UNIVERSITY OF MONTENEGRO

EVALUATION REPORT

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1. Introduction

This report is the result of the evaluation of the University of Montenegro. The evaluation took place in the framework of the project "Higher Education and Research for Innovation and Competitiveness" (HERIC)*,* implemented by the government of Montenegro with the overall objective to strengthen the quality and relevance of higher education and research in Montenegro.

While the institutional evaluations are taking place in the context of the project, each university is assessed by an independent IEP team, using the IEP methodology described below.

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 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).

The distinctive features of the Institutional Evaluation Programme are:

- A strong emphasis on the self-evaluation phase
- A European and international perspective
- A peer-review approach
- A support to improvement

The focus of the IEP is the institution as a whole and not the individual study programmes or units. It focuses upon:

- Decision-making processes and institutional structures and effectiveness of strategic management
- Relevance of internal quality processes and the degree to which their outcomes are used in decision-making and strategic management 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 the institution know it works?
- How does the institution change in order to improve?

1.2 The University of Montenegro's profile

The University of Montenegro is the largest and the only comprehensive, integrated and public university in Montenegro. The university was founded in 1974 from a number of independent faculties, colleges and research institutes. In 2014, it has 23 organisational units, 20 faculties and 3 institutes. Out of 1280 employees,850 are teaching staff; there are21,595 students, including between 40 and 50 doctoral candidates.

The university defines its mission as "to expand, improve and promote knowledge, learning, skills and artistic aptitude"(SER). It recognises its role in Montenegrin society with its economic and demographic profile, and aims to provide higher education that takes into account the ethnic diversity of Montenegro and the need for a higher level of knowledge transfer for economic development. The University of Montenegro is aware of its unique position in the Montenegrin higher education system as the only public and only integrated university, as well as the challenges that this brings to an institution with traditionally strong faculties, and in a local tradition that favours de-centralised governance. The university attempts to enhance its capacity and develop through initiatives and strategies articulated at the central level, for instance for quality, internationalisation, research and lifelong learning.

The autonomy of the university is limited by low direct state funding, which is transferred following a line-budget, as opposed to a block-grant approach. Wages are negotiated through the collective agreement which is a tri-partite system between the university, the state and the staff unions. This system further limits the autonomy of the university, as the collective agreement sets the amount to be spent according to teaching hours at a very detailed level. It contains no provisions for research activities or for investment in university infrastructure. The national quality assurance framework relies on programme accreditation, and the quality assurance agency is to a large extent dependent on the government. The economic situation puts a severe limit on the university's capacity to act as a number of initiatives are guided by immediate economic necessity rather than strategic planning.

1.3 The evaluation process

The self-evaluation process was undertaken by the university through a self-evaluation team representing the rectorate, academic and administrative staff, as well as students. The self-evaluation team drafted the self-evaluation report (SER)in December 2013 andJanuary2014, gathering information from the different university bodies, as well as using previous evaluations and SWOT analyses from the last ten years. The report was presented to the various governing and representative bodies of the university, from the rector to the student parliament. The SER was also posted on the university website.

The self-evaluation report of the University of Montenegro, together with the appendices, was sent to the evaluation team on 20 February 2014. The two visits of the evaluation team took place from 19to 21 April and from 13 to 16 May, respectively. In between the visits the university provided the evaluation team with some additional documentation.

The evaluation team (hereinafter named the team) consisted of:

- Virgilio Soares, former Rector, University of Lisbon, Portugal, team chair
- Jacques Lanarès, Vice Rector, University of Lausanne, Switzerland
- Lucka Lorber, Vice Rector, University of Maribor, Slovenia
- Liliya Ivanova, Master student, University of National and World Economy, Bulgaria
- Thomas Ekman Jørgensen, Deputy Director, Institutional Development, EUA, team coordinator

The SER was well structured and contained very valuable information; it was self-critical and this was highly appreciated by the team. Many of the observations of the team were already found in the SER, demonstrating a high level of awareness of the challenges in the university– although it must be mentioned that the SER was not known by everyone that the team interviewed.

The site visits were conducted in an open atmosphere with a frank discussion of the challenges that the university is facing.

The team wishes to thank the university for an excellent atmosphere of collaboration and for the smooth running of the site visits. In particular, Ana Dragutinovic of the self-evaluation team, needs to be thanked for her efficiency and for her commitment to the evaluation exercise.

