

**UNIVERSITY OF MITROVICA**

***EVALUATION REPORT***

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The name “University of Mitrovica” is used for the University in this report, following the name given by UNMIK in Executive Decision 2007/17. This name is widely used by the international community and until a compromise is found on an alternative name, EUA will also use this name for the University in all its external communication. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the University refers to itself as “University of Pristina in Kosovska Mitrovica” with the acronym “UPKM”.

## **FOREWORD**

### **1. The concept of the Institutional Evaluation Programme**

#### **1.1 Introduction**

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 distinctive features of the Institutional Evaluation Programme are:

- 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
- Relevance of internal quality processes and the degree to which their outcomes are used in decision making and strategic planning as well as perceived gaps in these internal mechanisms.

#### **1.2 The philosophy**

The central mission of the Institutional Evaluation Programme (IEP) of EUA is to strengthen the strategic steering capacity of higher education institutions and to enhance their autonomy and their accountability to the public.

Through this Programme, EUA wishes to offer an external diagnosis provided by experienced university leaders and experts who come from different higher education systems in Europe. This diagnosis should explain the quality nodes and the main actors in the university’s daily decision-making processes. It should be a tool for institutional leadership preparing for change. The EUA/IEP

does not wish to provide the university with a blueprint for its development; rather the review process is a consultative one or, in Martin Trow's terminology, an "external supportive review"<sup>1</sup>.

Through an evaluation of higher education institutions in the context of their specific mission and goals, the IEP actively supports higher education institutions in fulfilling their public mission by providing recommendations on the full range of their activities (research, teaching and learning and service to society) and on their institutional organisation, processes, policies, structures and culture. These supportive recommendations are based on European and international good practices.

### **1.3 The methodology**

The methodological instrument of the Programme focuses on the universities' capacity to change, including their strategic planning and internal quality monitoring, and examines if all the preconditions are assembled to make each and every institution more adaptable and responsive to the changing higher education environment at local, national, European and international level.

More specifically, the methodology is guided by four central strategic questions which are based on a "fitness for (and of) purpose" approach:

- What is the institution trying to do (and why)? This (twofold) question refers to the vision, mission and aims of the institution. A clear strategy is important in order to decide on priorities, strategic objectives and the means to reach these objectives.
- How is the institution trying to do it? The evaluation investigates the way in which the institution attempts to fulfil this mission in terms of organisation, governing structures and processes.
- How does the institution know it works? This question points at the necessity to have sound quality arrangements in place. The evaluation team looks at the institutional policies and practices regarding quality and other relevant processes in terms of actors, structures and procedures.
- How does the institution change in order to improve? This is a key question for IEP's institutional evaluations. It is the institution's capacity for change and improvement that allows it to deal with a fast-changing environment and to respond to evolving needs.

The IEP is committed to continuous improvement and adheres to good international and European practices, such as the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area.

## **2. Institutional evaluation of the University of Mitrovica**

In September 2008, the Rector of the University, Professor Zdravko Vitosevic, requested an institutional evaluation by IEP. This evaluation was undertaken by the IEP, and the Steering Committee of the IEP appointed, as members of the evaluation team for the University, the following:

- Alojz Kralj, former Rector, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia, as team chair

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<sup>1</sup> M. Trow: "Academic Reviews and the Culture of Excellence", Studies of Higher Education and Research, 1994/2.

- Ivan Ostrovsky, former Vice-Rector, Comenius University in Bratislava, Slovak Republic
- Bertrand Weil, former Vice-Rector, Université Paris 12, France
- Karina Ufert, MA student, Vilnius University, Lithuania
- Dionyssi Kladis, professor, University of the Peloponnese, Greece, former Secretary for Higher Education in Greece, as team coordinator

During the first visit, the student-member of the evaluation team was Francesca D'Ingianna, PhD student at the University of Milano-Bicocca, Italy, who was not able to participate in the second visit and was replaced by Karina Ufert.

The first visit to the University took place in February 2009 and the second in March 2010.

## INTRODUCTION

### 3. The evaluation process

#### 3.1 Outline of the two visits

In keeping with the framework of the IEP, the institutional evaluation of the University consisted of several phases. First, the evaluation team received a 35-page **self-evaluation report** (SER) illustrating the current situation in the University.

Upon receiving the SER, the evaluation team made a **first visit** to the University on 18-20 February 2009 to get acquainted with the Institution and to help clarify any issues arising from the SER. The **second visit** of the evaluation team took place on 16-19 March 2010. The main visit was initially planned for 26-29 May 2009, but was postponed for practical reasons.

During the two visits, the evaluation team had the opportunity to discuss the situation of the University with many of its actors, namely:

- the leadership of the University
- the major governance and decision-making bodies of the University (the Senate and the Council)
- members of the academic staff and students of nearly all the Faculties of the University, including Faculties located in Leposavic
- the Deans of all Faculties of the University
- members of the Commission in charge of internal quality assurance in the University
- representatives of the Student Parliament of the University
- key-persons in charge of administration affairs
- external partners (though in restricted number).

Therefore, the evaluation team had the opportunity to meet the broad spectrum of actors at the University. Special reference should be made however to the intense and in-depth discussions that the evaluation team had with the Rector of the University, Professor Zdravko Vitosevic.

On the last day of the main visit, the chair of the evaluation team, Professor Alojz Kralj, presented the team's **oral report** to an audience consisting of the leadership of the University (at institutional and Faculty levels) and many of the members of the university community (teaching and administrative staff and students) who participated in the meetings with the evaluation team during the two visits. The oral report constituted the basis of the present **evaluation report**, which also results from all written information, from interviews with various actors in the Institution and with external partners and from the evaluation team's observations during the two visits.

#### 3.2 Outline of the review

As mentioned in the SER and as the evaluation team observed during the first visit, the self-evaluation process was a rather top-down process which did not involve a large number of people

within the University. It was, more or less, a process based on questionnaires filled by a limited number of professors and students. Widening of the process was expected to take place between the two visits of the evaluation team, but it did not happen. In general, our impression was that the self-evaluation process was probably integrated into the accreditation process.

The evaluation team appreciated the work done in the SER; however, at the end of the first visit, the evaluation team asked for additional documentation on a wide range of issues. The University could not provide all requested additional documentation in due time before the second visit. This made it difficult to evaluate some areas. The evaluation team acknowledged the SER as an honest and critical analysis of the situation, presenting at the same time some aspects and the expectations of the Institution for the future. However, the evaluation team did note that the SER contained some “copy/paste” items from documents probably used previously in the accreditation process.

The evaluation team would like to express its sincere thanks to the Rector of the University, Professor Zdravko Vitosevic, to the Vice-Rector for International Relations, Professor Aleksandar Jovanovic, and to the Secretary General of the University, Mr. Ranko Djokic, for the efficient preparation and organisation of the two visits which provided the evaluation team with effective working conditions in which to fulfil its duties. All meetings and discussions were efficiently organised by international relations officials Ms. Pepa Gorgieva (1st visit) and Mr. Milos Subotic (2nd visit), who were the key-persons in the organisation and logistics of the respective visits. The evaluation team is also very grateful for the generous hospitality of the University. It was indeed a pleasure to work in the friendly atmosphere extended to all the people involved. Finally, the evaluation team wants also to express its gratitude to the people of the University for the openness and willingness to discuss all issues concerning the University during all our meetings.

### **3.3 Outline of the evaluation report**

The IEP is not concerned with the assessment of the quality of teaching and research activities; rather, it is concerned with the assessment and the improvement of the existing mechanisms and processes for strategic management and quality assurance and, in that context, with the assessment and the improvement of the capacity of the HEIs to adapt to the rapidly developing higher education environment in Europe and in the world.

