

**EUA institutional evaluations of seven  
Universities of  
Bosnia and Herzegovina**

**Cross cutting summary report**

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## **Cross cutting summary report**

### **1. Introduction**

1. In autumn 2003, the European University Association (EUA) was invited by the seven universities in Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH) to undertake an institutional evaluation of each university. This State-wide series of evaluations was planned as the first phase of a major project supported by the European Commission and the Council of Europe, entitled "Modernising the management and governance capacities of the universities in Bosnia-Herzegovina". The purpose of the evaluations was, through a European peer review process, to assist each university in identifying progress already made in the reform of their governance and management structures and systems, to highlight the steps which still needed to be taken, and to contribute to the development of policies and strategies, in order to ensure that the BiH universities become fully integrated into the European Higher Education Area by 2010.
2. The seven institutional evaluations in BiH were undertaken during the academic year 2003-2004, according to the standard EUA methodology. EUA has been providing this service to its member universities since 1994, and approximately 120 universities from across Europe, as well as some from further afield, have used this service. The methodology is based firstly on a self-evaluation process undertaken by the university itself, followed by an external evaluation. This consists of two visits to the university by a team of peer reviewers, all experienced university leaders with training in quality and evaluation processes. The teams are chosen by EUA to suit the specific characteristics and needs of each participating university. The evaluation process follows detailed guidelines provided by EUA, both for the universities and the review teams.
3. Following their second visit, the external reviewers presented a report to each university, based on their examination of the university's own self-evaluation report and of the situation on the ground, as identified by the reviewers during their visits and through their discussions with a wide variety of people across the university and its stakeholders. These reports are intended for wide circulation and discussion within the university and among its major stakeholders, in order

to assist with the ongoing development of each institution. The evaluations are undertaken from a critical yet supportive perspective, encouraging the university to reflect on and learn from its experiences and from those of the review team, and to use these to help plan and implement the next stages in the university's development. The process is designed as a learning opportunity for all involved.

4. While the EUA reports cover a wide range of issues linked to university governance and management, including the organization of teaching, learning and research, they do not enter into details concerning individual disciplines or research fields. This is beyond the scope of the EUA institutional evaluation, and would require a different methodology. EUA encourages the university to put in place institution-wide quality assurance and evaluation procedures for all study programmes and research projects, including the use of external academic and professional expertise. These subject-based reviews, combined with reviews of other university activities and services, should contribute to an overall institutional quality culture. The external EUA institutional evaluation is designed to assist the university in the development of such a quality culture.
5. This cross-cutting summary report covers the main issues which have repeatedly appeared across the seven individual institutional evaluations. While not required under the terms of the European Commission / Council of Europe project, this report is offered by EUA as an independent external analysis of the main issues currently facing the governance and management of higher education in BiH. EUA has worked closely with the universities in their reconstruction and reform processes since before the end of the war, and hopes that this report, in conjunction with the individual institutional evaluations and the other elements of the European Commission / Council of Europe project, will help contribute to a coherent and far-reaching reform of higher education in BiH.

## **2. The self-evaluation process**

6. Each university produced a self-evaluation report, which was translated into English and provided to each EUA team prior to its first visit. The reports followed the EUA guidelines and included an analysis of strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and threats. It is EUA's experience that those universities which undertake the most effective self-evaluations, with critical self-analysis and involving substantial numbers of people, covering the academic and administrative staff, students and external partners, are likely to obtain the

greatest benefits from the whole review process. This experience coincides with that from other evaluation procedures. The need for effective self-evaluation is therefore stressed in the EUA guidelines and in initial contacts with each university.

7. A variety of strategies were followed by the BiH universities in undertaking the self-evaluations. Some universities established a small group of reform-hungry individuals to undertake the analysis and write a rather critical report of the prevailing situation. In other universities, the self-evaluation steering committee mirrored the core team from the Rectorate, enlarged by a few supportive senior figures. Another approach also taken was to ask each Faculty to undertake its own self-evaluation and then to analyse these from an institutional perspective and write an overall report. Whatever the methodology, the self-evaluation reports were in general of a reasonable to good quality, and included the necessary annexes with statistical and other details. Where necessary, the EUA teams requested further information which was supplied by the universities, although a number of universities had some difficulties in providing institution-wide data concerning budgets, staff, student and graduation figures.
  