2. Governance and institutional decision making

The central governing bodies of the university are the rector, the Governing Board and the Senate. The rector deals with the daily management of the university, the Governing Board supervises its financial management, and the Senate is mainly responsible for academic affairs. The students are active through the Student Parliament, which elects representatives to the Governing Board and the Senate. The formal framework defining these bodies is clear, and the team saw no <u>formal</u> problems in the governance of the university.

Despite the adequate framework, the governing bodies seemed to exercise their power very weakly. It was the strong impression of the team that members of the Senate and of the Governing Board acted as representatives of their faculties or groups of faculties and did not take responsibility for the university as a whole. During the site visit, members of these bodies would often clearly speak for their faculties, and there was little common reference to the institution. The team did not perceive any driving force for change in the university leadership. No-one seemed to take responsibility for the development of the institution, and there was a lack of follow-up mechanisms and implementation of decisions taken by the central bodies. The Senate and Governing Board have launched a number of strategies to develop the mission of the University of Montenegro such as research and lifelong learning. The team found many of the approved strategies for action from the past decade laudable, but saw major obstacles for the execution of the good intentions. Much progress could be made within the university by establishing mechanisms to ensure that strategies are carried out; it would require quite simple measures such as assigning personal responsibilities, setting firm deadlines and engaging the students in the process. Basic follow-up of implementation is currently missing but could theoretically be established with relative ease.

The team recognises that the challenge of the central governing bodies lies to a large extent in the history of higher education in Montenegro, which traditionally has individual, independent faculties as the main institutional unit. It was the strong impression of the team that the decision to establish an integrated university in 2004 had not been fully accepted by the faculties, which results in a permanent struggle for equilibrium within the university. There was ample evidence during the site visits that faculties would see the central governing bodies as threats to their independence rather than appreciate their added value to institutional development and leadership. The team noted that the process of integration is often intertwined, or even confused, with the process of centralisation. The lack of strong leadership from the centre enhances this situation. The team would strongly recommend that the university, as an institution, begins a discussion about how to share responsibilities between faculties and the central management to see which division of labour is most fit for purpose. The outcome of this discussion should be a clarification of the two different concepts of integration and centralisation and – importantly – clarify the responsibility and accountability of each person and body within the university. The initiative of the rector is essential in this situation, and the rector and her team must begin this discussion.

The rector has a team of four vice rectors, which he or she proposes for appointment to the Governing Board. Each vice rector has responsibility for thematic and disciplinary areas and chairs one of the three Scientific Councils (Arts, Science and Engineering, and Social Sciences and Humanities) of the Senate as well as having institutional responsibilities defined by the rector, such as internationalisation or finance. The different vice rectors reported to have used considerable effort to set up basic infrastructure and services, and particularly the area of internationalisation had seen a number of initiatives to promote student mobility. The team saw very positive dynamics in parts of these initiatives, but noted that many of these were still carried out in an *ad hoc* manner and not formalised, despite the explicit intention to do so in the strategies approved by the governing bodies.

As stated above, the 20 faculties of the university are often assertive in their autonomy from the central bodies. The deans and vice deans often take initiatives at the faculty levels, for example in research projects, collaboration with external partners or mobility, which are disconnected from the efforts at the central level. The team had the impression that many of the decisions and strategies coming from the Governing Board and Senate were not known at the faculty level. The faculties themselves, however, had developed individual strategies for their particular areas. The Biotechnical Faculty had, for example, developed its own research strategy in a 56-page document, which did refer to the institutional strategy, but would seem divorced from institutional bodies such as the research office in practice. As part of the above-mentioned discussion on the division of powers between the faculties and the central management, the team advises that it should be discussed how plans of the individual faculties suit the overall strategy of the institution, and how the institutional strategies and their inherent initiatives can offer concrete added value to the faculties. In addition, it would be advisable to consider how synergies in research and teaching could be created through clustering and association of different faculties with respect for the existing identities of individual units. The present sub-committees of the Senate could be a possible framework for such a clustering.

The funding of the University of Montenegro is mainly through state funding and tuition fees. Basic state funding is low and fluctuating. The collective agreement fixes the budget allocations according to the number of lectures held in the individual faculties. There is no explicit basic funding for research or for investments in infrastructure. The team saw a basic lack of coherence between the mission of the University of Montenegro and the actual available resources: it is difficult for the university to be a research institution and a comprehensive and excellent teaching university without stable and sufficient funding. At the moment, the level of funding is simply too low to maintain any of the functions of the university at the level at which the government would like to aim. The team strongly recognises this basic challenge for the university.