In this context, the evaluation team’s task is to scrutinise the mechanisms for quality assurance that exist in the reviewed institution and its capacities for strategic change. This evaluation report, therefore, emphasises the current strengths and weaknesses regarding the capacity for change and expresses a number of recommendations that may be taken into account in the future development of the University. Of course, this evaluation report should be read in conjunction with the SER of the University with the corresponding additional information that was provided to the evaluation team. Furthermore, the comments are based on two intense but rather short visits: a first two-day visit followed by a second three-day visit. The comments and recommendations, therefore, will be confined mostly to major issues of concern within the University. The recommendations, together with the corresponding reasoning and analysis, appear underlined in the text of the evaluation report. A summary of recommendations is presented on page 26. It should also be noted that throughout the body of the evaluation report, many ideas of the evaluation team appear, which we

do not consider as real recommendations but as reflections which the University can discuss and consider.

#### 4. The profile of the University

The University has the status of a state university and, as a comprehensive/multidisciplinary university, comprises ten (10) Faculties,. The seat of the University and seven of its Faculties are located at Kosovska Mitrovica, while three Faculties are located at Leposavic, Zubin Potok and Lesak. Apart from the above locations, the University organises lectures in its departments which are located at Gracanica (informatics, Serbian literature and language, machine engineering), at Ranilug (Serbian literature and language) and at Kusce (civil engineering). The locations of the Faculties and some key statistical characteristics for the academic year 2008-09 are presented in the following Table 1.

Table 1  
Key statistical characteristics of the Faculties of the University (academic year 2008-09)<sup>2</sup>

Faculties	Location	1st cycle students			1st cycle graduates	Academic staff	Administrative & technical staff
		Full-time	Part-time	Total			
Economics	Mitrovica	318	195	513	65	31	21
Medicine	Mitrovica	755	415	1170	58	185	50
Agriculture	Zubin Potok + Lesak	229	18	247	19	64	35
Law	Mitrovica	303	1040	1343	54	33	17
Mathematics and Natural Sciences	Mitrovica	532	297	829	53	70	29
Teacher Training	Leposavic	185	528	713	75	23	16
Physical Education and Sports	Leposavic	154	519	673	123	22	21
Technical Sciences	Mitrovica	964	80	1044	36	122	69
Arts	Mitrovica (+ Zvekan)	201	45	246	48	45	21
Philosophy	Mitrovica	816	1144	1960	195	96	42
All Faculties		4457	4281	8738	726	691	321
Central management							37
Total University							358

In the following Table 2, four indicators are presented for each Faculty, which result from Table 1 and which are usually used in qualitative analyses based on statistical data.

Table 2  
Key indicators for the Faculties of the University

Faculties	Location	Percentage "graduates to students (1st cycle)"	Ratio "1st cycle students / academic staff"	Ratio "1st cycle students / administrative & technical staff"	Ratio "academic staff / administrative & technical staff"
Economics	Mitrovica	12,7%	16,5	24,4	1,5
Medicine	Mitrovica	5,0%	6,3	23,4	3,7
Agriculture	Zubin Potok + Lesak	7,7%	3,9	7,1	1,8

<sup>2</sup> In Table 1, information is also given for the number of administrative & technical staff who belong to the Rectorate, and whom we consider as operating at the level of central management.

Law	Mitrovica	4,0%	40,7	79,0	1,9
Mathematics and Natural Sciences	Mitrovica	6,4%	11,8	28,6	2,4
Teacher Training	Leposavic	10,5%	31,0	44,6	1,4
Physical Education and Sports	Leposavic	18,3%	30,6	32,0	1,0
Technical Sciences	Mitrovica	3,4%	8,6	15,1	1,8
Arts	Mitrovica (+ Zvekan)	19,5%	5,5	11,7	2,1
Philosophy	Mitrovica	9,9%	20,4	46,7	2,3
All Faculties		8,3%	12,6	27,2	2,2

All 10 Faculties of the University offer study programmes in all three cycles of studies (bachelor, master and doctorate). Especially at bachelor level, the University offers 45 study programmes in total. It is interesting to note that, according to the documentation that we received, some of these programmes attract a very low number of students. For example, the number of first year students in academic year 2009-10 was only 8 in Physics, 1 in Civil Engineering and 6 in Technological Engineering, while the total number of first year students in 5 out of the 10 study programmes of the Faculty of Arts was only 4.

It should be noted also that the University operates on the basis of the Serbian Law for Higher Education, its Statute being based on this Law. Its funding comes mainly from the government of the Republic of Serbia. Furthermore, the accreditation of the study programmes of the University is subject to the rules, standards and procedures of the Commission for Accreditation and Quality Assurance of the Republic of Serbia.

## MAIN FINDINGS OF THE REVIEW

### 5. Vision – Mission – Strategy – Aims

Through our meetings with the Rector and the leadership of the University, we had the opportunity to identify five major strategic goals, which we could consider as mid-term goals for the University:

- To change the structure of the University towards an integrated university
- To develop new study programmes (offering employment to their graduates)
- To improve quality
- To open the University to Europe
- To become a key actor in the development of the region

The evaluation team believes that these goals offer the University a good framework for its future steps in the coming years. However, the evaluation team believes that these goals need to be part of a more general strategy of the University. This strategy needs to be a sustainable strategy that should not depend on the potential future scenarios for political developments in the region. The University needs stability to build its future on a long-term basis. What follows in the current section of our report should not be considered as a recommendation. It should rather be considered as ideas for the future of the University, focusing on the University itself. This does not mean that we are not well aware of the general political context. This simply means that we are thinking of the University outside this political context.

In this respect, our main idea is to propose a long-term strategy (we could call it a “grand strategy”) along the following three axes:

- A. The University prevails and remains in the region. This means that we consider the University as a regional university, whose “area of reference” (or “area of responsibility”) can be defined geographically by the municipalities of the region that have a population of Serbian majority like Kosovska Mitrovica, Leposavic, Zubin Potok and Zvecan.
- B. The University builds upon the common European perspective, and sooner or later inclusion in the EU, of the wider area (Western Balkans or former Yugoslavia). This requires targeted improvement of the European characteristics of the University in the context of both the European Higher Education Area and the European Research Area.
- C. The third axis is related to the Serbian identity of the University. An idea, which however needs further elaboration by the University itself, is that it addresses not only the population of its own area of reference, but also the Serbian student population outside this area, in the large Kosovo area and in the area of former Yugoslavia (including Serbia, of course) where people with Serbian identity live.

The above first two axes A and B give to the University the mixed characteristics of a **European regional university**. As for the third axis, C, we do not have in mind a University addressed exclusively to Serbian populations. If we combine this axis with axis B (i.e. the concept of a European regional university), we come to the idea of a European regional university which addresses three different kinds of student populations: a) students from its own area of reference; b) Serbian

students from other areas (which could be the large Kosovo area, the whole area of former Yugoslavia, or even a wider European area); c) European (non-Serbian) students through international mobility programmes or even through regular (full-cycle) studies.

We would like to quote at this point a phrase of the Rector: “the University should be recognisable through its priorities”. Our idea aims at strengthening this phrase of the Rector, slightly rephrasing it to the following: “the University should be recognisable through its specific mission that makes it unique”. Our idea aims at giving the University a mission which, on the one hand, can make it unique and, on the other, can offer sustainability.

The first axis of our idea relates the University to the region. This relationship should be dominated by the usual characteristics of a regional university in the widest context, but also related to the widest region of Serbian population regardless of borders. We consider this as comparative advantage, but connected with related responsibilities (cultural, national heritage, social, regional and economic development, etc.). In fact we refer to an interrelationship or interdependence between the university and the region in a wider context. The university should respond to the needs of the region and the region should provide the required help to the university on a mutual basis. This is a two-way relationship. This relationship will be further elaborated in the section 14 of the present report. However, the evaluation team believes that the uniqueness of the relationship between the University and the region can be expressed in a symbolic way, making Kosovska Mitrovica known as ***“Kosovska Mitrovica – The University Town”***.