8. The self-evaluation process showed that a certain development has taken place in BiH higher education over the last eight years. It was clear in most cases that considerable experience had been gained from the wide variety of projects and initiatives undertaken since the end of the war, e.g. the many Tempus projects in the fields of university management and curriculum development, the World Bank supported reform measures, the Council of Europe work in the field of legislation and recognition, or the many inter-university development projects. The self-evaluation reports showed a reasonable level of sophistication in their analysis and presentation which would not have been possible even in 2000. However, despite these improvements, the fundamental issues facing higher education and universities in BiH remain the same and are largely unresolved. It is hoped that the added impetus created by joining the Bologna Process in 2003, and through the support of the current European Commission / Council of Europe project, including the EUA institutional evaluations, will result in sufficient academic and political support for the wide-ranging reforms necessary to ensure the transformation of higher education and universities in BiH.

9. However, a common feature found by EUA was that the self-evaluation reports produced for this exercise, in the case of most of the universities, bore little or no reference to the Institutional Development Plans (IDP) produced by each university in the framework of a World Bank project. Indeed, in the case of the University of Bihac, the EUA team was not informed of the existence of the IDP until during its second visit. This lack of coherence between evaluation procedures and strategic planning was found by EUA to be generalized, to a greater or lesser extent, across all seven universities. The link with the implementation of change appeared to be even weaker, with little application of the findings of analyses and evaluations, nor of the many provisions included in the IDPs.
10. Another weakness of the self-evaluation procedure across some of the BiH universities was that the self-evaluation reports, once written, were not widely distributed and discussed within the university. This was the case particularly with the Universities of Banja Luka and Sarajevo. This meant that staff and students within some of the universities were not fully aware of the context of the EUA evaluation or of the preparation undertaken by their own universities. It also meant that some of these groups were poorly prepared for meetings with the EUA teams.
11. A third generalized weakness of the self-evaluation procedure across a number of universities was the relatively poor involvement of students and student organizations. While efforts were made to include individual students in these procedures, formal involvement was lower than the EUA teams would have expected, at least from their experience in other parts of Europe. Special efforts appear to have been made to include students in the process in the Universities of Mostar Dzemal Bijedic, Sarajevo and Tuzla. This was highly appreciated and an indication of the important role which students and their organizations can play in developing a quality culture within a university.

### **3. Conduct of the EUA visits**

12. Each EUA team made a first (preliminary) visit to the university during the period January-March 2004, followed by a second (main) visit during the period April-July 2004. These visits were organized by the host university, but follow a standard EUA schedule which ensures that the evaluation team meets a wide variety of actors across the university, including students and administrative staff. Of special importance were meetings which also took place with the

university's external partners and stakeholders. The EUA team received the detailed programme in advance of each visit and could make changes to this if needed.

13. The visits to the BiH universities were generally considered by the EUA teams to have been well organized and successful. The teams appreciated the open atmosphere and frank discussions which characterized the visits. A large number of meetings took place as planned within each university, and extra information or documents requested by the EUA teams were, where available, supplied rapidly. The EUA would like to express its thanks to the contact persons in each university who were largely responsible for the smooth operation of each visit.

#### **4. External constraints in the current higher education environment in BiH**

14. Higher education in BiH is highly constrained by the legal situation, which does not provide a suitable framework for addressing current or future challenges facing the universities. The University of Tuzla is the only exception to this, in that it benefits from a more modern and progressive Cantonal legislation providing greater respect for the autonomy of the university and allowing an integrated institution. In the other Cantons of the Federation, and also in the Republika Srpska, the various laws in force are variations of the old Yugoslav model, which as a model is incompatible with the goals of the Bologna process and has now been largely abandoned across the successor republics.

15. During the evaluation process, hopes had been high across most universities that the new higher education Framework Law, drafted with the support of the Council of Europe, would be passed by the State Assembly. This however did not happen - on 29 July 2004, the BiH House of Peoples turned down the Framework Law. Following the voting, the draft was sent back to the responsible Ministry to be amended as soon as possible. The result is that there is still no coherent legal framework for higher education across BiH and the existing incoherent legislation therefore remains in force at local levels. The EUA teams strongly hope that the political obstacles, particularly regarding the level of competence of Higher Education, will be agreed upon and that a new draft, still incorporating the Bologna Process principles for BiH as a whole, will be adopted as swiftly as possible.