Some faculties are able to attract research project funding and generate funding from services to external partners; the latter is for some faculties a very considerable source of income. Although the board has proposed to limit the intake of students in some faculties and has the authority to monitor if these limits are kept, faculties can still admit fee paying

students independently of university policy. The result is that the university at times takes in a larger number of students than the actual capacity of the institution allows. Most of these students pay fees, but a minority receives state scholarships and loans, which only adds about 10% of extra indirect state funding. This over-emphasis on teaching is enhanced by the nature of the collective agreement, which allocates resources according to teaching activities. The present lack of equilibrium between faculties and central management is also aggravated by the difference in individual faculties' ability to generate external funding or admit more students.

To solve these basic challenges, there is a need for coherence between the mission of the university and the funding for this mission. Concretely, there is a need for separate funding for research as well as for maintenance of infrastructure, particularly the libraries. As the current situation stands, the financing of the university is one major obstacle to overcome the basic challenges that it is facing.

In terms of human resources, the SER pointed to high student-staff ratios, up to 110 students per teacher in the law faculty, as a problem for the university. In addition to the over-reliance on student fees mentioned above, the team found evidence of imbalances as teaching staff were allocated on the basis of the number of courses, and not on the number of students. This resulted in large courses having insufficient staff, and student-staff ratios being very high, particularly in the Faculty of Law and the Faculty of Economics, whilst being much lower in other faculties. Moreover, there was evidence that teaching and research loads were very rigidly distributed so that staff would have a fixed amount of teaching and research each year with little possibility to teach more in some periods and carry out more research in others, apart from the possibility to take a sabbatical every seven years. As the university has limited access to infrastructure such as databases and journals on-site, a more flexible system could improve its research capacity.

The team found little evidence of staff development, neither for academic nor for non-academic staff. The university should look into how this can be developed, possibly using already existing structures such as the Career Development Centre, which has some experience in the field.

Overall, the team recognises the serious challenges for the governance of the University of Montenegro. The team recognises that some constraints need to be addressed at the system level and are not in the hands of the university. However, it is crucial for the development of the university in all the specific areas mentioned in this report that the university establishes a functioning central management and that the rector takes the responsibility for this vital task. The team recognises that recommendations in this report are largely consistent with recommendations from previous evaluations and strategic documents. The team, however, underlines the fact that the insufficient implementation of these recommendations is due to the lack of sufficient central management of the university.

3. Teaching and learning

The University of Montenegro has worked on improving learning and teaching by implementing the three-cycle Bologna structure and the ECTS credit system with the aim to align the Montenegrin system to the European Higher Education Area. Monitoring the quality of teaching is largely done through a centralised student satisfaction survey, which seems to play a key part in the understanding of quality assurance among all groups within the university.

The implementation of other parts of the Bologna Process, such as outcome-based and student-centred learning, is at best sporadic. The evaluation team found some evidence of a move towards more problem-based learning in some faculties, but there was no institution-wide awareness of this. Importantly, the team found very little awareness of concepts such as learning outcomes or student-centred learning. The university has begun to plan the implementation of learning outcomes, which should be done by 2017.

Where Bologna-like reforms had been implemented, they were not yet functioning in an optimal way. The implementation of the three cycles has not led to a comprehensive rethinking of curricula, but rather there were examples of re-organisation of existing structures into sometimes shorter time frames. In some cases, the implementation of ECTS had led to students "hunting for credits" by taking courses with a view to attain more credits rather than selecting courses for their actual content and relevance for their study as a whole. This occasionally meant that although basic skills were missing, students would nevertheless pass as they had the sufficient number of credits.

The team found that much more work should be devoted to curriculum development. Although the university has developed a common framework for course descriptions, it bears testimony to the lacking awareness of learning outcomes, which are wholly absent from the form. This would need to be changed as a part of the planned implementation project, if the university has the ambition to live up to the norms in the European Higher Education Area.

The team recognises that there is an ongoing process to develop learning outcomes, but this seems to be dependent on funding from a Tempus project to be concluded in 2017, and not – as would be appropriate – on the initiative of the university itself. The team found that the process of developing learning outcomes should be accelerated and not be dependent on deadlines set by externally funded projects.

Within the faculties, there was mention of several obstacles to a deeper engagement with study reform. Financial obstacles ranked highly as an impediment to reform learning and teaching. Low funding resulted in high student-staff ratios detrimental to the overall quality of learning and teaching. Teachers were very aware of the student survey and reported to have used it for changing their teaching. However, there was no systematic professional development of teachers as such. This is connected to a general lack of follow-up in the university's quality assurance system (cf. Chapter on Quality Culture), but examples of good

practices exist in the Career Development Centre; these practices should be systematised and further developed.

