study-places for group work, social corners) with wireless Internet access in order to practice self-learning taking also full advantage of the existing e-learning platform. Furthermore, FBE should encourage and facilitate the extra-curricular activities of students on the premises of the faculty (e.g. sport and social activities). As for the organisation of the oral examinations, the team recommends that FBE develops a more realistic timetable combining the needs of the teaching staff with the needs of the students so that they do

not have to wait for several hours before taking their exams. Finally, strengthening knowledge of foreign languages among students (but also among teaching staff) should also be considered.

9. The team recommends that FBE increases the visibility of its research by developing its own research profile and encouraging and stimulating its teaching staff to place their research activities under the “brand” of FBE. In parallel, FBE should establish research co-operations with other higher education and research institutions in order to be more visible and to reach critical mass for research groups. The visibility of research is also meant to be related to its internationalisation perspective. In this regard, the recommendation of the team is extended to also include international research teams as mentioned above and to support scientific publications in the English language.
10. The team recommends that FBE strengthens its links with public authorities, local communities and industry, as well as enterprises, by signing mutual contracts of cooperation and makes collaborations sustainable in the form of applied research and consultancies. Of course, these collaborations should also focus on internships to improve the practical component of the studies.
11. The team would recommend that FBE continues to establish and enhance its strong links with public authorities, local communities, industry as well as enterprises in order to allow the practical programme to be sustainable for the future, while a second recommendation would be that FBE should also consider more systematically the even closer involvement of stakeholders in educational activities, both in the process of curricula development and in the process of teaching under the capacity of invited professional experts in a similar sense as for the case of co-mentors.
12. The team recommends that FBE presents examples of good consultancies and services to potential partners in the region and explores opportunities for strategic partnerships, co-operations and alliances. To that end, FBE should sign formal agreements and contracts with stakeholders and employers (companies, enterprises, public institutions) for co-operations of various types including joint projects and offering of services of various types. Finally, in the context of this strategy, the team recommends that FBE should also strengthen and formalise its relations and the information flow with its graduates (e.g. tracking of graduates and alumni association).
13. The team recommends that FBE further strengthens and improves certain internal quality assurance measures (aiming at a more active involvement of all members of the institutional community). For that purpose, the overall community of FBE (staff and students) should be informed more clearly about the benefits and improvements deriving from quality assurance procedures so that they develop a common understanding and ownership for quality culture at FBE. Finally, the team recommends to FBE that its internal quality assurance should be built more firmly on the basis of strategic planning and

management of the institution and should make use of - and benefit from - existing good practices (e.g. benchmarking with comparable institutions nationally and internationally).

14. The team recommends that FBE elaborates an action plan for internationalisation with clear goals and indicators (e.g. mobility, strategic partnerships, research collaborations, international activities) which go beyond Serbia. In the context of this strategy, FBE should define a clear policy for the use of foreign languages including the provision of courses in the English language and text-books in English. In parallel, FBE should strengthen the knowledge of foreign languages and provide learning facilities to improve language skills of students and staff.
15. With more specific regard to mobility, the team recommends that FBE should develop its policy in both directions (outgoing and incoming). As for outgoing mobility, stimulation of the FBE students is needed. It is first of all a matter of attitude, but it is also an issue of motivation, information on the benefits and opportunities that would be explored primarily with the aid of the teaching staff. As for incoming mobility, FBE should try to attract more international students, also taking advantage of its privileged geographical position, firstly by providing information in English (webpage and handbook) and secondly by providing opportunities for courses in English. To the direction of improving both incoming and outgoing student mobility, FBE could collaborate with the International Association of Students in Economic and Commercial Sciences (AIESEC) for international internships of students.