- 16 The absence of a coherent legal framework also means the absence of coherent modern funding systems for the universities. Public funds are used almost

entirely for salaries and the most basic of recurring costs, while public funding for research is virtually non-existent. The little money available for either education or research is generally used in most inefficient ways, given the disintegrated structures of the universities and poor teaching and learning policies.

17 The legacy of war can still be seen at those universities which suffered the most direct physical damage. All universities continue to suffer due to poor general infrastructure and the lack of up to date scientific equipment and libraries. The outcomes of war have greatly shaped the identity and profiles of the universities during the last ten years. Despite these many difficulties, recent improvements in infrastructure and general conditions are now very visible at all universities. The work towards campus-like settings at the universities of Sarajevo, Mostar Dzermal Bijedic and Banja Luka has and will be of further benefit in providing good environments for students and staff alike.

## **5. University missions, visions and profiles**

18 The EUA teams found that, while each university has an official mission and vision, that there was an urgent need for these to be articulated more clearly and to have greater influence on both the long term strategy and the daily work of the institutions. Some universities, such as Srpsko Sarajevo, and Mostar Dzermal Bijedic, included a strong commitment to the local community and social responsiveness in these official positions – this was welcomed by the EUA teams. In the older universities however, the EUA teams considered that considerable work was necessary in order to move towards a new future, as expressed through the visions.

19 This clearer articulation of mission and vision should also lead to the development of a particular academic profile for each university. This is partly a question of recognizing the current starting points, and of then setting priorities and deciding what type of institution does each university want to be. Realistic choices are needed, for both the short term and medium term/long term periods. Given the current large numbers of students, the resources available to each university, and the wider social and economic situation, it appears to the EUA teams that the universities should concentrate their efforts on education. In parallel, a more realistic approach to research could be developed by fostering centres of excellence, in academic fields central to each university's profile, for the



application and transfer of technology and up-to-date international scientific knowledge relevant to BiH social development. The necessary resources – including financial and human resources – are not currently available for more ambitious research operations, and in the opinion of the EUA teams will not become available in the near future either.

## **6. Teaching and learning**

20 Teaching and learning are at the centre of what a university is and does, and because of the social and economic environment, even more crucially so in BiH. However, the EUA teams formed the unanimous opinion that these aspects of the universities' work across BiH were far from satisfactory. There are many reasons for this, most of which are fully understandable, but the reality is that without substantial improvement in these fields in the near future, the BiH universities will collectively have failed in their primary task.

21 At the same time, the EUA teams would like to praise the many examples of fine efforts which they witnessed in each of the universities where, despite all sorts of bad conditions, dedicated academics are endeavouring to do the best job they can with their students and colleagues. However, these examples are often isolated, receive little support within the universities, and are due more to the dedication and hard work of individuals than to effective organization, management and leadership at both university and Faculty levels.

22 It is not easy to be a conscientious, hard working and ambitious student in BiH at the moment. The current structure of academic programmes and examinations makes it almost impossible to study correctly, pass examinations and graduate within the normal timeframe. Curricula are overloaded and based heavily, if not exclusively, on traditional *ex cathedra* teaching and rote learning. Academic courses tend to be too specialized and rigid, with many overlaps and incoherencies, thus denying students the flexibility needed to face the future. There are few examples of interdisciplinarity. Theoretical knowledge predominates over practical learning. Timetabling is poor, resulting in many hours lost for the students, without adequate library or other independent learning facilities. All these mean that there is a generalized and urgent need for a learning-oriented approach across all universities, where the student is at the centre of the process, rather than an accidental element on the periphery. The recently introduced interactive teaching methods at Mostar Dzemal Bijedic are a good example of how change in this field can begin.