Some staff saw the need for the Senate to approve study programmes as an undue interference by colleagues from other faculties with no knowledge of the subject matter. Central human resources policies were also mentioned as an obstacle. Thus, hiring of new teaching staff was often hindered by promotion rules and by the disproportion between the number of students and the available staff for large programmes. The team noted that the financial governance of the university entailed considerable perverse incentives to take in a high number of students. These incentives come from the teaching-based collective agreement as well as from the economic incentive for individual staff members and for individual faculties to admit fee-paying students to make up for lack of public funding. The team would recommend that the University of Montenegro reduce its very high number of study programmes while retaining the present number of teachers so as to attain better staff/student ratios.

The University of Montenegro could improve in the area of teaching and learning by introducing an internal programme review, which would include the introduction of learning outcomes and student-centred learning in order to implement a modernisation of learning and teaching overall. The university could also take initiatives to explore better opportunities for interdisciplinary programmes. At present, there are good examples of teaching staff being used across faculties. However, students have difficulties participating in courses and using equipment of all faculties as they are enrolled in one faculty and not at the university.

Students were generally satisfied with their situation although they did recognise issues concerning the low number of teachers per student. Across the faculties, students reported to have good communication with the university staff. There were examples of explanations of the intended outcomes of individual courses but this did not seem to be systematic. This would seem to be part of the "professional" quality culture of the institution, where individual staff members and students take responsibility for quality, but without much engagement from the side of management.

Students would like to have greater possibility to engage in practical work and to apply their knowledge. Some noted that the low knowledge-intensity of the Montenegrin economy resulted in limited possibilities to engage in practical work with external partners. This would correspond to the findings of the evaluation team that engagement with the private sector was rather sporadic or experimental and that external stakeholders were absent in planning study programmes. External stakeholders should be engaged systematically in the planning of programmes together with students in order to better align programmes with developments in the labour market.

Both students and staff underlined that the difficulty in hiring and promoting younger teachers hindered a more dynamic approach to learning and teaching at the university. The evaluation team, however, found the promotion procedures transparent in their form. The

team also noted that a significant part of the teaching staff will retire over the next few years. The university would be advised to use this as an opportunity to install a more modern culture of learning and teaching.

In terms of learning infrastructures, the evaluation team found the libraries to be in a particular state of neglect. There is a lack of access to up-to-date reference works, journals and databases at all levels. For laboratory-based exercises, there was a lack of teachers to conduct these exercises, as well as adequate funding for developing and maintaining these.

Generally, the team found that many issues concerning learning and teaching have been mentioned in the SER, and thus show awareness. Nevertheless, these issues must be addressed by the university leadership in order to bring the level of learning and teaching at the university up to European standards.

4. Research

The University of Montenegro has a short history of research activities, due to the tradition in South Eastern Europe to divide research and teaching institutions.

The research strategy of the University of Montenegro is aimed at an overall development to build capacity across the institution. The Strategic Research Plan for 2010-2013, built on a European-funded project, aimed at creating a "pervasive research culture across all academic disciplines and achieve a leadership position in the region within areas that are of national importance". It aims to achieve this by:

- Sustained development and effective use of university infrastructure and human resources;
- Continuous improvement of supporting frameworks by exploring the best practices adopted by world leading institutions and adapting them to the local context;
- Meticulousness, creativity, transparency, sustainability and humanity of scientific research and art work as a foundation for advancement of quality of life;
- Promotion and development of multidisciplinary research initiatives to create a fully integrated knowledge society and make important contributions to the social and economic development of Montenegro and the region.

The strategy defined 13 areas involving most, if not all, faculties. This decision is understandable in the light of the special role of the University of Montenegro in the Montenegrin higher education and research landscape. The university would have to safeguard a broad approach as the main research-performing organisation in the country. However, there does not seem to have been a thorough discussion on the balance between keeping the university's overall national mission and focusing the limited resources that the university has for research purposes. The above-mentioned clustering or association of faculties could partly alleviate the lack of resources by creating synergies and avoiding overlaps for instance in infrastructure procurement.

However, it was clear for the team that the university is seriously inhibited in its research activities by the lack of funding as well as by the funding model, which gives strong incentives to focus on teaching, as mentioned above. At the present levels, the university can only partly fulfil its research mission.

