

**UNIVERSITY OF ZENICA
Bosnia and Herzegovina
*EVALUATION REPORT***

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1. Introduction

This report is the result of the evaluation of the University of Zenica. The evaluation took place between February and May 2009. As stated in the guidelines for the Institutional Evaluation Programme, we do not attempt to give a blueprint for university management. We report on our findings from the university self-evaluation report, visits to the university and fruitful discussions with leadership, staff, students and external stakeholders. On this basis we present a number of suggestions for further development of the university.

1.1. 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 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 planning
- 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.

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 it know it works?
- How does the institution change in order to improve?

1.2. University of Zenica

The national context

The legal control of higher education in Bosnia and Herzegovina is divided between the cantons, the two entities and the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

A new Framework Law on Higher Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina has been long awaited and recently introduced. The law gives possibility for development and makes

accommodation for university autonomy. The recent introduction of this law should bring some certainty and a period of stability in which the university can concentrate on consolidation and growth.

Overall there is an extremely low participation rate in Higher Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Exact figures could not be determined but we understand to be estimated at 16%. European participation rates are much higher, typically around 50%. With this in mind the university should anticipate and contribute to an increased participation rate.

Zenica is an important economic, administrative, educational, health and cultural centre of Zenica/Doboj Canton. The total area of the municipality is 505 square kilometres, and according to the last census, has 145.577 inhabitants. Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina, is 80 km away.

Zenica/Doboj Canton is one of ten administrative units within the Federation of the country of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Canton covers an area of 3.950 square kilometres, with about 420.000 inhabitants. The majority of the region is hilly or mountainous and rural.

Higher education has been present in Zenica for more than 50 years, when part of the University of Sarajevo was situated in Zenica. In June 2005 the Faculties of Law, Economics and Health from the University of Sarajevo became part of the University of Zenica.

At the University of Zenica there are approx. 5,000 students and 300 professors, assistants and other staff in full or part time employment. The university consists of the following faculties (in order of their founding):

- Faculty for Metallurgy and Material Sciences
- Faculty of Mechanical Engineering
- Faculty of Education
- Faculty of Education Islamic Pedagogical
- Faculty of Law
- Faculty of Economics
- Faculty of Health

and two institutes/centres:

- Metallurgical
- Dormitory

(See SER 2008 p 4)

IEP at University of Zenica

The Rector of the University of Zenica has a strong interest in internationalisation and as member of the European University Association asked for an evaluation which indicated European benchmarks. It is with this in mind that we make our suggestions and recommendations.

We do not underestimate the hard work, effort, clear thinking, dedication, devotion that has gone into creating the University to this point. Our comments are made to help the

university, and the region, prepare itself for the fiercely competitive Higher Education sector that exists globally. Having said that, we should add that many recommendations and many choices facing the university are not exclusive to Zenica, or to Bosnia, but are being faced by universities throughout Europe and the world.

1.3. The Self-Evaluation Process

The IEP guidelines emphasise the self-evaluation as a crucial phase in the evaluation process. The self-evaluation phase has two aspects that are equally important: the self-evaluation *process* and the self-evaluation *report*:

- The self-evaluation *process* is a collective institutional reflection and an opportunity for quality improvement of any aspect of the institution.
- The self-evaluation *report* is one outcome of the self-evaluation process; it provides information to the evaluation team, with emphasis on the institution's strategic and quality management activities.

The goal of both the *process* and the *report* is to enhance the institutional capacity for improvement and change through self-reflection. This is a crucial phase in which careful consideration should be given to maximise the engagement of the whole institution. To fulfil these goals the guidelines for the institutional evaluation programme put great emphasis on this part of the process.

The University of Zenica chose not to undertake this process nor produce a dedicated self evaluation report based upon the guidelines provided by IEP. The University advised the team that it "recognise(s) self-evaluation process as a collective reflection of our institution and nice opportunity for quality improvement of any aspect of organisation". It goes on to say that it 'is better working every year self-evaluation of our University than working this report from time to time (when EUA or similar organisation comes). That is difference between us and other Bosnian state universities.....Normally, self evaluation reports are not enough if we have not adequate steps which need to realise improvement in our work."