- 23 Teaching activity across the BiH universities also appears, to the EUA teams, to be in a rather critical position. Despite a much more favourable staff-student ratio than in most other European countries, BiH university teachers feel overloaded with lectures while having little time for research. However, the reality is that, in at least one of the BiH universities, the minimum obligatory teaching load for full-time staff is three hours per week only, the overloading of teachers – especially those above a certain seniority, coming from the fact that they teach simultaneously in other Faculties of the same university or at a different university, thereby drawing several salaries. Indeed, all universities rely extensively on these visiting professors, which is an expensive habit, all the more so as it results in a low research output.
- 24 The situation regarding the organization of teaching is therefore ridiculous: teachers are badly paid and have very few obligations to their primary employer, but these same employers are spending important amounts of money for teachers from another university or Faculty to come and teach. Apart from the bad economics of such a system, its pedagogic or academic sense is also questionable. One EUA team made the comment that the system in place appeared more like a scheme for the support of teacher employment than to encourage student learning. The Gordian knot must be cut at some time, and the sooner the better. Staff should have far greater responsibilities at their home institution and be paid accordingly. Visiting professors should become the exception rather than the rule, and only in cases of clear necessity. To achieve this will probably require the complete integration of the universities under one legal structure, with all staff employed by the university rather than the respective Faculties. The recent positive steps taken by the University of Tuzla to reduce reliance on expensive visiting professors are relevant here as they are certainly supported by the university's integration into one single institution.
- 25 Curricula are at the core of the teaching and learning processes, and the basis by which knowledge is transmitted in an organized way. Universities therefore need to be confident that their curricula are up to date, relevant, adhered to, monitored and improved on a regular basis, and have quality assurance systems in place to ensure this is the case. Curricula across an academic programme need to be coherent and complementary, rather than overlapping and contradictory. Students should know why certain courses and curricula are important or

relevant, what different modules will contain, and what they can expect to have achieved at the end of these courses. Learning outcomes and competences are the buzz-words in determining the content and organization of curricula, allowing for an explicit link between learning and wider professional, social and cultural realities. This link is of crucial importance for the rapid development of BiH but, given the evidence from the institutional evaluations, is very underdeveloped at present. The correct use of ECTS and the modular structure, as in certain Faculties of the Sveuciliste in Mostar, will help significantly in developing this coherent approach to curriculum planning and delivery, and should be encouraged across all BiH universities.

26 In a society such as BiH where the vast majority of knowledge is not produced locally, the effective and efficient transmission of this knowledge by the universities is vital. The statistics from all the universities unfortunately do not support this hypothesis; the rates of student drop-out and non-completion are simply too high, and the total number of graduates each year simply too low to imagine that the universities are successful in fulfilling their responsibilities to the development of BiH and their local communities.

27 Assessment of student performance is necessary for the university to be satisfied that students have met the objectives and standards set for any particular academic course or programme. Examination is one tool for assessment, and oral exams tend to be the main system used for the monitoring of learning in BiH universities. Other forms of assessment, such as marking project or laboratory work, problem solving, writing essays, making presentations, etc, rarely figure. Moreover, it is difficult to ensure objective assessment when currently very few courses or programmes in BiH have any explicit objectives or standards against which a student's work can be judged. The introduction of ECTS, to which all the universities are committed through joining the Bologna Process, will require increased transparency in this process, and will enable universities to assess student progress not only through formal examinations but through a wide variety of other mechanisms, often of much greater pedagogic value.

28 Given that examinations are currently so central to BiH higher education, it is important that the examination systems in place assess students in a timely and relevant way, so that, if objectives and standards are met, the students can progress to the next stage in their studies or to the labour market. Unfortunately,

in a majority of the universities, the EUA teams were not able to say that the examination system was either effective or efficient. They found that most examinations do not focus on students' progress in learning; that most exams are oral; that in most cases the student must confront the professor who taught the course, without independent observers and without any means of later verifying what was said or done; that a student can sit an exam five or more times a year for several years, making it easy for either party to delay until "next time"; that any appeal system which may exist is seriously flawed and therefore not used by the students; and that unverifiable allegations of abuse of power and corruption exist.

29 When linked to the overloaded and sometimes incoherent study programmes, it is clear that such an examinations system must also share responsibility for the excessively long study times and low completion rates which can be found at all BiH universities. If ECTS and the other elements of the Bologna Process are to be introduced, then those universities still using such outdated and pedagogically unsuitable exam procedures will need to abandon these completely and think seriously about the purpose of and mechanisms for assessing student learning. Regarding the most serious issues of the abuse of power and corruption, the proactive steps taken at the University of Tuzla to combat and remove these are worthy of note and praise.