The second axis of our idea is related to the issue of internationalisation. This issue covers a separate section (section 13) of the present report, which however should be read in the light of this second axis. In simple words, the University should put increased emphasis on all those issues which will improve its capacity in internationalisation affairs.

When talking about regional universities, the issue of the location of their activities always comes to the fore. The typical question is whether to concentrate all activities into a single location or spread them to various locations throughout the whole area of reference. As mentioned in the previous section of the present report, the University has a strong seat in Kosovska Mitrovica (where the majority of Faculties are located), with three more Faculties located in three other places. Lectures are also organised at departments in three other places (which, however, are located outside the area which we call “area of reference” for the University). This situation could be described as a mixed model including on the one hand a strong university seat and on the other hand some activities spread away of the central seat.

The evaluation team had the opportunity to visit the two Faculties located at Leposavic and also had the opportunity to meet the leadership and members of teaching staff of the Faculty of Agriculture located at Zubin Potok and Lesak. Although we could see the satisfactory operation of the two Faculties at Leposavic, we also sensed sincere concerns from people of the Faculty of Agriculture with regards to their isolation from the university centre. We had no input on how the departments at Gračanica, Ranilug and Kusce are operating (given the much longer distance from the university seat). We understand the necessity of being there, but at the same time we understand the difficulties as well.

From our discussions with the leadership of the University, we understood that the issue of the Campus of the University in Kosovska Mitrovica is of strategic importance. The evaluation team supports the idea of a Campus where all activities of the University carried out in Kosovska Mitrovica will be concentrated. This will have a multiple positive effect: it will improve efficiency of the university activities; it will also foster the development of interdisciplinary programs, research and community attitude within the University; and, finally, it will improve the visibility of the University.

At the end of the current section, the evaluation team would like to make two recommendations with regards to strategic issues.

Our first recommendation refers to the name of the University. According to this recommendation, the University should take the appropriate initiatives to solve in a widely accepted way the problem of its name. If the University wants to play a major strategic role in the region also building on its European perspective, it needs to solve the name issue once and for all, striving for a compromise. The University needs a name for all uses (inside and outside the University) and for all purposes. And the evaluation team believes that this problem can be solved only on initiative by the University and in close consultation with all relevant political authorities.

Our second recommendation refers to structures and procedures for the development and implementation of a strategy and it is not connected only to the ideas that we have proposed in this section of the report. According to this recommendation, the University should a) open a university-wide debate about the vision considering its long-term development, b) reformulate its mission to reflect its own specificities and vision of the future, and c) develop a strategy to fulfil its mission and reach strategic aims and to raise its reputation and visibility. In the context of this strategy, the University should set concrete priorities, which should be attained on the basis of an analytical action plan. Finally, a permanent structure and a systematic procedure should be established in the University which will continuously monitor not only the implementation of the strategic plan, but also the validity of its goals.

## **6. Towards an integrated university**

The University is a decentralised university in the sense that its Faculties are highly independent and autonomous. However, this structure is not imposed by legislation. In article 24 of the Statute of the University both possibilities are provided for with regards to the legal personality of the Faculties. In the first paragraph of article 24 we read that *“The University may establish Faculties as institutions with legal personality provided the Faculty implements at least three approved, i.e. accredited, study programmes”*, while in the second paragraph we read that *“The University may establish Faculties without legal personality as a form of its internal organisation”*.

For the evaluation team, this is one of the major issues to be considered in the University, especially with regards to its future development. Therefore, we put it high on the agenda of our discussions at the University, both at central level and at the level of the Faculties. If the University is at a crucial crossroads and if it has to develop a strategy for its future, then it needs to develop an institution-wide attitude within the University. It is a requirement for strategic choices to be implemented and

for setting strategic priorities in a university. However, it is not possible to build an institution-wide attitude in an academic structure where Faculties are autonomous entities. In simple words, it is not possible to build an institutional strategy supported by cost efficiency upon a mosaic of independent and autonomous sub-strategies at the Faculty level; and it is not possible to organise effective and efficient strategic management in a university of a federal type. We only add here that, as we had the opportunity to realise, the representatives of the Faculties at the Senate support the interests of their Faculties, without integrating these interests into the wider interests of the University as such.

At the same time, essential and numerous weaknesses appear also in the functioning of the University under this model of confederation of Faculties. The evaluation team observed several such weaknesses (e.g. multiplication of services, high cost for poor efficiency, difficulties for establishing critical mass for teachers and researchers), with no clear understanding of what the real advantages of this structure are. Duplication or multiplication of processes due to decentralisation is cost and time consuming. What is most important, decentralised structures prevent the university from being proactive. And the University needs to be proactive today and utilise this as an essential pillar and advantage, compared to other universities in the region and wider.

In one of our visits to Faculties, the Dean told us that he is against integration because *“no one can understand your problems better than what you do”*. This may be true. But it is also true that in your micro-level you can only solve your problems in a short-term perspective. And in order to solve your problems in a long-term perspective, in a strategic perspective, you have to shift to the institutional level. Of course, the task of each Faculty representative to make his/her Faculty's problems understood at institutional level is an important one and it should not be undermined.

The evaluation team realised that the leadership of the University is today the main driving force towards the model of an integrated university. In this respect, the evaluation team supports the efforts and the initiatives of the Rectorate in that direction. On the other hand, we did not hear many supportive voices at the level of the Faculties, but we consider this normal, given the history and the roots of this structure. This means that the transformation of the University from a decentralised structure to an integrated one will not be an easy task. However, we do consider this transformation as a *“sine qua non”* for faster progress of the University particular in the regard of strengthening its reputation, visibility, internationalisation and its position in the European Research and Higher Education Area and for the development of its European identity.

Considering the above-mentioned findings and the analysis presented in the previous section of the present report, the evaluation team recommends that the University adopt the Europe-wide model, norms and values of an integrated university, with a view to building an effective strategy for the future, but also with a view to ensuring the continuous enhancement of quality, efficiency, cost efficiency and its competitiveness in all aspects of functioning.

At the same time, and considering the existing conditions at the University, the evaluation team recommends that the leadership of the University establish concrete policies and undertake appropriate initiatives in order to reinforce the institutional attitude within the University towards an integrated university.

Furthermore, the evaluation team recommends that the University, in its restructuring apply the principle of subsidiarity (maximum possible professional autonomy) of the Faculties, to ensure their creativity, fast response to opportunities and best performance.

## **7. Governance and management**

Governance and management in the University are determined by two major factors: a) the dual structure at central level with the parallel existence of the Council and the Senate, and b) the decentralised academic structure resulting in a decentralised attitude as well. The Statute of the University defines three types of university bodies at the institutional level: an administrative body (the University Council), a professional body (the Senate), and a management body (the Rector of the University)<sup>3</sup>. Irrespective of the terminology used in the Statute, there is a clear distinction in the roles and the tasks of the two collective bodies; the Senate focuses on academic issues, while the Council focuses on management and on financial and developmental issues.

The evaluation team heard no concrete concerns regarding efficiency in the operation of this dual structure. It is interesting to note that the Council and the Senate have no common members in their composition. The only indirect common factor is the Rector, who is elected by the Council and who chairs the Senate (but without being a member of the Council). It seems, therefore, that there are no real problems in the parallel existence of the two bodies and the cooperation between them. Nevertheless, bridging the operation of the two bodies should be a continuous concern of the Rector.