The recommendations from the 2009 evaluation of research have not been implemented. The university has established a central Research and Development Service Centre in order to support research through better communication between university units and between the university and external partners. While this centre seems to be fulfilling its function, it has not obtained stable funding, and largely depends on funds from projects. Other recommendations such as preventing staff from carrying out private consultancy work instead of research and promoting inter-faculty research collaboration were absent. Exceptions from this inertia in terms of implementation was the – however temporary –

functions of the R&D Service Centre, Centres of Excellence established by funds from the HERIC project as well as rules for staff promotion based on research performance.

The evaluation team found very little knowledge about any of these initiatives at the level of the individual faculties. Some faculties would know about the Centres of Excellence if they were engaged in one, but not necessarily of the R&D Service Centre or about the university's central strategy. Nevertheless, the faculties were eager to build their research capacity. Although the overall capacity was limited due to the financial restraints on staff and infrastructure, there were examples of engagement in European funding schemes through the Seventh Framework Programme. In particular, the Biotechnical Faculty has developed an ambitious research strategy, but as mentioned above, with little connection to the institutional level.

Funding for research through international projects is spread very unevenly across faculties and varies considerably from year to year. Such income, for the whole university, was for example 63% lower in 2011 than in 2010, and then rose by almost 50% in 2012. It would seem that income from research projects is at present not at a sustainable level to seriously contribute to capacity building.

The present level of funding and consequent low capacity for research does not allow doctoral education on a significant scale. Even the present small number of doctoral candidates spread over a large number of programmes would seem inconsistent with the university's capability to offer adequate supervision and research environments. Doctoral candidates are, for example, to a very large extent left to fund their research via their own means in addition to the fees they pay. The team noticed a strong discrepancy between the time available for research and the requirements for completing doctoral studies. Doctoral candidates must take one full academic year of taught elements, and they need to publish one or two papers in SCI-listed journals as well as writing a doctoral thesis. Moreover, there seemed to be no clear rules which journals were actually accepted; this was up to *post facto* decisions by the Senate on a case-to-case basis. The same lack of transparency was present for the actual thesis, which could be blocked at the Senate level. This practice was the source of much criticism by the doctoral candidates and by individual faculties, which saw it as undue interference in areas where they had the disciplinary competence. In addition, the vast majority of doctoral candidates are teaching, sometimes outside Podgorica. This leaves considerable less time for research than is usually thought necessary for quality doctoral education. Moreover, it was found that doctoral candidates would at times need to travel to obtain access to basic infrastructure, such as the main journals in the field. The university has 28 doctoral programmes for between 40 and 50 doctoral candidates, which would create difficulties in providing sufficiently large research environments within the individual programmes.

The university plans to establish broader doctoral schools, which would be a step forward for a more strategic approach to doctoral education and building capacity in this area. The university should use these schools in order to make up for the scarce mass of research in

individual fields by creating interdisciplinary research environments. Joint programmes would also be an opportunity to develop capacity and gain access to state-of-the-art research environments.

Infrastructure seems to be neglected and suffer from the insufficiencies of the central management. There is no central coordination of investment, with the risk of duplication and inefficient use of already scarce funding. In particular, the libraries would benefit from being fully integrated. The team learned that the libraries themselves have prepared a plan for integration, which should be considered by the rector and the Senate.

In conclusion, the university must seek to develop its central strategic capacity in the area of research. The existing research strategy must be expanded and made operational, with clear deadlines and clear responsibilities. This would include a better prioritisation of resources, sharing of good practice in the faculties that can present research at an international level, and diversification of funding. One way to address this issue could be to approach the government by explaining that the university is not able to fulfil its mission at the current level of funding.

5. Service to society

As Montenegro is a small country, there are close personal connections between the university and the rest of society. The SER mentions how academic staff takes part in different committees and gives advice to both central and local government. The University of Montenegro also provides minority language education.

The University of Montenegro also ensures access to higher education throughout the country through its campuses outside Podgorica. Some of these sites are situated according to their function, such as the Faculty of Maritime Studies in Kotor on the coast. Some sites are expected to assist local development in regions of the country that risk de-population. Some campuses outside Podgorica are costly to the university, and questions have been raised about whether they are the most efficient means to prevent young people from leaving these areas.

The university has carried out several initiatives concerning distance learning, but it feels hampered by the fact that distance learning is not included in the legislation on higher education. Moreover, distance learning is often considered second class, while the teaching in Podgorica is seen as better than both the courses in remote campuses and the distance learning options.