## **7. Research**

30 Research is a key and integral element of the University's mission. Through basic research it generates new knowledge of benefit to society, and through applied research it uses existing knowledge to find solutions to needs expressed by society. The need for both basic and applied research is clear in BiH today.

31 However, successful and useful research usually requires significant resources, firstly in terms of scientific and other staff, and secondly in terms of infrastructure, equipment, funding, etc. Given that, as already discussed, the public funding of research at the BiH universities is very low, and the current emphasis is, *de facto*, on teaching activity, a number of EUA teams recommended that the universities should concentrate on applied research in a limited number of strategic fields of most relevance to the university's partners.

32 Another additional element of importance in developing research activity at universities is that of research strategy and management. All the EUA teams

came to the same conclusions in this regard: that there are no effective university-wide research strategies in place at the moment, that the current fragmented university structures work against any coherent approach to research management, and that the current capacity is limited to individual activities rather than developing critical mass in a number of defined strategic fields. Only the University of Tuzla seems so far to have been able to create a university-wide research fund, based on overhead contributions, for encouraging individual researchers. But even here, there is no strategy or prioritization of research fields in place.

33 These findings are echoed in the low numbers of Masters students at each university, and the even lower numbers of PhD students. Given the size of many of the BiH universities, the output figures for graduates at these levels are far too low, even to ensure continuity in academic staff numbers for the years to come, let alone to provide highly qualified scientists for the BiH economy. Crude calculations by the EUA teams based on figures provided by the universities showed that the average total cost of educating a student to post-graduate degree level from a BiH university came close to the fees asked for similar post-graduate degree programmes from the most expensive and highly reputed European or US universities.

34 In terms of broadening the universities' scientific and academic base and reversing the terrible brain-drain of the last decade, only the University of Tuzla appears to have put in place a concrete strategy for its post-graduate students to obtain research experience abroad as part of their PhD studies, and to return to academic positions in Tuzla.

35 An important issue for the future of research in BiH is the status of the Institutes of Research, which are currently independent of the universities. Where this issue was raised during the visits, the EUA teams strongly recommended that these institutes be brought back into the structure of the university, in order to encourage scientific, personnel and funding coherence.

## **8. Bologna Process**

36 BiH formally joined the Bologna Process in September 2003, and had been working towards this objective for some time previously. The BiH universities should now implement a range of fundamental structural reforms in the same way as the universities across all the other participating countries. The EUA

teams encouraged the BiH universities to see these Bologna reforms as opportunities for modernization and internationalization in a compatible and convergent manner.

37 However, the rapid reform of all BiH universities to the Bologna model has been set back by the rejection of the proposed Framework Law. This draft, which contained clear and simple provisions for implementing the Bologna reforms, may be reintroduced to the BiH Assembly in some modified format. The EUA teams encourage the universities to ensure that whatever law is introduced contains the same clear and simple provisions for Bologna, and that these are introduced and implemented rapidly across both Entities and other administrative units.

38 At university level, the EUA teams found that there was little Bologna coordination so far. Although this is also due to the fragmented structures still in place, recommendations were made to some universities to establish an institution-wide Bologna committee to prepare for coordinated implementation. In general, the EUA teams found that levels of awareness of Bologna issues across the universities were not high, and that much more structured information was needed. This is one area where, working together through HECB, the universities could possibly act collectively.

39 Some specific elements of the Bologna reforms, such as ECTS, have already been discussed. As with ECTS, other such elements including the Diploma Supplement will also need central coordination, maybe facilitated by HECB.

40 The major Bologna reforms however will be the introduction of the Bachelor-Master two-cycle structure, and the introduction of quality assurance mechanisms at all levels of higher education. The universities urgently need to start work on these issues, both individually and collectively, without waiting for the relevant legislation to be in place. Few preparations seem as yet to have been made, but considerable time will be needed as these entail not just the restructuring of all existing study programmes and degrees, but also rethinking of these along the lines discussed already in the context of ECTS.