The evaluation team wants, however, to raise an issue which is connected to the abovementioned decentralised attitude within the University. Representatives of all Faculties participate in both collective bodies. As we were told and as we had the opportunity to realise during our meetings with both bodies, the representatives of the Faculties act in most cases in the name of the interests of their Faculties and not in the name of the general interests of the University as a whole. This fact may ensure efficient communication between Faculties and central management of the University. But, in parallel, this fact is a real obstacle to both bodies in their need to take decisions of a strategic nature. Their decisions result as a compromise or a balance among the various Faculties, but this cannot be considered a strategic decision. Strategic decisions require difficult choices in order to set strategic priorities for the development of the University as a whole. Of course, this weakness is connected with the lack of institutional attitude within the University. The evaluation team dealt with this issue in the previous section of the present report. However, we would like to add a recommendation here, referring to the two collective bodies (Council and Senate), including the representatives of the Faculties and the Deans, and stressing the need for an institutional-driven operation in the two supreme bodies of the University. The chairs of these bodies should be accountable for this operation.

Furthermore, transparency in the functioning of all decision-making bodies, together with accountability of their members, are two important factors to ensure legitimacy of their decisions and to lead to good implementation of them. The improvement of these two factors is another

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<sup>3</sup> UPKM Statute, articles 33-65.

recommendation of the evaluation team. To that end, the University should also take full advantage of existing possibilities in order to enhance the number of students and administrative staff participating in the decision-making bodies.

The evaluation team wants to recall here that, apart from improving transparency and accountability of decision-making bodies, student participation in governance is a prerogative in line with the Bologna Process. This is clearly stated in the Berlin Communiqué<sup>4</sup>, where we read that “*students are full partners in higher education governance*” and that the institutions and the student organisations should “*identify ways of increasing actual student involvement in higher education governance*”.

Another crucial issue with regards to governance and management is the one referring to the administrative staff. It seems that there is a lack of clear job descriptions and documentation showing the reality of the work in which administrative staff are engaged both within the Faculties and at the level of Rectorate. It would be particularly helpful for the University, in order to understand its own manner of functioning, to clarify and describe accurately the functions attributed to each administrative post, as well as to break down the amount of time required for these different activities. Several consequences to a lack of such overall human resource management and planning can be highlighted. Currently the absence of task descriptions within posts means that the responsibility for defining tasks and functions is often left to the personnel occupying the posts. By outlining tasks for each required post, and then matching this outline against the allocation of permanent staff, the real needs of the University could become more transparent. With regard to administrative (and academic) staff, there does not appear to be a system in place to evaluate and reward performance. This is a central question of quality enhancement. Such a system of regular performance appraisal is required also to identify training needs as they arise, and to ensure that, in a process of permanent change and innovation at the university, the administrative staff are fully operational and equipped to support the pedagogical, scientific and service functions of the University.

The last issue that we want to raise in this chapter is the one related to financial management. Because of the decentralised structure of the University, financing is not integrated within the university as well. State funding goes directly to the Faculties. This means that financial management and investment decisions with initiatives at the level of the Institution deals with a restricted amount of the total university budget. Each Faculty has its own financial capacity. This means that there are significant inequalities between Faculties and that the central management of the University is not in any real position to finance initiatives at institutional level. The issue of the financial contribution of each Faculty to the central needs is crucial. We were informed that the overhead given by the Faculties to the University is only 3% of the income. This is rather low for sound institution-driven initiatives. Therefore, the evaluation team recommends that the University raise overheads and ensures their regular payment. Furthermore, the evaluation team recommends that the University establish an efficient diversified fund raising policy in order to generate additional resources for the University and take measures particularly to raise income by research and services to society.

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<sup>4</sup> Berlin Communiqué (2003).

We were informed that matters concerning financing may change significantly as soon as the next academic year with state funding directed to the University and not to the Faculties. In that case the University has to further improve its financial management, so that it includes the system for allocating state funding to the Faculties.

## **8. Bologna reforms and implementation**

The evaluation team had contradictory perceptions with regards to the implementation of the Bologna reforms at the University. According to our briefing by the Rector, the University follows Bologna without any significant problems, and their only concern is how to best to apply it. At the same time, the Rector says that the Faculties move at different speeds and that they do not have a concrete policy on Bologna implementation. From our own meetings, we realised that in many cases there is still wide misunderstanding and resistance against Bologna by professors, while at the same time we realised that there was lack of information about Bologna within students. We also heard that ECTS is applied in the same way in every Faculty since it was built centrally. But, at the same time, credits were not estimated on the basis of the student workload. And finally, we realised, as in many countries and in many universities in Europe, that there were misconceptions and misunderstanding regarding Bologna reforms.

For the evaluation team, this means that there are efforts to be undertaken towards understanding and implementing the Bologna reforms. To that end, the evaluation team wants to praise the attitude and the commitment of the University leadership with regards to the implementation of the Bologna Process and inclusion in the European Higher Education Area.

Our first recommendation in this section is that the University ensure genuine implementation of Bologna reforms. with this in mind, the leadership of the University should undertake proper initiatives in order to help all actors within the University understand the reasons, real concept, aims and goals of the Bologna reforms. In this regard, the evaluation team recommends that the leadership of the University prepare an information leaflet explaining all important issues about concept, aims and implementation of the Bologna reforms and disseminate it among students and staff and interested members of the society.

Furthermore, the evaluation team recommends that the University reconsider the existing credit system with a view to further improving it. Bearing this in mind, original ECTS norms and standards should be followed, based on the estimation of student workload and learning outcomes. However, the evaluation team believes that an accurate relationship between courses, learning outcomes and student workload cannot be achieved without the active involvement of students themselves. With this regard, the evaluation team recommends the use of a student questionnaire to reassess the consistency between ECTS credits, the learning outcomes and the actual workload sustained by students (combining an a-priori evaluation with a-posteriori revision or confirmation of it).

## **9. Teaching and learning**

The evaluation team found a general positive mood with regards to the Bologna reforms related to teaching and learning and to educational processes in general. This mood could be identified at the

SER, but it was also evident in our discussions, both at the central level and at the level of the Faculties. We sensed an inclination for providing knowledge and building competences relevant to the labour market in wider study fields and also for renovating teaching and learning towards a student-centred approach (for example through studying in small groups). However, we had mixed feelings regarding implementation of this new approach. Shifting from teacher-centred to student-centred educational approaches is, anyway, a difficult issue, going in parallel with the introduction of the learning outcomes approach which was mentioned in the previous section of the present report. The evaluation team is aware that the genuine implementation of these elements is still one of the most difficult steps in the implementation of the Bologna reforms throughout Europe. In many cases the Bologna reforms are only perceived as simple structural reforms (the three cycles of studies), deprived of their essential components. In other cases, we experience a false implementation of the Bologna reforms due to a misunderstanding of the spirit of Bologna.

The role of the teachers in the student-centred educational approaches is fundamental. The shift to student-centred education requires new didactic and learning approaches. The traditional ones can no longer help. To that end, the evaluation team recommends that the University develop concrete actions in order to improve the pedagogical and teaching competences and qualities of the academic staff, taking due account of the new approaches.

Students are at the centre of the new educational approaches. Besides the typical education offered to the students, the new approach also requires an increased concern for the students regarding their studies, their study paths, and the orientation that they are given. To that end, the evaluation team recommends that the University implement an effective tutoring system from the very first year of the studies and also consider introducing mentoring. The implementation of such a system will also help to reduce both drop-out rates, especially from the first years of studies, and time to graduation. Furthermore, it seems that the University has to cope also with the problem of students coming from secondary education with poor abilities. To cope with this problem, the evaluation team recommends that the University establish knowledge testing for incoming students and accordingly administer bridging courses between higher and secondary education aimed at raising the abilities of the newly enrolled students.

Our last recommendation in this section is that the leadership of the University establish an effective system to monitor continuously the basic indicators which measure the efficiency of studies (drop-out rates and time to graduation).

## **10. Students**

In our meetings with students, both at the level of the Students' Parliament and at the level of each Faculty that we visited, we had the opportunity to notice that students are in general satisfied with their studies, their life and their relationship with the leadership and management of the University. Students are also satisfied with the operation of the Students' Parliament. The Student Vice-Rector at the University level and the Student Vice-Dean at the level of each Faculty are considered key actors in the university affairs.

