

IZMIR UNIVERSITY OF ECONOMICS

FOLLOW-UP EVALUATION REPORT

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1. Introduction

This report is the result of a follow-up evaluation of the Izmir University of Economics (IUE). EUA's Institutional Evaluation Programme (IEP) originally evaluated IUE in 2008/2009. The 2009 IUE *Self-Evaluation Report* and *Revised Strategic Plan 2007-2009* gave a good, comprehensive and honest general overview of the university. The IEP team submitted its evaluation report to the University in November 2009. In 2011, the Rector of IUE, Professor Dr. Attila Sezgin, requested that IEP carry out a follow-up evaluation. Acting Rector, Professor Dr. Tunçdan Baltacıoğlu, was elected as the new Rector of IUE in January 2012.

1.1 Institutional Evaluation Programme and follow-up evaluation process

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

In line with the EUA's Institutional Evaluation Programme as a whole, the follow-up process is a supportive one. There is no prescribed procedure, and it is for the institution itself to set the agenda in the light of its experiences since the original evaluation. The institution is expected to submit its own self-evaluation report, which will describe the progress made, possibly indicating barriers to change.

The rationale is that the follow-up evaluation can assist the institution in evaluating the changes that have been made since the original evaluation: What was the impact of the original evaluation? What use has the institution made of the original evaluation report? How far has it been able to address the issues raised in the report? The follow-up evaluation is also an opportunity for the institution to take stock of its strategies for managing change in the context of internal and external constraints and opportunities.

As for the original evaluation, the follow-up process is also 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 The Self Evaluation Process

The *EUA Follow-Up Report, Izmir University of Economics (2012)*, henceforth referred to as the *IUE Self Evaluation Report (2012)*, the rationale for the IEP Follow-

Up visit, was prepared by the Bologna Coordination Committee chaired by Professor Dr. Oğuz Esen, and including representatives of faculties, students, academics and administrative staff. The *IUE Self Evaluation Report (2012)* was structured according to the recommendations given in the 2009 *IEP Evaluation Report* and gave an excellent overview of the change process of IUE from 2009 to 2012. A complement to the *IUE Self Evaluation Report (2012)*, the *IUE Strategic Plan 2010-2014* also included a valuable *Action Plan 2010-2014* for the future development of IUE.

1.3 The evaluation team (later Team)

The follow-up visit took place on 24-27 April 2012. The IEP follow-up consists of one visit (2½ days), including interviews with different groups of staff and students and an Oral Report during the last day of the visit, followed by a short written IEP Follow-Up Report.

The evaluation team consisted of:

- Professor Carles Solà, former Rector of University of Barcelona Autònoma, Spain, as Chair of the IEP Team
- Professor Noel Whelan, Vice President and Dean Emeritus, University of Limerick, Ireland
- Christian Stråhlman, Lund University, Sweden, as Student representative
- Professor Airi Rovio-Johansson, University of Gothenburg, Gothenburg Research Institute (GRI), Sweden, as the Coordinator

2. IEP Follow Up of IUE

Changes in the National and Institutional context

Since 2008 Turkey has founded 34 universities (9 state and 25 Foundation), making a total of 128 state universities, including two Higher Institutes of Technology and 61 Foundation Universities.

The Foundation universities are under the supervision of The Council of Higher Education (YÖK) and their graduate and undergraduate study programmes must be accredited by YÖK. The language of instruction in the universities is Turkish. IUE uses English as the language of instruction, which usually necessitates an additional preparatory year for the Turkish students, but opens up the possibility to receive foreign students.

In February 2011, a *New Higher Education Law* (No: 6111) was introduced in Turkey, which has affected the *Higher Education Law* (No: 2547) by removing all time limits for the students to complete their Higher Education studies. An entrance examination still exists and is taken by far more students than the number who manage to pass it. One of the consequences of this change in law, as pointed out in

the *IUE Self Evaluation Report (2012)*, is that there will be no further study failures among students, since they can complete their studies whenever they are able or want to do so. Moreover, students can no longer be excluded from university due to failure to pay tuition fees. Another consequence is that higher education institutions have been legally bound to restructure all higher education study programmes according to the Bologna system.

IUE Self Evaluation Report (2012)

The *EUA Follow-Up Report, Izmir University of Economics (2012)*, which the IEP Team refers to as the *IUE Self Evaluation Report (2012)* in the present report, provides a comprehensive overview of the University and its developmental work accomplished since the IEP evaluation in 2009. The progress in various areas was impressive and the IEP Team could observe that IUE has significantly improved almost all of the areas mentioned in its 2009 recommendations.

In Izmir three new Universities have been established since the IEP evaluation in 2009. The competition for students is higher than before as is the struggle to attract more foreign students and academics to IUE, despite it having expanded its study programmes and activities in the region.