The elaborated annual report following a structure suitable for the university reporting and with several duplications from year to year made it difficult for the team to apply the standard procedure during the initial stages of the evaluation process. As a consequence, the team attempted to apply the IEP principles and judgements to the information provided, through requesting further information and through its meetings with University personnel. The team observes, but draws no conclusion from the University's choice not to engage with the guidelines.

Preliminary information (an internal evaluation report for the year 2007) was sent to the evaluation team on 23 January, followed by a number of other supplementary documents. The first visit of the evaluation team took place from 18 to 20 February 2009 followed by a second visit from 11 to 14 May 2009. At the conclusion of the first visit, the evaluation team requested additional information, which the university provided prior to the second visit.

The evaluation team consisted of:

- Bent Schmidt-Nielsen (Chair), Former Rector, the Royal Veterinary and Agricultural University, Denmark
- Áine Hyland, Former Vice President, University College Cork, Ireland
- Öktem Vardar, Provost, Işık University, Turkey
- Urs Brudermann, Student, University of Applied Sciences Northwestern Switzerland, Switzerland
- Andy Gibbs (Coordinator) School Director of International Relations, Edinburgh Napier University, Scotland

The Team thanks Prof. DSc Sabahudin Ekinović, Rector of the University of Zenica and his team for arranging and facilitating such useful visits and for providing open access to the staff and information about the university. Thanks also to Prof. DSc Darko Petković, Vice-Rector of University of Zenica for co-ordinating the event and providing relevant information. It is obvious to the team that the present Rector and his team have contributed successfully to the development of the university and have shown great resourcefulness and effort in bringing resources and recognition to the university.

2. Governance

2.1. External Governance

2.1.1. Overall the team noted strong and empathic leadership to establish the university and supported by internal and external stakeholders.

2.1.2. In the absence of a university mission statement, the team was interested to know “Why” have a university in Zenica? What is its purpose and mission? It asked a range of internal and external stakeholders these questions. No single or shared mission or vision for the university emerged.

2.1.3. The team found overwhelming support for the university from both internal and external stakeholders. Local businesses and organisations all agreed that it is critical to the regeneration of the local economy. Everyone gained a great sense of pride and improved self esteem by having a local university. Students and staff all expressed the importance of establishing the university in the local environment.

2.1.4. The team met with external stakeholders. There was a strong sense of ownership exhibited by them. However, the role of external stakeholders towards making a contribution to university governance is currently not structured in a way that would give maximum reciprocal benefits.

2.1.5. Stakeholders represented government, trade organisations, welfare organisations, health care providers, schools and industry. They gave a range of reasons to support a university in Zenica. These included: stopping talented youngsters leaving the locality or the country; it is a cost effective way for students to study locally and developing expertise locally.

2.1.6. Industry representatives talked of the importance of matching curricula with employment needs. Scholarship schemes have been established with local industry and employers would welcome teachers in order to introduce them to their work practices. The requirement to liaise with industry and co-ordinate the introduction of new programmes was emphasised whilst it was acknowledged that greater labour market research was needed. Communication was at a good level at the moment but not yet structured.

2.1.7. There was agreement that the university had made a good start however rapid development may bring problems in itself. Some of these problems would be related to matching the selection of programmes to need but there would also be practical issues of capacity and physical space.

2.1.8. An imbalance between those wishing to study humanities and science was seen as potentially problematic with more students wanting to choose humanities whilst industry wanted engineers, technically and scientifically skilled graduates. The University, in close collaboration with local society, is seen as having a role in encouraging greater uptake of science-based disciplines. Additionally, within the health

sector there was a shortage of medical personnel and it was anticipated that the further development of the Health Faculty may address this.