The only worries raised by the students related to the restricted social, cultural and entertainment life that Kosovska Mitrovica offers them and to the uncertainty they feel for their life after graduation due to high level of unemployment. However, we can mention here initiatives like the Business Start-up Centre and the Career Centre, which can prove really helpful to students after their graduation. What we want to point out here is our feeling that the student support services are one of the strengths of the University. We were informed that almost all regular students are provided with food and low cost accommodation in student hostels of good quality, even used for international students. A question for the evaluation team was what “regular students” means. From the statistical data we were given, we noticed that almost 50% of the 1st cycle students are considered part-time students<sup>5</sup>. It seems that part-time students do not stay at Kosovska Mitrovica (or at the other seats of Faculties). Therefore, we assume the remaining 50% are considered “regular students”.

The feeling of the evaluation team, however, is that students are not active and proactive enough in university affairs. One serious reason, in our view, is the lack of awareness concerning their duties and their rights, as they derive on the one hand from the Statute of the University and on the other hand from the European developments in higher education and the ESU proposals. Therefore, the evaluation team recommends that the University (jointly the leadership of the University and the Students’ Parliament) improve awareness of students on their duties and rights considering ESU practices and the provisions of the University’s Statute, strengthen students’ voice, improve effective communication with students at grassroot level and enhance proper implementation of the functions afforded to the Students’ Parliament. These are all actions to be taken jointly by the leadership of the University and by the Students’ Parliament with a view to shared responsibility.

## **11. Research**

Research activity is what primarily distinguishes a university from any other kind of higher education institution. In the University, the evaluation team had mixed feelings regarding the overall attitude towards research. On the one hand, we noticed a strong inclination on the part of the leadership of the University to invest in the development of research capacities and to develop research and innovation activities. In some cases, this attitude has resulted in concrete actions, like the establishment of the Multidisciplinary Research Centre, which should also be considered as a means to enhance integration. On the other hand, we observed a weak research attitude in some Faculties, which resulted in a weak research activity. The lack of a critical mass of researchers to take over research activity is also a reality in these cases and is linked to the segregation of Faculties as well, which does not allow for better utilisation of the existing human potential at the University. However, the lack of an adequate infrastructure for research and innovation (e.g. poorly equipped research laboratories) remains a major problem, limiting significantly the developmental capacity of the University.

In general, our impression is that the University is not research-oriented today, but it has to be as soon as possible in order to meet the new challenges. Our first recommendation, therefore, in this section, is that the University introduce an efficient continuous upgrading of conditions for scientific

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<sup>5</sup> See Table 1 in section 6 of the present report.

work and improve the existing ones as soon as possible. To that end, the University should define at the institutional level a concrete research policy and set priorities in line with its strategic plan. Raising the attitude for research within the whole University with students as an essential part, should be one of the key objectives of this policy.

Doctoral studies should be considered part of the research plan of the University. We noticed that some Faculties face difficulties regarding the accreditation of doctoral programmes. Our recommendation here is that the University consider the integration of doctoral programmes at university level by establishing a Doctoral School, a model which is used currently in many European countries. Improving doctoral programmes will offer a good link between higher education studies and research, in regard of better critical mass and interdisciplinary activities, while at the same time will prepare the young academic potential which will offer the necessary momentum for the implementation of the research policy. This young academic staff needs the highest support from the University.

Our last recommendation in this section has to do with the position of the University in the international research environment. In this respect, we recommend that the University improve its position in three action lines: a) improve awareness of the academic potential with regards to announcements for research proposals, by obtaining and disseminating adequate information; b) increase activity of the University as a partner in international projects, international HE networks as well as in research networks; c) improve training in project preparation in the context of the EU (ERC, FP7) or other initiatives (ESF, ...) and in fundraising.

Following this last recommendation, the evaluation team would like to stress the necessity for the University to further improve its links and cooperation with other Universities in the region and beyond. This may offer significant benefits for the University, and not only in connection to research. It will enhance the capacity of the University in conditions of a competitive environment; it will help the University to improve its quality by comparing its functioning and its output to selected Universities on a benchmarking basis; and, finally, it will offer the University the possibility to make agreements with other HEIs for cooperation on doctoral studies. This would be beneficial especially in areas where the University is not able to cover the needs for doctoral studies with an adequate research environment in the near future.

## **12. Teaching staff**

As mentioned earlier, in section 10 of the present report, students are, in general, satisfied with their professors and with the communication they have with them. This is clear evidence of the commitment of the teaching staff of the University. However, we were informed that there is a large proportion of commuting staff that do not live in Kosovska Mitrovica or in the other seats of Faculties, and this generates problems in the overall educational process. From the various meetings with teaching staff at the Faculties, the evaluation team realised that the University has to develop a policy for the academic potential in order to raise their involvement in education, research and international activities of the University and in order to ensure for quality. Some of our recommendations related to teaching and learning and to research (previous sections), and to internationalisation (next section), can be applicable also for the current section. Furthermore, the

evaluation team would like to recommend that the University develop a mixed policy for the academic staff combining the guarantee for quality with motivation. In this regard, this policy should on the one hand lead to raising criteria and requirements for professional promotion and on the other hand introduce a motivation and rewarding system for good performance of staff (positive students' evaluations, good publication record, good research performance, higher number of graduates, etc.). Special interest should be shown for young academic staff that are ready for innovative changes in academic and research process. This policy has to find the best ways of taking advantage of this young staff and utilising its dynamics.

One more observation in the current section has to do with statistical data. From Table 1 in section 4 of the present report, great differences among Faculties in regard of student – teacher ratios can be noticed. Of course, these inequalities are to be attributed to the independent nature of the Faculties. However, this is a characteristic academic issue connected to teaching staff which should be considered by the Senate of the University as an issue of institutional concern and not as an issue left to each separate Faculty and its financial capacity.

As our last recommendation in the current section, we repeat our recommendation presented in section 9, referring to the student-centred educational approaches, because we consider it of high importance for the teaching staff as well:

“The role of the teachers in the student-centred educational approaches is fundamental. The shift to student-centred education requires new didactic and learning approaches. The traditional ones can no longer help. To that end, the evaluation team recommends that the University develop concrete actions in order to improve the pedagogical and teaching competences and qualities of the academic staff, taking due account of the new approaches.”

### **13. Internationalisation**

This section of the report is strongly related to the idea of the regional university as was outlined earlier in section 5. We simply repeat here that the University should put increased emphasis on all issues improving its capacity in internationalisation affairs. Two issues are to be mentioned here. The first one has to do with initiatives of the University at international level and the second one with international mobility of students and staff.

The evaluation team sensed an international attitude at the level of the leadership of the University. This attitude is consistent with a general European perspective and we praise the University's leadership for that. We also observed evidence of this attitude through various initiatives at international level. In other words, we noticed concrete efforts of the University to open itself to the outer world and especially to Europe. Involvement in research and other projects for European funding (FP7, European Science Foundation, Tempus), active participation in European higher education organisations, involvement in Joint Master Programmes and participation of students in Erasmus Mundus Master Programmes are some of these evidences. Our only recommendation here is that the University further promote its international initiatives, taking also advantage of the support offered by international organisations and initiatives at regional level.

With regards to mobility of students and teaching staff, it seems that there are difficulties. These difficulties were mentioned in the SER, but we also had the opportunity to verify them during our meetings. Three reasons can be mentioned regarding this: a) there is little interest in mobility programmes; b) there is poor knowledge of foreign languages, especially English; c) there are problems concerning recognition of periods of studies abroad. Considering the high importance of international mobility for both staff and students, the evaluation team recommends that the University develop a policy including concrete measures for both staff and students. It should be understood that the teaching staff should act as a catalyst for the mobility of students. In this regard the University should facilitate international staff mobility with sabbatical policy and should also enhance hospitality for foreign teachers. Furthermore, the University should facilitate mobility of students, on the one hand by improving information mechanisms and on the other hand by the actual recognition of the ECTS obtained in other Universities abroad. Finally, the improvement of the capacity in foreign languages (especially English) for both staff and students should be a key issue for this policy. The establishment of a foreign Language Centre could be a good step in that direction. Staff and students should be encouraged in this and good performance rewarded.