## **9. Quality Assurance**

41 As noted, quality assurance is not only a central element of the Bologna Process, but in fact is key to the whole academic work and existence of the University. A university must be able to demonstrate that it knows what it is doing, how it is

doing this, that it knows that it works and that it can adapt to make things better. The EUA evaluation process is built around these central questions.

42 At the BiH universities, the EUA teams found that universities were formally able to state what they were doing, thanks to their recently created mission statements. Through their draft institutional development plans, they were also able to make some statements about how they were achieving this. However, as mentioned already, some universities had not made the link between the IDP, strategic management and the quality assurance and evaluation procedures.

43 In terms of assessing feasibility and implementation of strategies, the EUA teams found that the universities under review did not have effective monitoring systems in place. No body at the university was charged with this important responsibility, there were few or no student feedback mechanisms, and that even where some monitoring was in place, this was largely routine work with no consequences and therefore no real scrutiny.

44 Some of the essential tools for quality assurance are also lacking. The difficulty of obtaining university-wide data has already been mentioned. The lack of an effective management information system in a majority of the universities means data gathering and analysis is time consuming and haphazard. An integrated university will also need these tools to manage - centralized student registration and records, for instance.

45 Some international experience has already been gathered by the BiH universities in quality assurance issues, eg through Tempus projects or the EUA quality culture project. However, as yet few academic programmes or departments in BiH have undergone any form of external review. The EUA teams at two universities strongly encouraged these universities to broaden their experiences by using a variety of external review procedures at whatever level possible. This would also help the universities develop their own comparative tools internally, and lead to a broad understanding of quality issues among a wider group of people, as well as putting in place international partnerships for continued work in this field.

46 The scope for cooperation between the BiH universities in this field is considerable. Indeed, a central element of the draft Framework Law would have

gone in this direction. It is to be hoped that any future version of this law will retain such elements. Common guidelines and training opportunities may be areas where joint activities could start even in advance of any new legislation.

## **10. University integration**

47 The EUA teams strongly support the proposals to integrate each university in BiH under one single legal entity. This would follow the successful models in place in almost all other countries of Europe. The exceptions to this rule are Serbia and Macedonia, where universities continue to exist as loose conglomerates of highly independent Faculties and other units. While integration would not immediately solve some of the major problems facing the BiH universities, it would allow for these to be addressed in a realistic way over a few years. The example of what has already been achieved by the University of Tuzla since 1999 is interesting.

48 any fears have been voiced concerning the issue of integration, and many of these fears are legitimate. If a reform process towards a more integrated structure is to succeed, it is vital that each of them must be addressed and that a solution that satisfies the vast majority of actors is found. From a European perspective - based upon the experience of integrated universities across the continent - there is no reason to suppose that an integrated structure implies any of the disadvantages that are feared. However, if reforms are undertaken without adequate negotiation, and without explaining how concerns will be addressed, the fears are indeed legitimate.

49 From the perspective of Deans, who in the current structure have ultimate responsibility over matters at their Faculty, it will be important to demonstrate that an integrated university model will bring many advantages. It will also be necessary to reassure them that decisions which concern the internal management of the Faculty will continue to be taken at Faculty level. In other words a model will need to be found whereby responsibility that now rests with faculties will be shared with the university in the common interest, eg in fields such as central administration, international relations, quality assurance, student policies, language training, buildings and maintenance, staff development, etc. There should be no question of power being removed from Faculties and given to the central level; rather responsibility should be assumed at the most appropriate level of management, using the principle of subsidiarity.



## **11. Human Resources**

50 BiH has suffered large scale emigration, both during and since the war. This emigration has included a high proportion of educated young people, including students, graduates and academic staff. Although at the moment there would still appear to be plenty of students who wish to study – and overall BiH student numbers have expanded very rapidly over the last five years – figures provided to the EUA teams indicated serious underlying demographic decline across the country. This trend needs to be seen in conjunction with the current age structure of academic staff at the universities. A large proportion of staff are already approaching, if not already beyond, the official retirement age, and young staff have not been recruited to replace them. This situation appears to be better in Tuzla and Mostar Dzemal Bijedic, where deliberate attempts have been made to appoint such younger staff.