2.1.9. The enthusiasm, interest and insights of this external group emphasised to the team that stakeholder needs are pivotal to the need for a university in Zenica and vital for its growth. For these reasons external stakeholders must be central to development. A stakeholder advisory forum should be established.

2.2. Internal Governance

2.2.1. The university has been successful in creating an integrated structure. The team understands this to mean that the university has a central organising and management structure which exercises these powers autonomously for the benefit of the whole university. This moves away from a system whereby management and decision making rested with individual faculties towards a structure based on a fully integrated university. This has been achieved in part by the establishment of a system of "chairs". This is recognised as a significant achievement, complemented by the universal praise that the system received from those academic staff that we met.

2.2.2. The team understood the rationale and concept of the revised system. The structure is extremely complex when looked at from outside and takes a great deal of explaining. There are multiple understandings of the structure amongst staff to such an extent to lead us to conclude that the system is accepted but not widely understood. Whilst this may suit the university at the moment, it would be prudent to consider a decision making structure which is clearer, more transparent and has clearly defined responsibilities at the differing levels of organisation.

2.2.3. It was observed that most decisions are made at Rectorate level. In the long term this may be an unsustainable position as it is a reasonable expectation that the university will continue to grow quickly. The management and decision making structures need to be such that the university can respond to this both effectively and with the involvement of all staff. It needs to stimulate activity and ensure resources are directed correctly by establishing effective internal structures.

2.2.4. Some areas caused us concern. They may be useful now but how will they remain useful into the future. The university has grown rapidly and will continue to grow. It is obvious that growth will be constrained by resources. The University management needs to anticipate and plan for future size and shape of the organisation.

2.2.5. There has been a rapid growth in Arts and Humanities disciplines and a decline in scientific and technical areas. The university must review profile and portfolio to ensure that its provision is in line with stakeholder needs. It would be prudent to identify and make transparent criteria for sustainability of departments, units and faculties so that staff is aware of what establishes sustainability and how they can contribute to it. For this reason resource allocation to individual units and areas must reflect and have a relationship to activity levels.

2.3. Research Institute

2.3.1. During the prosperous period of industrial development of the Zenica/Doboj canton the sector research institute, Metallurgical Institute “Kemal Kapetanovic”, played an important role as a service to local industry. To-day, the larger industries draw upon their own service laboratories or use foreign support to a much greater extent. The research institute has been active in adapting to new terms of reference and includes several service functions. Being part of the integrated university, this activity should be further integrated into the university in respect to organisational structure and financial decision making. The institute is seen as a valuable partner for future developments in establishing contact with external stakeholders, in teaching and learning and in research within technical sciences. A closer integration into the faculty structure should be considered.

3. Students

3.1. The team spoke to a number of groups of students from a number of faculties. There is an inconsistency in the student experience across different faculties. Nevertheless students like being at this university and are grateful to study locally. Indeed some students chose Zenica in preference to other Bosnian institutions but most chose it because it was their local university. Some had studied elsewhere and made favourable comparisons with the University of Zenica.

3.2. The inconsistency that students mentioned referred both to systems within faculties or programmes and the approaches of individual teachers. Many examples of excellent support for students were cited and it was clear that many faculties have excellent procedures and many individual teachers work hard for student success. However, not all students are treated the same and there are widely varying student experiences within the university. A lack of consistency may contribute to feelings of partiality or favouritism and detract from a positive student experience.

3.3. A lack of consistency and transparency in assessment was the most commonly cited area of concern. A sense of fairness in assessment is really important to students. The majority of students did not know what they have to study each semester and were unaware of learning outcomes, what they have to do to pass and how to appeal if things go wrong. The European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) specify that students should be assessed using published criteria, regulations and procedures which are applied consistently. The university is recommended to move quickly to this position. Not only would this increase the students' sense of fairness but also address some issues related to low pass rates.

3.4. This is linked to comments about the Bologna Process and Teaching and Learning. The introduction of learning outcomes would be a critical first step in addressing this issue.