#### **14. Links with society**

This section of the report is strongly related to the idea of the regional university as was outlined earlier in section 5. The only thing that we want to repeat here is the two-way relationship between the university and the region, expressed through an interrelationship or interdependence between the university and the region, in the context of which the university should pro-actively respond to the needs of the region and the region should provide the required help to the university on a mutual basis.

During our meetings, especially with the leadership of the University, we realised that there is a strong commitment on the part of the University to produce the educated people needed to contribute to the region's needs on a developmental basis (agriculture, mining) and on a social basis (teachers, medical doctors etc.). We also noticed the good relations of the University with the municipality of Kosovska Mitrovica and their good intentions with ideas for industry and economic cooperation. (in our meeting with the Director of Trepca).

However, our deeper feeling, and our recommendation as well, is that the University should make strong efforts in order to build up its reputation and visibility and in order to communicate the idea of the mutual commitment between the University and the region in all its aspects (local, social, economic). With that in mind, the University should pro-actively emphasise efforts for knowledge transfer to the regional economy. Furthermore, and in order to strengthen its arguments, the University should make even more visible its role and its offer for the development of the regional society. Thus, the University should also start considering Lifelong Learning possibilities with regards to the region.

Lifelong learning should be considered one of the basic means for a university to open up to society. According to the Leuven Communiqué (2009)<sup>6</sup>, *“Widening participation shall also be achieved*

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<sup>6</sup> European Ministers in charge of Higher Education, Leuven Communiqué, April 2009.

through lifelong learning as an integral part of our education systems” and “Lifelong learning is subject to the principle of public responsibility”. Furthermore, “The implementation of lifelong learning policies requires strong partnerships between public authorities, higher education institutions, students, employers and employees”. The European Universities’ Charter on Lifelong Learning developed by the European University Association provides a useful input for defining such partnerships.

## 15. Quality culture

The term “quality culture” defines the overall attitude of an HEI which focuses on the concept of “quality” and which, thus, applies to issues like quality assurance, quality assessment, quality improvement, etc. In the context of the IEP’s methodology, quality assurance offers the means through which a university will be in position **to know whether it is doing well**. It certainly comes from the necessity of going beyond data, figures, statistics, quantitative elements and it deals with the qualitative dimension. Quality is a central issue and concern in European higher education today. Furthermore, it has also assumed a key role in the Bologna Process, and the “European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education” (ESG)<sup>7</sup> have already been adopted by the European Ministers in Bergen in May 2005, thus also building a European perspective and a European context for quality assurance in higher education. It is worthwhile noting that every country participating in the Bologna Process is committed to establishing its own quality assurance system by 2010 according to the above ESGs.

For its own part, EUA actively encourages its member universities to implement their own internal quality assurance mechanisms and to develop a quality culture shared among universities throughout Europe. As stated in the Berlin Communiqué (2003)<sup>8</sup>, “in consistency with the principle of institutional autonomy, the primary responsibility for quality assurance in higher education lies with each institution itself and this provides the basis for real accountability of the academic system within the national quality framework”. This statement is further specified in the London Communiqué (2007)<sup>9</sup> with a new statement: “Since the main responsibility for quality lies with HEIs, they should continue to develop their systems of quality assurance”. It is a task therefore for every European HEI to develop its own structures and procedures ensuring genuine quality assurance.

In the present case of the University, the evaluation team noticed with satisfaction that quality is among its major concerns. The establishment of the Quality Assurance Committee, together with the production of the main quality instruments, namely the Strategy for Quality Assurance, the Regulation on Quality Assurance and the Regulation on Self-Evaluation, offer significant evidence to that. We can also add here the Rulebook on Student Evaluation of Studies and Teachers’ Pedagogical Work through questionnaires. Finally, we would also like to mention the work done in the SWOT analysis prepared in the context of the self-evaluation process, irrespective of some technical and methodological weaknesses. These efforts and initiatives are correctly integrated into the University.

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<sup>7</sup> Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, 3rd edition, ENQA, Helsinki, 2009.

[http://www.engq.eu/files/esg\\_3edition%20\(2\).pdf](http://www.engq.eu/files/esg_3edition%20(2).pdf)

<sup>8</sup> European Ministers in charge of Higher Education, Berlin Communiqué, September 2003.

<sup>9</sup> European Ministers in charge of Higher Education, London Communiqué, May 2007.

However, this is not enough. In order for these efforts and initiatives to help build a quality culture in the University, a real institutional orchestrated attitude within the University is required. Otherwise, we will simply talk about internal quality structures and processes but not about results, output achievements and wide shared quality culture.

The evaluation team recommends, therefore, that the University continue in a systematic way the efforts that it has already put in action with regards to internal quality assurance and ensure that its internal quality assurance system is functioning properly, is constantly improving and is producing reasonable progress in all aspects. To that end, the University should adopt commonly accepted norms as, for example, they are applied in the EHEA, through the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) for quality assurance and as listed in the respective EUA documents.

It should be further noted here that, when dealing with quality assurance processes, there is always a danger that quality assurance is seen either as the responsibility of only a few committed persons or as feedback from questionnaires. In parallel, bureaucratisation is always a threat to the effective establishment and operation of a quality assurance system. These dangers and threats should be considered carefully by the University in operating its internal quality assurance system.

lasting the past few years, a great number of HEIs have established internal quality structures (offices, services, committees, working groups or agencies); they act as internal evaluators, intent on defining the level of quality of teaching, learning, research, services to students, in all the components of the institution (from communication to library, from budget to computer facilities, etc.). They all base their work on well-established indicators and standards (both qualitative and quantitative), methods, analyses that are defined at the European level in the form of the abovementioned ESGs. This provides real evidence for a quality culture and for periodic obligatory external quality assessment and accreditation.

Nevertheless, building quality culture within an institution requires much more than establishing internal quality assurance structures and procedures; quality culture does not start and does not end only with structures and procedures; every individual enrolled in the institution has also a responsibility to replace non-functional or poorly functional practices with ones that bring better and more effective and efficient results, that contribute to improving the overall quality. In other words, quality culture should be approached as the attitude of individuals for quality and for continuous improvement. The question is how to make quality an everyday concern for every single individual member of the community (staff and students).

In this regard, the evaluation team recommends that the University ensure appropriate conditions to build a Quality Culture within the Institution. Of course, the internal quality assurance structures and procedures will be the basis for this Quality Culture. However, the appropriate conditions require much more. Practices that could help in creating such conditions can be the enhancement of academic staff's involvement, timely briefing on QA European developments, and care in overall quality assessment of educational practices, the wide dissemination of the results of internal quality assurance integrated within the whole Institution, the transparency of quality procedures, the visible impact on quality improvement and any other practices that foster, through better knowledge of the

institution, a sense of belonging, a spirit of collegiality, a stronger identity, a feeling of ownership, the commitment of people.

The final word in this section concerns the assessment of teachers and courses by the students through questionnaires, which is a specific issue of major importance in the field of quality assurance. It is a very sensitive issue and, therefore, the University should pay increased attention to the way it approaches it. The recommendation of the evaluation team on this point is that the University find an appropriate way to foster the effectiveness and the reliability of the process. To that end, the University should consider the need for the results to be trusted, publicised and should also consider their impact on the quality of teaching, gathering evidence for it, but also for improving educational efficiency (reduce failure rates, drop-out rates and time to graduation). Furthermore, ways should be found to motivate students and teachers to participate actively in the process and make best use of the questionnaires and the students' responses. In other words, the University should implement a systematic way to gather, and report students' feedback and utilise it efficiently. Finally, the teaching evaluation process should be carried out with the proper methodology and should be integrated into the overall internal quality assurance process.