Similarly, there is only sporadic engagement with lifelong learning. The university has received funds from the Tempus programmes to develop a lifelong learning strategy, which was published in 2011. The 2012-2014 plan for implementing lifelong learning "foresees development of fully operational LLL support system with clearly defined processes, responsibilities, competencies and resources necessary for development of LLL, as well partnership building to support conditions, production and delivery of LLL." As with other initiatives, the team did not find convincing evidence that any of these goals had been achieved. It would seem that there is internal resistance due to a lack of understanding of the concept and purpose of lifelong learning. As in other fields, the university has developed a strategy and recommendations for further action, but seems blocked by the inertia of the central university governance. The team can only recommend that the university leadership implement the already adopted strategy.

In terms of engagement by stakeholders, several faculties reported that they enjoyed good relations with the private sector, either through internship schemes or as providers of technical services. There seemed to be very little engagement with future employers in curriculum development, which was likely due to the lack of curriculum development procedures and reviews at the university in general. Most concrete collaborations appeared to be on an *ad hoc* basis. The team would recommend a more strategic approach with regard to relations with stakeholders and to strengthen links to Montenegrin companies.

Students should also be more involved in practical work, particularly since some representatives of the private sector requested new skills as the economy was developing.

Staff training should also be considered in order to attain a better coherence between teaching and labour market needs.

Technology transfer seemed limited to provision of specialised services through, for example, certified university laboratories making measurements for local companies. In some cases, these activities are a non-negligible part of the funding of individual faculties, although the level of income can vary considerably. At the time of the site visits, the university was discussing the possibility of creating a technology park. In order for such an investment to be successful, the university should strengthen its links and develop comprehensive policies for knowledge transfer and collaboration with the private sector. For instance, it could consider ways in which knowledge transfer could be taken beyond the "service provider" state and how to engage in deeper research collaborations with private partners, including a common supervision of doctoral candidates. The university would also be advised to develop policies on when university facilities should be used to provide these services, or if there should be a policy to develop, for example, spin-off companies.[1] The evaluation team, however, does understand the difficult economic situation which makes service provision an attractive activity. Better core funding for the university could offer a more dynamic view on technology transfer.

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[1]See Borrell-Damian, Lidia (2009) *Collaborative Doctoral Education*, EUA, p. 24-25 and *Responsible Partnering*, EIRMA/EUA/EARTO/ProTon Europe (to be revised 2015)

6. Quality culture

The quality assurance system is probably the most integrated system of the university. Although it can well be developed and expanded, the team found it in use across the institution, and there were several examples of good practices in the implementation in individual faculties. The information system at the university seemed very good and efficient, though overall communication across the university could be improved. The university could use the experience of implementing an integrated quality assurance for other areas where integration is needed.

The quality assurance system is to a large extent centred on a student satisfaction survey on the teaching and quality of individual courses. This survey is centralised and managed by the Quality Assurance Board. Different groups within the university had diverse opinions on the efficiency of the survey. It would seem that academic staff is quite attentive to the results for themselves and tries to change methods of teaching to better accommodate students. Students, however, often expressed doubts about the usefulness of the survey, and sometimes could not see that their input contributed to better quality at the institution. It was clear to the team that, while the survey in itself seemed well designed, the system could be improved in terms of feedback on the consequences of evaluations.

Regarding a broader quality culture, the evaluation team had the impression that the understanding of quality assurance was limited to the idea of quality control focused on measuring and collecting data. There was little evidence of systematic, institutional procedures for quality enhancement. Academic staff would engage in quality enhancement – reacting to the student survey – on a purely individual basis, but there is no sign of the institution having a systematic approach on ensuring that staff can develop as teachers and researchers. The quality culture can be described as a "professional culture", where quality is dependent on the professional attitude of individuals, and the institutional engagement is limited to control and data collection. The university must seek to develop a deeper quality culture where the good will and professionalism of individual staff members play together with the overall strategic ambitions of the university as a whole.

Moreover, quality assurance at the University of Montenegro is largely limited to the individual teachers. The national quality assurance framework entails programme accreditation, but there is no internal review of programmes. The university must establish an internal review process for its study programmes in order to meet the challenges related to curriculum development, the implementation of the Bologna Process as well as meeting the demands of the labour market. Such a review process should be aimed at quality enhancement rather than the compliance function of the external accreditation.

Likewise, quality assurance systems should be put in place for research, following the work that has been started by the Research and Development Service Centre. In addition, the institutional quality assurance system should also encompass non-academic functions such as the administrative units.