3.5. A number of teaching staff indicated that students don't want or are unable to study and as a consequence fail their studies. There is a clear culture of blaming the student body for failure and lack of engagement or interest with their studies. The university needs to take responsibility for the students it accepts for its programmes of study and to take steps to ensure student success.

3.6. The Students Union has a good relationship with the Rectorate of the University and is involved in university committees. The university works with the Union to communicate with students. The Union makes efforts to involve all students but reported that many students do not want to be involved. The relationship between the Union and the university is good and should be maintained and further developed to include more members than just the President. The evaluation team also recognised the rights of students not to join the Union and to represent themselves if they so wished. For these reasons, university communications should be directly with students and, equally, students should have a means of making their views known directly.

Direct communication to the students – and not to the Union – would make the information flow transparent.

3.7. The team suggests that student rights should be clear and universal application should be ensured, perhaps in the form of a student charter. A Student Charter would help all students get a good experience and would create expectations of university study that are in line with European norms. This would help to address inconsistency of information available on rights, courses and assessment.

3.8. This would also contribute to students realistically evaluating their experience and using this as an opportunity to transform current approaches. We see a win-win situation in the development of a student charter – for the university and the students.

3.9. The team noted that, currently, all evaluations are not available to all students. The team reiterates its belief that there should be direct communication with students and that all students should have access to evaluation reports. An intranet would communicate with students and bring that community together and bring about greater transparency.

4. Teaching and Learning

4.1. An Impressive amount of programme development was evident and it was obvious that a lot of hard work and effort has been expended to bring the university to the point it is at today. There was a high level of new courses as well as new subject disciplines. Generally teachers were praised as hard working and committed by students.

4.2. The non-completion rate is far too high and it is far from a European norm. The team found a widespread culture which held an expectation of failure for students and that a high failure rate reflected the quality of a course or programme. The team disagree with this notion. A high level of student failure does not mean the education is good. It merely means it is elitist.

4.3. Coupled with this is a widespread assumption that the secondary school education system inadequately prepares students for Higher Education studies. The team found no objective evidence for this and considered the possibility that secondary school education has become a scapegoat for high failure and non-completion rates should be either evidenced or refuted. In any case a close working relationship with secondary schools should be developed as a way of facilitating a smoother transition between the sectors, such as bridging courses. This would also be an opportunity for promoting greater interest in science subjects.

4.3. Overall, a student-centred approach could not be observed and neither was there any evidence of a change of emphasis, widely seen in contemporary European universities, of a shift from teaching to learning. Stimulating teaching and learning would help to introduce these approaches. One way to do this would be to introduce or expose teachers to courses in teaching and learning. Here, the university could benefit from the existing experience in teaching and learning already found at the Faculty of Education. This is normal in many European universities and is a way to improve the quality of teaching and learning. The student needs to be at the centre of learning and staff development is crucial to help the university to keep moving in the direction it wishes to go. As much emphasis needs to be placed on this as on research, publications, conference presentations and involvement in internal quality processes. Good teaching and learning should be promoted, rewarded and incentivised.

4.5. Linked to this is the role and purpose of student evaluation of teaching. Receiving feedback from students provides an excellent opportunity to identify areas at individual and institutional levels, for improvement rather than a threat to individual teachers. For this to be a truly effective, constructive experience, students need to be able to provide information in a way which maintains anonymity and is free from undue influence from teachers.

4.6. Good teaching and learning combined with good feedback from students is personally rewarding for all devoted teachers and is in most cases a goal in itself.

5. Research

5.1. The university recognises the importance of having an active research environment. Not least, it contributes to stakeholder needs and regional regeneration. The establishment of the Business start up/ entrepreneurial centre is to be commended and is noted to be increasingly active.

5.2. It also enhances the reputation of the university and provides an opportunity for research and teaching to link and complement each other.