In the academic year 2011-2012, IUE counts 6 485 students (*IUE Self Evaluation Report 2012*, Appendix 3) and 332 academics (*IUE Self Evaluation Report 2012*, Appendix 9B). In April 2012, IUE offered 28 different undergraduate programmes, 21 graduate programmes and 3 PhD programmes. IUE has 6 faculties, 2 graduate schools, 2 schools, 1 vocational school and 8 application and research centres (*IUE Self Evaluation Report 2012*, p. 6).

Following the introduction, the *IUE Self Evaluation Report (2012)* is structured according to the recommendations given in the 2009 *IEP Evaluation Report*. Its aim is to show the progress and development in these recommended areas.

3. Recommendations

3.1. Strategic Planning

According to the *IUE Self Evaluation Report (2012)* and the *IUE Strategic Plan 2010-2014* the following six research areas have been prioritised: (1) research orientation, (2) differentiation in education, (3) institutionalisation, (4) contribution to regional development and progress, (5) internationalisation and (6) finance and infrastructure. The IEP Team was informed that there will be a new Strategic Plan for 2012-2016, due to changes that need to be made in the existing plan and as a commitment to progress.

Among the necessary changes, the IEP Team would like to point out the missing link between financial decisions and realisation of outputs. It is therefore necessary to align financial decisions more closely with the realisation of outputs from the Strategic Plan in order to avoid discrepancies which exist in relation to some strategic plan outputs. In improving the infrastructure for the full realisation of the Strategic Plan, there is also a need for coherent reporting of the various steps towards the set goals and intentions.

3.2. Governance

The new Strategic Plan for 2012-2016 is the core instrument for future prosperity. The Head of the Board of Trustees, the Rector and Vice-Rector, together with the Senate, constitute the overall strategic management of IUE. Compared to previous visits (*IEP Evaluation Report, 2009*) there are no changes in the management structure at faculty or department levels in spite of the adopted participative management policy.

As the team pointed out in previous visits, the division of responsibilities and "borders" between the functions of the Board of Trustees and those of the Rectorate is still not clear, particularly in relation to the Rector. This may obstruct the functioning of the Rector as Chief Executive of the organisation/IUE, the on-going effective management of IUE, and the long-term strategic planning for the future development of IUE. This matter needs to be addressed as soon as possible if IUE is to become a first-class university internationally. Accordingly, there is an urgent need to rationalise the division of roles in strategic planning between the Senate, the Rectorate, the various directorates, and the Academic Assessment and Quality Improvement Committee as well as to monitor closely, with appropriate metrics, the realisation of the outputs of the Strategic Plan.

The IEP Team notes that the students, through their Council representatives, are now invited to take part in the Senate meetings and in other fora relating to the governance of IUE. However, their attendance, particularly in the Senate meetings, is poor. This is a situation that the Student Council has to change and improve, as it concerns and affects all IUE students. IUE should encourage student participation and, in order to do so, should adopt measures designed in close concertation with the Student Council.

Due to the Regulation of Appointment and Promotion Criteria, which are now implemented, the decision making process has improved and has become both more transparent and faster. The communication distance to the top management has become shorter.

3.3. Institutional Management

The internal communication has been improved and there are currently online documents and announcement systems with a specification of each position in the system, including the management positions in the Rectorate. Decentralisation is encouraged and more responsibility is given to the Deans and department heads. In order to achieve this, action reports, including bench-marking reports, are collected each semester.

The IUE organisation chart is deficient in line authority insofar as there is no clear identification of delegated layers of responsibility (with resulting accountability). The role of the Rector (as Chief Executive of the organisation) is, at times, eclipsed by the role of the Chairman of the Board of Trustees which has repercussions downwards within the organisation. The Team realises that it is not possible, under Turkish Law, for the roles of the Vice Rectors to be designated as sources of line management (e.g. for academic affairs, research, administration etc.). The institutional management must therefore suggest that this should be changed in the future within the Turkish educational legal system, which the team very much supports.

3.4. Quality and Quality Management

The IEP Team acknowledges the implementation of the Bologna system since the 2009 evaluation and the application of the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS). This is a needed progress in the differentiation of the Higher Education programmes and in the integration of a multi-disciplinary approach integrated in the curricula. The Team acknowledges the management's awareness of the importance of implementing a Quality Culture in the organisation. After the interviews with staff, the Team's conclusion is that the Quality Culture (Loukkola and Zhang, 2010; Sursock, 2011; Vettori, 2012) is still missing in IUE. A problem that obstructs the promulgation of a strong quality culture throughout IUE is that quality assurance is not prioritised within the Strategic Plan and this must be changed. The missing infrastructure for follow-up of all kinds of quality work has also to be included in the next Strategic Plan 2012-2016.

3.5. Finance and Budget

The IEP Team acknowledges that IUE has a healthy current budget which allows the University to invest in two projects: (1) infrastructure and (2) a new land area for a future new campus through its own resources. However, the IEP Team notes that the diversification of funding (so as not to rely exclusively on student fees), as was recommended in the 2009 IEP evaluation, has not been achieved.