51 New staff, but also existing staff, need support and encouragement in their work, especially when expected to introduce new teaching and assessment methods, work with more diverse groups of students, increase their research outputs, etc. Such issues of human resource management and development will become increasingly important in BiH universities in the years to come. Universities will need to put in place systems for upgrading the skills of academic staff and to help them respond to new challenges and demands. This is a central element in maintaining quality at a university, and one which has been neglected for too long at present.

## **12. Students and governance**

52 Student input to the governance of universities in BiH is currently very weak. This is partly due to the fragmented nature of their presence at the university, mirroring current structures, eg students enroll at Faculties not at the University. Another reason is the generally weak position of students at all levels of the university, as already discussed. However, if the universities in BiH are to become student-centred institutions, with a focus on teaching and learning, it will be important for students to become more active institutional stakeholders.

53 Students invest an essential part of their life into academic education. This best part of their youth needs fair handling by the institution to which they entrust their personal and social development. From that point of view, the University can organise activities in function of student potential achievements. Students

should not only be consulted on the process of their learning but also on their ambitions for the community they will inherit, a society that is being shaped in good part by the university to which they belong.

54. For the moment, universities do not fully recognise the vital role that students play as partners in the academic community, and indeed as the most important collective group that is to be entrusted with the future of the country. Neither are there sufficient measures in place to protect student interests. Instead, in the worst cases, students may be perceived as an additional income source to be exploited by underpaid professors leading to various forms of malpractice being tolerated. For any department, faculty or institution to adopt such an approach is terribly short-sighted and dangerous for the long term integration of BiH in the community of European nations.

55. Recent moves taken to address this situation include the formal strengthening by the University of Tuzla of the student presence in its Senate. Good examples of student participation in formal bodies across the university also exist in Mostar at both the Sveuciliste and Djemal Bijedic; the EUA teams recommended that student participation in these bodies be increased. The development of a Student Charter, as recommended to the Universities of Sarajevo and Srpsko Sarajevo, could also be an interesting mechanism to increase awareness of the rights and obligations of students at the university. Such a document would reinforce both internal transparency and external visibility and could constitute a clear element of the profile of the university.

### **13. Stakeholders, society and governance**

56. The EUA teams met selected groups of external stakeholders at all of the BiH universities. It is clear from the perspective of these persons that the BiH universities play vital roles; the expectations of stakeholders are indeed high. There are enormous educational needs across BiH society, but these are very poorly articulated at present. There is also great need across BiH for technology transfer, applied research, consultancy and other advisory services. The universities are one of the few institutions able to respond to these varied needs, and with the social obligation to do so. The universities can also benefit through a number of ways, not least through financial possibilities and by obtaining employment or placement opportunities for their students. However, current

structures and systems make it difficult to make such mutual beneficial arrangements in a coherent or organized way.

57. There are currently few mechanisms for structured exchange and dialogue between the universities and their stakeholders, although there are many possible opportunities to improve this, for the benefit of everybody concerned. The universities certainly need to become better at communicating their current or potential contributions and input to societal questions. They also need to become better listeners and more engaged at local and regional levels.

58. One practical recommendation made by two of the EUA teams was that, in order to improve the formal dialogue between the university and its societal partners, key stakeholders could be represented on the steering boards of the universities, as is found in a number of other European countries.

#### **14. Concluding remarks**

59. This summary report is based on a cross-cutting analysis of the findings of the EUA teams in all seven BiH universities. It has focused more on the challenges facing the universities for the years to come than on their successes in the years past. It has focused particularly on issues which are covered under the broad headings of governance and management, and where the leaders of the university – at central, faculty and departmental levels - have a strong obligation to take clear steps in developing collective institutional solutions to these challenges.

60. This work within the universities, much of which has already started and was warmly encouraged by the EUA teams, also needs strong support from the public authorities. The structure of BiH means that the universities are subject to very local political forces and demands – not all of which coincide with the universities' own needs and strategies and the long term interests of students. The closeness of the local relationships may mean in some cases that these institutional differences are not respected, to the long term damage of both the university and the local and regional community.

61. The EUA teams would like to thank once again the Rectors of the BiH universities for inviting us to undertake these institutional evaluations, the European Commission and the Council of Europe for their support in this, and the entire

staff and students of the seven universities who made us feel so welcome in their academic communities. We have found this to be a challenging but fascinating experience, and we trust that our work, both individually and collectively, will be of use to you for the years to come.