5.3. However, the university research strategy is not developed, consequently these opportunities are not met. The research strategy needs to be developed to take account of the points above and noting other relevant drivers. These are the areas around which the strategy should be developed. The research strategy institutional targets for research should be linked to themes rather than individuals. It should reflect the transitions taking place in the local environment and should stimulate further development of the region.

5.4. Recognising the difficult economic situation of B&H, the team would encourage the university to consider establishing a research start-up fund in areas of strategic significance and seek external funding for that. The university should further consider establishing support structure for international grant applications and should draw on experience available internationally to do so.

5.5. Research productivity measures emphasise “works per employee”. This does not give a meaningful reflection since, when mechanical engineering and law are compared, differing research metrics are required. The nature of scientific contribution differs between disciplines and single numeric follow-up (like 10 works) are not considered effective as a QA criterion.

6. Quality

6.1. There is a strong internal quality system evident throughout the university. The university is commended for introducing this. It has succeeded in engaging a critical mass of staff in quality related work. There is also great enthusiasm, at senior management level, for implementing internal quality structures.

6.2. What is less evident is the extent to which these internal systems are orientated towards contributing to the achievement of university goals, in a focused and consistent manner. There are so many quality measurements and related actions in place that it was difficult to ascertain how these were differentiated and prioritised. The team could not gauge whether the annual report had achieved its goals. A shared understanding and common goal could not be discerned. It should be clear to all that quality assessment should lead to quality enhancement and this is usually evidenced by clear and systematic actions which “close the loop” between assessment and enhancement.

6.3. Nevertheless the team found that within at least one faculty there was a clear relationship between the outcomes of evaluation and action, and that the action contributed to quality enhancement. It would assist the continuing development of internal quality systems if this good practice was identified and shared between faculties.

6.4. The European Standards and Guidelines specify parameters which should guide the university in the further development of internal quality systems. In particular they specify that “institutions should ensure that they collect, analyse and use relevant information for the effective management of their programmes of study and other activities” (p8).

6.5. Not only will these focus internal systems but will also be the focus of future external quality assurance reviews which will take into account the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance processes described in the European Standards and Guidelines.

7. Bologna Process

7.1. The university has taken very clear action and has made great progress in implementing actions associated with the Bologna Process. The Team found that there were mixed attitudes to this. One faculty was wholly enthusiastic, whilst another described elements of Bologna which could not be recognised as such by the evaluation team. Our impression was that there is a limited understanding of the aims, purpose and rationale for actions associated with the Bologna Process. There was mixed attitude and misunderstanding amongst staff regarding some elements such as student workload, course descriptions and learning outcomes.

7.2. The University asserts that it is “one of the first Bosnian universities University of Zenica finished complete regulation for the Bologna Declaration about registration, university autonomy, ECTS system, joint chairs, quality management, university integration etc.” (Strategic determinants of the the development of University of Zenica 2009- 2014 p 11)

The team identifies Bologna to be a process rather than an activity to be completed and as quoted above we see strong engagement in this ongoing process.

7.3. To that extent, Bologna is also about interpretation, ownership and attitude. It is a reasonable assumption that a negative attitude to Bologna will hinder the university’s ambition to achieve European standards. The negative attitude detracts from the good work the university has already done. Staff should be supported during implementation of Bologna reforms, with time taken to identify the choices available to them. At the same time, university leaders should revisit their approach to Bologna to take account of the wider issues, such as student centeredness.

7.4. In particular the issue of learning outcomes needs to be resolved and implemented universally. So many other actions flow from these which is why their importance is stressed. Furthermore, issues related to employability should be explored with external stakeholders.

7.5. Many reforms associated with the Bologna Reforms are linked to mobility of staff and students. This not only provides excellent learning opportunities but also the opportunity to import relevant ideas and innovations. Often a period of mobility produces better results for the university than conference attendance or journal publication. The university should review its support for, and approach to, staff and student mobility.