Internal communication seems to be an obstacle to many initiatives. The team found that relatively simple steps could be taken in order to improve this situation. As a matter of principle, as much information as possible should be easily accessible on the website. Additionally, every person affiliated to the University of Montenegro should be assigned one email account, to which all relevant information should be sent. The present system whereby students can choose not to have a university email account should be changed so that having an email account becomes obligatory. In this way, the university would have one easy and direct line of communication with everyone.

Lastly, while quality assurance should be further developed and expanded, it should also be used in a systematic way to inform the university's strategy development. The technical framework of the present system seems to be a good starting point, but as with all other parts of this evaluation, the initiative and clear leadership of the central governing bodies is essential to the success of the university.

7. Internationalisation

In the area of internationalisation, the picture prevails of highly independent faculties and little strategic capacity within the university. There seems to be very little strategic planning for internationalisation. However, mobility is on the rise at the University of Montenegro, international agreements with other universities exist and the university has participated in a number of EU-funded programmes such as Tempus and the Framework Programmes. There is an international office, which does offer some services, but the student mobility experience still leaves a great deal to be desired.

Some students had experienced mobility and appeared to have profited from it. Doctoral candidates were particularly largely dependent on collaboration and international mobility so as to have access to infrastructure. The small size of doctoral programmes emphasises this need to be part of an international research environment.

Incoming students reported problems of basic information. They had received very superficial assistance in finding accommodation, and they had no access to dormitories in Podgorica. These students lacked language courses in Montenegrin, particularly courses that would be held before the start of the semester so that they could participate in the regular teaching of the university. Due to lack of language training and lack of courses in English, these students were offered private tutorials. However, these tutorials seemed to be offered in an unsystematic way as they were insufficiently regular and sometimes of insufficient quality. For the University of Montenegro to develop its efforts in internationalisation, services concerning practical information and assistance must be provided. The academic offerings, including language courses, need to be further developed and evaluated.

Outgoing students faced similar problems of lack of information. Students with mobility experience reported that they had arranged their stay abroad largely by themselves, including constructing their own curriculum on the basis of the information that they could find on the Internet. Importantly, students mentioned recognition problems as an important obstacle for mobility. Recognition appeared to be done in terms of course recognition and on a *post factum* basis. This created serious problems for some returning students. The team recommends that credit recognition be applied rather than course recognition. This could well be done by formalising learning agreements with foreign universities and informing outgoing students about such agreements. Development of joint programmes would also facilitate student mobility as well as develop the capacity of the University of Montenegro to implement good practices in the area of internationalisation. A more light-hand approach would be to organise summer schools with foreign universities.

Staff mobility seemed very limited, partly due to the inflexible teaching requirements. The level of English in some faculties was very uneven. Some members of the academic staff had good English skills, while others showed great difficulties in expressing themselves in English. As Montenegro is part of a large language area, this would not be an obstacle to regional collaboration but to broader collaboration with other European and non-European countries.

In line with the previous chapters, the university leadership must take the appropriate responsibility for this area. There needs to be a policy and explicit priorities concerning agreements with foreign universities so that they are functional. Agreements need to be targeted in order to respond to the local needs in learning as well as in research. Importantly, internationalisation needs to be evaluated regularly to monitor developments and the fitness for purposes of the existing programmes and initiatives.

8. Conclusion

The University of Montenegro has carried out a candid and clear self-evaluation. There is an obvious awareness of the issues to be confronted. The team saw a will to change and recognises the efforts being made in the implementation of the Bologna Process, quality assurance and development of research capacity. However, these efforts seemed hampered by structural challenges, which would need to be addressed.

The team finds the issues concerning central governance a fundamental weakness for all parts of the University of Montenegro. The new rector needs to use a firm and steady hand to make the governing bodies take on their role as central management units and not individual representatives of faculties. There needs to be a shift in management culture that makes implementation of strategies possible through fixed deadlines and personal responsibilities. There also needs to be an open dialogue with clear conclusions about the responsibility of the central management and individual faculties, about centralisation and integration.

In most of the areas, the university has already undergone numerous evaluations and received valuable recommendations, which the team endorses. It is high time for the university to put these recommendations into practice. Reforms in some areas have proved that it is possible to make an integrated effort to develop the university, with the quality assurance system as an evident example. Good practices exist in individual faculties across the university and these should be disseminated and further developed.

The team fully recognises the difficult situation with regard to funding and the consequences of the collective agreement and its focus on teaching. The university needs to make it clear that it cannot fulfil its current missions under the present financial system.

