

November, 2012

Džemal Bijedić University of Mostar

TEMPUS MOREMS project – Site visits by EU experts 24th of October 2012

REPORT

EU Experts:

Assis. prof. Lučka Lorber, Vice-Rector for Quality Development at the University of Maribor (Slovenia),
Christopher Moss, University of Marburg (Germany)

Present:

Prof. dr. Sead Pašić, rector,
Assis. prof. Nina Bijedić, vice rector,
Alim Abazovic, Head of Quality Assurance

The Experts were welcomed by the Rector, Prof. Dr. Sead Pasic and a team of experts from the University. The discussions followed the lines suggested by the EU-experts for all site visits. We had a frank and open discussion about the situation at the Džemal Bijedic University of Mostar.

The mission of the Džemal Bijedić University of Mostar is to organise a wide range of educational processes of different contents and levels, and perform theoretical, applied and evolving scientific research. We can confirm that the university leadership follows the mission of the university and they try to be one of the leaders in the education of young experts, as they define, the necessity for the development of the economy and society, as well as promoting cultural and social development in the region and country.

Thanks to very soft credits and donations they were able to build faculty buildings on their campus (Civil Engineering Faculty and Centre for Biotechnology). They have a very good cooperation with Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency.

Integration

During the course of the MOREMS project, the University has seen four rectors. Džemal Bijedić University is still not an integrated University, but the Assembly of Herzegovina – Neretva Canton adopted new higher educational law and now the present Rector has the task of implementing the cantonal law on the integration of the university which is not supported by all faculties. The University has also prepared a new statute which reflects the new situation and they need to change all of their internal documents and procedures. The University has two years for full integration, and one year for the preparation and planning of the process.

Finance

The university receives funding from the cantonal government in the form of a grant rather than regular, predictable payments. This grant covers approximately 21% of the expenses, which means basically the salaries. The Experts recommended that the University should draw up a budget based on its actual needs as a basis for negotiation with the cantonal government. This also means defining priorities in order to free up some funding for redistribution. It is clear that integration cannot be implemented in the face of an uncertain financial situation. The university makes use of external funding for the provision of new buildings which has made it possible to make improvements to the infrastructure.

Research

The experts recommended that the University prepare a strategy for research by identifying fields which they are good at to enable specific support to be given to researchers in those fields. The quality of research needs to be analysed before doctoral studies are introduced based on the Dublin Descriptors.

Internationalisation

Džemal Bijedić University sees Internationalisation as a part of the strategic development at the University. and has a clear policy and clear leadership through the Vice-Rector for Internationalisation and the Head of the International Office. Internationalisation is seen as more than mobility and is defines standards. It is also one of their priorities of the current university management which represents a change of attitude since the last visit. The university also has a foreign language strategy and as an example of good practice co-operates with other institutions in the region.

They are fully aware that the process of internationalisation is dependent on internal external factors. Therefore, DBU assumes that during the process of international positioning, parts of the strategic documents need to be updated annually. The main factors that position the University at the national, regional and international level must be clearly defined, mapped into a set of indicators, and be monitored and evaluated.

Bologna

The University describe in its self-evaluation report that the Bologna reform is carried to a greater or lesser extent and with more or less success, in accordance with existing legislation and financial capabilities. They carry out reforms through great efforts on the part of staff and students, but they also stress that the range of such processes is very limited without harmonisation and synchronisation with the environment.

The Experts found are strong emphasis on year structures for defining cycles rather than basing it on credit points. The new statute will allow the introduction of third cycle studies and the teaching of competences is the basis for all degree courses. There is a mechanism in place for reallocating credit or changing content in the light of quality exercises.

They see the Bologna process in its essence can be used as a basis for the internationalisation at any university, because it includes the development of most of the factors that are necessary for positioning the University at the international research and academic level, while putting an emphasis on quality. In practice, DBU uses international incentives for years, to implement and improve the implementation of the Bologna process, and to be able to achieve international standards.

Student services

The Experts recommended that the University should use the positive aspects of the location “What makes Mostar good?” for recruiting new students. Special needs students are catered for by a dedicated unit. The careers service organises work placements and provides feedback from potential employers when new courses are being designed. The Career Centre also offers training of some soft-skills in IT.

Quality Assurance

The university has a dedicated unit which is working on an action plan for the improvement of quality. The university management is working to develop a culture of quality in the university. The university is involved in TEMPUS projects concerning quality and is defining quality indicators across the university. Students are regularly involved in quality exercises and respond to evaluations. They are firmly anchored in quality exercises.

The Experts found a dedicated team working under difficult financial constraints to provide a good education in a university with modern structures.

Conclusion

Džemal Bijedić University of Mostar managed to develop the system in spite of political and economic difficulties during the period of Tempus Morems project. The Tempus Morems strengthened core elements, such as start of their integration process and administrative competences, by improving their quality assurance and management proficiency.

Reporters

Assis. prof. Lučka Lorber
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