8. Resources and Facilities

8.1. The university has demonstrated great success in resource procurement. The team recognises that what has been achieved is remarkable, all circumstances considered. However, the fact that student growth exceeds capacity places the university in a constant state of shortage with a continuing lack of contemporary resources and facilities which would be taken for granted in many European universities. At the same time, certain areas do have large building facilities not well correlated to the actual student body or the research carried out. There are inadequate library resources, both physical and digital. There is a possibility that many students rely on unlicensed or unreliable material from internet sources. Additionally, laboratory facilities are outdated.

8.2. The Library should be further developed as should online access to databases and journals within an effective IT infrastructure. Online access to databases should have a high priority, databases can offer staff and students thousands of books and journals, to build up such a library within a short time scale is not possible.

8.3. It is critical that resources keep pace with student growth as the European Standard against which the university will be evaluated is that "institutions should ensure that the resources available for the support of student learning are adequate and appropriate for each programme offered" (ESG).

8.4. Similarly there are plans for the development and expansion of the university Estate to accommodate new developments. This expansion should be combined with a programme for renovating existing building facilities and a review of existing and future projected usage of estates rather than seeking constant expansion. It is suggested that a review of existing estate takes place with a view to merging or relocating current provision, based on projected and likely future growth.

9. Strategic Management and Planning

9.1. The University has developed guidelines for strategic development which includes a detailed analysis of the position of UNZE. The guidelines run to more than eighty pages and are general, lack priorities and an implementation plan.

9.2. The team believes that this document could form the basis of an effective strategic plan, which has concise information and clearly stated vision, and mission together with an implementation plan detailing how these would be achieved. We have noticed activities and documentation showing that the university is in the process of developing these planning documents. We urge the university to make these documents short, widely known and manageable

9.3. The notion of a shared vision for the university may be developed through this plan and also through staff development. An integral part of the strategic plan should be a need to invest in development of staff including national and international approaches. In this way all staff can contribute to the realisation of the university vision and goals.

10. Conclusions

10.1. On management and governance, the university is recommended to:

- anticipate and plan for its future size and shape
- review its profile and portfolio of programmes
- identify criteria for sustainability of departments, units, faculties and other areas of activity
- improve transparency so that resource allocation reflects activity
- establish a stakeholder advisory forum
- consider a closer integration of the Metallurgical Institute into the faculty structure

10.2. On students, the university is recommended to:

- undertake direct and transparent communication with students
- develop a Student Charter – to make rights clear and ensure universal application
- allow access to evaluation reports for all students
- promote transparency regarding course assessment

10.3. On teaching and learning, the university is recommended to:

- introduce a formal teaching programme for academic staff
- restructure student evaluation so that it is an opportunity not a threat
- develop student-centred education (Bologna)
- consider foundation bridging courses and other means of facilitating the move from secondary to higher education

10.4. On research, the university is recommended to:

- develop a research strategy, including human resource management and development
- link institutional targets for research to themes rather than individuals in the research strategy
- consider establishing a research fund in areas of strategic significance and seek external funding for this
- consider establishing support structure for international grant applications

10.5. On quality, the university is recommended to:

- share examples of good practice found at the university between faculties and quality managers
- ensure that quality assessment leads to quality enhancement

10.6. On resources and facilities, the university is recommended to:

- review its Estates requirement
- further develop the library
- introduce online access to databases and journals
- develop an IT infrastructure

10.7. On strategic management and planning, the university is recommended to:

- review planning guidelines which could form the basis of an effective strategic plan
- invest in development of staff including national and international approaches

11. Envoi

The IEP team wishes to thank the university once again for the excellent arrangements made for its visit and work, for the hospitality offered and for the opportunity to get to know an impressive and interesting institution facing so many new challenges and developing so rapidly. It was a great pleasure to come to the University of Zenica and to discuss with staff, students and external stakeholders the challenges which the university faces in its next phase of development and the various strategies currently being adopted to meet these. We hope that our comments and suggestions have been helpful, and we wish the university the best for a stimulating future.