Once the University of Montenegro attains a functional leadership, a common institutional identity and a sound financial framework, it will have the potential to fulfil its role as Montenegro's leading institution for teaching, research and development of a knowledge society.

Summary of the recommendations

Improve central governance and infrastructure

The team finds that the university must establish mechanisms to ensure that strategies are carried out: assigning personal responsibilities, setting firm deadlines and engaging the students in the process.

According to the team, the university, as an institution, must begin a discussion on how to share responsibilities between faculties and the central management to see which division of labour is most fit for purpose.

As a part of this debate, the team recommends that it should be discussed how plans of the individual faculties suit the overall strategy of the institution, and how the institutional strategies and their inherent initiatives can offer concrete added value to the faculties.

The team strongly advises the university to consider how synergies in research and teaching could be created through clustering and association of different faculties while respecting the existing identities of individual units. The present sub-committees of the Senate could be a possible framework for such a clustering.

There must be more coherence between the mission of the university and the funding for this mission. At present, there is not sufficient stable funding, and particularly the collective agreement does not offer the financial system needed for the University of Montenegro to fulfil its mission.

Due to the limited local access to resources such as databases and journals, the team finds that the university should find a more flexible system for staff time allocation thus creating opportunities for visits to other universities.

The university should develop training for academic and non-academic staff, possibly using already existing structures such as the Career Development Centre.

Extend Bologna implementation and improve study programmes

Course descriptions lack proper inclusion of learning outcomes and do not live up to the norms of the European Higher Education Area. The team advises that this is remedied in the immediate future.

The process of developing learning outcomes should be accelerated and not be dependent on deadlines set by externally funded projects.

The team would recommend reducing the number of study programmes while retaining the present number of teachers in order to attain better staff/student ratios.

The University of Montenegro should also introduce an internal programme review, including proper implementation of learning outcomes and student-centred learning.

External stakeholders should be engaged systematically in the planning of programmes, together with students, in order to better align programmes with developments in the labour market.

A significant part of the teaching staff will retire over the next years. The university would be advised to use this as an opportunity to install a more modern culture of learning and teaching, taking into account the recommendations above.

Build research capacity and implement institutional strategies

Broader, interdisciplinary doctoral schools would be a step forward for a more strategic approach to doctoral education and building capacity in this area. The university should use these schools in order to make up for the scarce mass of research in individual fields by creating interdisciplinary research environments.

Joint doctoral programmes would be an opportunity to develop capacity and gain access to state-of-the-art research environments.

There needs to be central coordination of investment in infrastructure. Particularly the libraries would benefit from being fully integrated. The existing plan for integration of the libraries should be considered by the rector and the Senate.

The university must seek to develop its central strategic capacity in the area of research. The existing research strategy must be expanded and operationalised with clear deadlines and clear responsibilities. This would include a better prioritisation of resources, use of good practice in the faculties that can present research at an international level and diversification of funding. One way to address this issue could be to approach the government by explaining that the university is not able to fulfil its mission at the current level of funding.

Engage systematically with external partners and society as a whole

The team strongly recommends that the university leadership implement the already adopted strategy for lifelong learning.

The university should adopt a more strategic approach to stakeholder relations and to strengthen the links to Montenegrin companies for collaboration in research and for the development of teaching.

Students should be more involved in practical work.

University staff should have training in order to attain a better coherence between teaching and labour market needs.

The university would do well to develop policies on when university facilities should be used for provision of services to external partners, or if there should be a policy to develop, for example, spin-off companies.

Further develop quality assurance

The university must seek to develop a deeper quality culture where the good will and professionalism of individual staff members act together with the overall strategic ambitions of the university as a whole.

An institutional quality assurance system should encompass non-academic functions such as the administrative units in addition to academic staff.

As much information as possible should be easily accessible on the website. Additionally, every person affiliated to the University of Montenegro, including all students, should be assigned one email account, to which all relevant information should be sent.

Quality assurance should be further developed and expanded; it should also be used in a systematic way to inform strategy development of the university.

Enhance services and improve recognition for mobility

For the University of Montenegro to develop its efforts to internationalise, services concerning practical information and assistance must be provided. The academic offerings, including language courses, need to be further developed and evaluated.

The team strongly recommends that credit recognition be applied instead of course recognition.

Joint programmes and summer schools should be developed to enhance internationalisation.

The university leadership must take the appropriate responsibility for the area of internationalisation, including policies on setting up, signing and monitoring partnership agreements.