3.6. Research

Research is identified as priority area number one in the *IUE Strategic Plan 2010-2014*. New regulations are determined for the financial support of research.

Accordingly, the need to identify a specific university-wide budget for research is urgent, as is the need to identify (immediately under and reporting to the Rector) a managerial responsibility for developing the university-wide research agenda.

Evaluation criteria for research excellence are determined by the Vice-Rector and announced to the academic staff. The IEP Team acknowledge the new PhD and Master programmes, the increase of research networks and the increase in the number of research publications. With regard to the faculty there is a widespread perception that the teaching loads for academic staff are too high, and that this impinges on the faculty undertaking serious research. This needs to be addressed as soon as possible.

3.7. Teaching

The Bologna system and implemented ECTS system support the on-going work to achieve a Quality Culture at IUE. The curricula have been restructured and the standards and guidelines, as well as Diploma Supplements, have been implemented in the faculties. A Quality Assurance system is applied but the follow-up to these evaluations is not systematised and visible in the infrastructure of IUE.

The Research and Graduate Policy Directorate is now separated into Research Projects Directorate and Quality Development and Accreditation Directorate. This split of functions has to be observed in order to reach optimal functionality. Administrative functions have been accredited and are now related to electronic flow-charts, which can be accessed online.

The Faculty of Engineering and Computer Science will be applying for the “Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET)”. Other faculties are also planning to apply for different European and international accreditations.

According to the academic staff who participated in the interviews during the IEP Follow-Up visit, the teaching load is still felt to be too high.

The policy for student fees which are decided upon by the Board of Trustees based on suggestion from the Senate. Different types of student scholarships have been introduced, such as 25% and 50% scholarships. IUE’s aim is to provide scholarships to Turkish students as well as to foreign students.

3.8. Faculty Development

The IEP Team acknowledges the increase of doctoral degrees among the academic staff since 2009. Sabbaticals, by semester or shorter periods, have been introduced even though only a few academics have had the opportunity to apply for these research periods.

There is an improvement since the terms for contracts have been extended from two to three years for some faculties *IUE Self Evaluation Report, 2012, p. 13*), but the Team would like to emphasise that the contract length affects both teaching and research, although this issue is not only in the hands of IUE. Contracts are renewed more or less automatically if staff achieves the requirements decided by the *Appointment and Promotion Criteria Regulation*. Existing job descriptions are determined by a committee including representatives of the top management and academic staff from the Department of Business Administration in face to face interviews.

3.9. Internationalisation

As mentioned above, there are six prioritised research fields in the *IUE Strategic Plan 2010-2014*. In order to manage this venture, IUE is recruiting international researchers and teachers.

In addition to the Erasmus exchange programme, IUE is actively inviting international students. The number of Erasmus agreements has increased from 55 in 2009 to 83 in 2011 (*IUE Self Evaluation Report, 2012, p. 14*). The long-term ambition is to invite one student from each country and support each student with a scholarship covering the costs of the studies. IUE is also implementing international dual degrees, for instance with the State University of New York (SUNY) and hopefully with other foreign universities.

However, the importance of internationalisation must be clearly identified within IUE's research strategy, in international education strategy and in the new Strategic Plan 2012-2016.

3.10. Outreach and Commitment to its Local Community

In the *IUE Self Evaluation Report (2012, p. 14)* it is stated that "The Board of Trustees and the Rector are the main authorities responsible for structuring and developing entrepreneurial activities. Under this defined structure, the opportunity exists for any department or faculty member to develop or participate in such activities". Under the Rector's supervision three research centres are devoted to entrepreneurship, the Centre for Research Design and Practices (ECOTAM), the Centre for Innovation and Entrepreneurship (EKOĞIRIŞIM) and the Leadership and Governance Centre (EKOLIDER). With the exception of these centres, the IEP Team acknowledge on-going graduation projects with the support of UNILEVER, COCA COLA, DHL and Retail Option Programme, which is conducted with international and national retail chains such as TESCO-KIPA, to mention a few positive external stakeholder projects. A new IUE initiative is the Izmir Science and Technology Park. Still in the global perspective, IUE has to increase its *international research network* in order to achieve its future goal of being an acknowledged international school of business and economics.

4. Conclusion

Finally, the IEP Team would like to underline the importance of addressing the issues identified above at the earliest opportunity. The Izmir University of Economics is actively pursuing its change programme and is on the right line. The IEP Team has acknowledged several clear signs of great progress.

5. Envoi

The IEP Follow-Up Team wishes to extend its sincere thanks to the Rector, Professor Dr. Tunçdan Baltacıoğlu and the President, Ekrem Demirtaş, Chair of the Board of Trustees, as well as other academics, administrative staff, students and external representatives for their warm reception and generous hospitality during our visit. Our special thanks go to the Vice-Rector, Professor Dr. Murat Adivar, Chair of the Self Evaluation Group, Professor Dr. Oğuz Esen and the liaison person Hülya İncekara and the support staff from the Office of International Affairs for their careful consideration of all our logistics.

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