## 16. Capacity for change

Alongside the quality assurance issues, the Institutional Evaluation Programme focuses on the **capacity for change**. The reason for this is a widespread conviction that European HEIs are exposed to increasing **demands** from society and the labour market due to global increasing economic competition. In many countries they are also exposed to growing **competition** from other institutions of higher education, be it domestic or foreign. Especially with regards to European HEIs, the new landscape drawn by the emerging European Research and Higher Education Area and the principles of the Bologna Process is one more reason and necessity for change.

If the HEIs do not seize the initiative themselves and show their capacity for change and their adaptability to radically new conditions in an era of increasing competition and mass higher education, then there may be **risks** that even the important core academic values, which we undoubtedly all want to preserve, might be in jeopardy.

HEIs have always had, and still have, the twofold duty of **defending** traditional values and of **leading** society into new areas (and new eras). There have been periods in their very long history, when HEIs were too successful as defenders of tradition at the price of **isolation** from society and petrification. But fortunately enough, we can also look back to times when HEIs were true centres of **innovation, social and cultural progress** in many respects.

The capacity for change firstly requires the identification of all the factors requiring change, as well as of the features and the content of the change needed. Secondly, it requires each HEI to determine its own mission in conjunction with the changes needed and to set its priorities. Thirdly, it requires determining the strengths and weaknesses of each HEI with respect to its own identity and characteristics and to the existing challenges and external conditions. Finally, it requires an efficient mechanism to assess continually the course of each institution towards its objectives, towards the

changes required. What we have to ask ourselves is whether the traditional organisation and leadership of a HEI will be capable of fulfilling its task at the beginning of the 21st century.

The evaluation team wants to stress that ***the capacity for change is a sine qua non condition for a HEI in a modern society***. The capacity for change requires ***a clear mission, inspired vision and realistic objectives*** for the institution. It also requires ***effective strategic planning*** and the establishment of a ***quality culture***. Furthermore, it requires tools such as ***action plans and milestones***. These are the internal requirements like human resources, innovative power, efficiency, cost efficiency. There are, of course, external requirements as well. They have to do with resources (financial, research support and human), with the legislative framework and the relationship between HEIs and the state (autonomy), which have to encourage and support the institutions in strengthening their capacity for change. And, finally, there are joint requirements that have to do with the ***relationship between HEIs and the society at large*** following the principle of the ***public responsibility for (and of) higher education and research*** and the quest for ***real accountability***.

Apart from these internal and external requirements, the capacity for change requires, above all, inspiration. It requires ***inspired, motivated and determined people***. It is extremely important to realise that elements of strategic planning do not themselves change HEIs. Changes in institutions have to be driven by people: staff and students; and an inspired stimulating leadership, making sure that the actions in the action plans are under way and that the milestones are achieved.

As mentioned earlier universities in Europe are facing many challenges. In this regard the University is no exception, being today at a crucial crossroads in the sense that it has to make crucial decisions for its future and it has to develop a strategy that will drive its future steps. The evaluation team is aware that the University has proved many times in the past its capacity for change as it has undergone significant changes and in hard times. However, to meet with the present challenge, the University needs to enhance its capacity for change. In the previous paragraphs, we outlined the factors that, in our view, build this capacity. Our recommendation, therefore, is that the University consider these factors, especially those related to internal and joint requirements, and adapts them to the needs of its new strategy. As a reminder, we summarise these factors as follows:

- A clear mission, inspired vision and realistic objectives
- Effective strategic planning
- Action plans and milestones
- Quality and innovativeness culture
- Relationship between HEIs and the society at large
  - Public responsibility for (and of) higher education and research
  - Real accountability (in all essential aspects).

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **17. Conclusions**

For the evaluation team it is clear that the University of Mitrovica is at a crossroads. Furthermore, we considered the case of the University as unique. We did not restrict ourselves to a typical supportive institutional evaluation aiming simply at quality improvement, but we tried to offer inspirations and views for the future of the University. We are aware of the problems and the hard times that the University has encountered. This is why our concern was how to ensure a brighter future based on stability and sustainability. As we mentioned in section 5 of this report, our ideas could be considered more than simple recommendations.

However, and apart from the above thoughts and ideas, our report contains regular recommendations as well. These recommendations are based on the analysis that we have made with regards to the SER and to the two site-visits that we conducted. Our general impression is that the University is a university with many qualities, which is also facing difficult conditions. At the same time, the University is putting a significant effort into increasing quality. The effective and inspiring leadership and the commitment of the people of the University (staff and students) are the main forces driving the University towards a better future.

It is in that context that the evaluation team tried to approach the work done by the University. Our recommendations are intended to be our own contribution to the process of change and to help the University to make the most of the opportunities open to it and to cope with the threats scattered along its route to the future. At the same time, our report aspires to function as an inspiration for the Institution as a whole, but more specifically for all those people, students and staff, who have a concern for its future. We hope that the work done by our evaluation team, including the present report, offers stimulation and a real help to the University in shaping its future steps.

### **18. Summary of recommendations**

In this section of the report we summarise the main recommendations, as they have appeared underlined in the respective sections of the text.

#### **Section 5: Vision – Mission – Strategy – Aims**

1. The University should take the appropriate initiatives to solve in a widely accepted way the problem of its name. If the University wants to play a major strategic role in the region also building on its European perspective, it needs to solve the name issue once and for all, striving for a compromise. The University needs a name for all uses (inside and outside the University) and for all purposes. And the evaluation team believes that this problem can be solved only on initiative by the University and in close consultation with all relevant political authorities.

2. The University should a) open a university-wide debate about the vision considering its long-term development, b) reformulate its mission to reflect its own specificities and vision of the future, and c) develop a strategy to fulfil its mission and reach strategic aims and to raise its reputation and visibility. In the context of this strategy, the University should set concrete priorities, which should be attained on the basis of an analytical action plan. Finally, a permanent structure and a systematic procedure should be established in the University which will continuously monitor not only the implementation of the strategic plan, but also the validity of its goals.

### **Section 6: Towards an integrated university**

3. The evaluation team recommends that the University adopt the Europe-wide model, norms and values of an integrated university, with a view to building an effective strategy for the future, but also with a view to ensuring the continuous enhancement of quality, efficiency, cost efficiency and its competitiveness in all aspects of functioning.

4. The evaluation team recommends that the leadership of the University establish concrete policies and undertake appropriate initiatives in order to reinforce the institutional attitude within the University towards an integrated university.

5. The evaluation team recommends that the University, in its restructuring apply the principle of subsidiarity (maximum possible professional autonomy) of the Faculties, to ensure their creativity, fast response to opportunities and best performance.

### **Section 7: Governance and management**

6. The evaluation team would like to add a recommendation here, referring to the two collective bodies (Council and Senate), including the representatives of the Faculties and the Deans, and stressing the need for an institutional-driven operation in the two supreme bodies of the University. The chairs of these bodies should be accountable for this operation.

7. Transparency in the functioning of all decision-making bodies, together with accountability of their members, are two important factors to ensure legitimacy of their decisions and to lead to their good implementation. The improvement of these two factors is another recommendation of the evaluation team. To that end, the University should also take full advantage of existing possibilities in order to enhance the number of students and administrative staff participating in the decision-making bodies.

8. The evaluation team recommends that the University raise overheads and ensures their regular payment. Furthermore, the evaluation team recommends that the University establish an efficient diversified fund raising policy in order to generate additional resources for the University and take measures particularly to raise income by research and services to society.

9. Should state funding be directed to the University and not to the Faculties, the University has to further improve its financial management, so that it includes the system for allocating state funding to the Faculties.

## **Section 8: Bologna reforms and implementation**

10. Our first recommendation here is that the University ensures genuine implementation of Bologna reforms. To that end, the leadership of the University should undertake proper initiatives in order to help all actors within the University understand the reasons, real concept, aims and goals of the Bologna reforms. In this regards, the evaluation team recommends that the leadership of the University prepare an information leaflet explaining all important issues about the concept, aims and implementation of the Bologna reforms and disseminate it among students and staff and interested members of the society.

11. The evaluation team recommends that the University reconsider the existing credit system with a view to further improving it. Original ECTS norms and standards should be followed with that in mind, based on the estimation of student workload and learning outcomes. However, the evaluation team believes that an accurate relationship between courses, learning outcomes and student workload cannot be achieved without the active involvement of students themselves. Thus, the evaluation team recommends the use of a student questionnaire to reassess the consistency between the ECTS credits, the learning outcomes and the actual workload sustained by students (combining an a-priori evaluation with a-posteriori revision or confirmation of it).

## **Section 9: Teaching and learning**

12. The evaluation team recommends that the University develop concrete actions in order to improve the pedagogical and teaching competences and qualities of the academic staff, taking due account of the new approaches (student-centred educational approaches).

13. The evaluation team recommends that the University implement an effective tutoring system from the very first year of study and also consider introducing mentoring. The implementation of such a system will also help to reduce both drop-out rates, especially from the first years of study, and time to graduation.

14. To cope with the problem of poorly prepared secondary school students, the evaluation team recommends that the University establish knowledge testing for incoming students and accordingly administer bridging courses between higher and secondary education aimed at raising the abilities of the newly enrolled students.

15. Our last recommendation in this section is that the leadership of the University establish an effective system to monitor continuously the basic indicators measuring the efficiency of studies (drop-out rates and time to graduation).

## **Section 10: Students**

16. The evaluation team recommends that the University (jointly the leadership of the University and the Students' Parliament) improve awareness of students on their duties and rights considering ESU practices and the provisions of the University's Statute, strengthen students' voice, improve

effective communication with students at grassroots level and enhance proper implementation of the functions afforded to the Students' Parliament. These are all actions to be taken jointly by the leadership of the University and by the Students' Parliament with a view to shared responsibility.

### **Section 11: Research**

17. Our first recommendation in this section is that the University introduce an efficient continuous upgrading of conditions for scientific work and improve the existing ones as soon as possible. To that end, the University should define at the institutional level a concrete research policy and set priorities in line with its strategic plan. Raising the attitude towards research within the whole University with students as an essential part, should be one of the key objectives of this policy.

18. Our recommendation is that the University consider integration of doctoral programmes at university level by establishing a Doctoral School, a model which is used currently in many European countries. Improving doctoral programmes will offer a good link between higher education studies and research, in regard of better critical mass and interdisciplinary activities, while at the same time preparing the young academic potential which will offer the necessary momentum for the implementation of the research policy. This young academic staff needs the highest support from the University.

19. Our last recommendation in this section concerns the position of the University in the international research environment. In this respect, we recommend that the University improve its position in three action lines: a) improve awareness of the academic potential with regards to announcements for research proposals, by obtaining and disseminating the adequate information; b) increase activity of the University as a partner in international projects, international HE networks as well as in research networks; c) improve training in project preparation in the context of EU (ERC, FP7) or other initiatives (ESF, ...) and in fundraising.

### **Section 12: Teaching staff**

20. The evaluation team would like to recommend that the University develop a mixed policy for the academic staff combining guarantee for quality with motivation. In this regard, this policy should lead to raising criteria and requirements for professional promotion and, at the same time, introduce a motivation and rewarding system for good performance of staff (positive students' evaluations, good publication record, good research performance, higher number of graduates, etc.). Special interest should be shown for young academic staff that are ready for innovative changes in the academic and research process. This policy has to find the best ways of taking advantage of this young staff and to utilise its dynamics.

### **Section 13: Internationalisation**

21. Our only recommendation here is that the University further promote its international initiatives, taking also advantage of the support offered by international organisations and initiatives at regional level.

22. Considering the high importance of international mobility for both staff and students, the evaluation team recommends that the University develop a policy including concrete measures for both staff and students. It should be understood that the teaching staff should act as a catalyst for the mobility of students. In this regard the University should facilitate international staff mobility with sabbatical policy and should also enhance hospitality for foreign teachers. Furthermore, the University should facilitate mobility of students, on the one hand by improving information mechanisms and on the other hand by the actual recognition of the ECTS obtained in other Universities abroad. Finally, the improvement of the capacity in foreign languages (especially English) for both staff and students should be a key issue for this policy. The establishment of a foreign Language Centre could be a good step in that direction. Staff and students should be encouraged in this and good performance rewarded.

#### **Section 14: Links with society**

23. Our recommendation is that the University should make strong efforts in order to build up its reputation and visibility and in order to communicate the idea of the mutual commitment between the University and the region in all its aspects (local, social, economic). With that in mind, the University should pro-actively emphasise efforts for knowledge transfer to the regional economy. Furthermore, and in order to strengthen its arguments, the University should make even more visible its role and its offer for the development of the regional society. Thus, the University should also start considering Lifelong Learning possibilities with regards to the region.

#### **Section 15: Quality culture**

24. The evaluation team recommends that the University continue in a systematic way the efforts that it has already put in action with regards to internal quality assurance and ensure that its internal quality assurance system is functioning properly, is constantly improving and is producing reasonable progress in all aspects. To that end, the University should adopt commonly accepted norms as, for example, they are applied in the EHEA, through the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) for quality assurance and as listed in the respective EUA documents.

25. The evaluation team recommends that the University ensure appropriate conditions to build a Quality Culture within the Institution. Of course, the internal quality assurance structures and procedures will be the basis for this Quality Culture. However, the appropriate conditions require much more. Practices that could help in creating such conditions can be the enhancement of academic staff's involvement, timely briefing on QA European developments, and care in overall quality assessment of educational practices, the wide dissemination of the results of internal quality assurance integrated within the whole Institution, the transparency of quality procedures, the visible impact on quality improvement and any other practices that foster, through better knowledge of the institution, a sense of belonging, a spirit of collegiality, a stronger identity, a feeling of ownership, the commitment of people.

26. The final recommendation on this point is that the University find an appropriate way to foster the effectiveness and the reliability of the process. To that end, the University should consider the need for the results to be trusted, publicised and should also consider their impact on the quality of

teaching, gathering evidence for it, but also for improving educational efficiency (reduce failure rates, drop-out rates and time to graduation). Furthermore, ways should be found to motivate students and teachers to participate actively in the process and make best use of the questionnaires and the students' responses. In other words, the University should implement a systematic way to gather, and report students' feedback and utilise it efficiently. Finally, the teaching evaluation process should be carried out with the proper methodology and should be integrated into the overall internal quality assurance process.

#### **Section 16: Capacity for change**

27. Our recommendation is that the University consider the following factors that build capacity for change and adapts them to the needs of its new strategy:

- A clear mission, inspired vision and realistic objectives
- Effective strategic planning
- Action plans and milestones
- Quality and innovativeness culture
- Relationship between HEIs and the society at large
  - Public responsibility for (and of) higher education and research
  - Real accountability (in all essential aspects).

## **ENVOI**

Coming to the end of this report, the evaluation team feels the need to express once again its sincere thanks to the people of the University for the excellent arrangements provided to make our two visits a challenging and delightful, although very intensive, experience. At the same time, the evaluation team wishes to thank the University for its generous and overwhelming hospitality.

The evaluation team wants also to express its gratitude to the staff and students of the University for the openness and willingness to discuss with us all issues concerning the Institution during all our meetings. It has been a great pleasure and a very stimulating experience for us to be introduced to the University during this specific and crucial period, in this turning point in the history of the Institution.

As a final word, the evaluation team has been positively impressed by the commitment and the engagement of all people in the University, especially of its leadership. The new situations and the new era are real challenges for the Institution. And we are convinced that the University does have the capacity to meet these challenges.