

Project on supporting Higher Education in Kosovo 2008 - 2011 “JOINT DEGREES & ACADEMIC RECOGNITION”

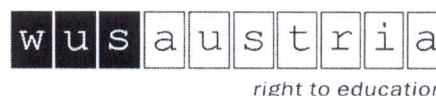
Summary Meeting Record

Training Seminar, July 7th - 8th, 2010

Venue: *New Building of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology of the Republic of Kosova, 10000 Prishtina*

financed by

Austrian
Development Cooperation



Introduction

Ministry of Education, Science and Technology of the Republic of Kosova (MESTK) in cooperation with WUS Austria organized the Seminar on „Joint Degrees & Academic Recognition“ during July 7th - 8th, 2010. The event took place at the MESTK premises.

This seminar is organized in the frame of the project „Support to Higher Education in Kosovo 2008-2011“, financed by the Austrian Development Cooperation and implemented by WUS Austria. It is one of several initiatives that WUS Austria is conducting to help the implementation of the reforms in the Higher Education System of the Republic of Kosova.

The representatives of the higher education of Kosova, emphasised that the development of joint programs has to be on focus for development of future study programs in Bachelor and Master levels. In addition, it aligns with the second phase (2010-2015) of the “Strategy for Development of Higher Education in Kosova 2005 - 2015”. This, way, development of joint programs represents the future development of the entire Kosovar Higher Education System.

Part 1: The role of Higher Education (HE) System in the Economic Development of Kosova

The first part of the seminar was dedicated to the presentation of the current situation (priorities and challenges), the role of TEMPUS Program on joint degrees development, linkage between higher education and research in Kosova, as well as the procedures of NARIC Office in Kosova for recognizing different kinds of diplomas obtained outside Kosova, including the recognition of joint degrees diplomas which Kosovar students have obtained abroad.

Law on Higher Education of Kosovo, which is in the amending procedure, will create the legal basis for development of the joint programs. An emergent need identified in the presentation of Prof. Dr. Avdulla Alija, Director of Higher Education Department is “encouraging of a new attitude towards teaching and learning processes”. Further, internationalization of the Higher Education in Kosova is identified as a future focus, whereas the change of statute of higher education institutions (HEI) remains to be done after the new Law is approved. In this way can expect that the HEIs will include also a paragraph on defining the joint programs, in accordance to the new Law.

Development of joint programs, represent a very convenient tool for achieving the strategic objectives of the Strategy and Law on Higher Education.

ENIC NARIC Office in Kosova presented specific challenges in recognizing different degrees, obtained outside Kosova. Among others it showed to participants how a diploma looks like, which is issued through a joint program outside Kosova. Further, it emphasized the importance of including the ENIC Naric Kosova and other relevant stakeholders (MESTK, Kosovo Accreditation Agency etc) during the planning phase of a joint program for avoiding possible overlaps.

Since 2002 TEMPUS Program is contributing on "creating an area of cooperation in HE involving EU and partner countries, assistance in reforming HE systems in line with principles of Bologna process, strengthening the role of HE institutions for the successful transition to a knowledge-based economy and society". By considering that one of the priorities of TEMPUS Joint Programs is "*Curricula modernization, 3 cycles and recognition of degrees*", it represents a suitable source of funding of the HEIs of Kosova for introducing joint programs with the EU universities. In Kosova there are some joint programs being implemented, which are financed through the TEMPUS program.

Development of joint programs with the EU universities preferably should include also the research cooperation for contributing in internationalization of the HE of Kosova. Mr. Dukagjin Pupovci, National Scientific Council, presented that in Kosova only 0.01% of the total of Gross Domestic Product is dedicated for research activities. This data classifies Kosova far away from the countries that make larger investments in this field.

Where applicable and realizable, when a joint program is planned the possibility for including the research component is preferable.

Creation and finance of the joint programs in Kosova remains a challenge. The first source of funding remains international donations especially funding through different EU programs.

Part 2: Understanding the joint degree concept and its development:

The second session focused on introducing general principles and the recommendations developed by the European University Association (EUA) on planning a new joint degree as well as for internal quality assurance of a degree.

According to the presentation made by Ms. Tia Loukkola, EUA, joint program is offered commonly by different HEIs, and developed in co-operation. Degrees awarded can be either joint, multiple or double. In accordance to the recent surveys done in Europe, most of the joint programs are planned in Master level. Program/Course coordination remains challenging, due to the dissimilarities on variable points, credit weighting, workload and learning outcomes.

European University Association has developed a useful document on planning a new joint degree as well as for internal QA of a degree.

Part 3: Recognition of Joint degrees

The last session of presentations had a specific focus on legal tools and quality assurance of joint degrees.

Mr. Heinz Kasparovsky, ENIC NARIC Austria, explains (taking the example of two partner institutions) that before planning a new joint program, the legal frame-work on HE of both countries involved should be reviewed, for making sure that any obstacle might not appear during the implementation phase. After Law reviewing, the statutes of each the HEIs involved should be checked in terms of definition of modalities that involve creation of a new joint program. Once, most of the things are settled between the two cooperating partners the contract should be signed, for enabling

smooth implementation of the programs and avoiding any possible ambiguity that might come up in the future.

The Austrian Federal Ministry for Science and Research has developed a list of issues that should be taken into consideration before planning such a study program. In addition, it has developed a contract template that can serve as a model to the HEIs involved on creating a joint program.

Both documents are put at disposal by ENIC Naric Austria, and will be distributed to the seminar participants.

Creation of joint programs represents a huge challenge for quality assurance. Barriers for joint programs remain different legal framework and QA/accreditation agencies involved. This will result on multiple accreditation recognition procedures. Further, Mrs. Elisabeth Fiorioli, Austrian Accreditation Council, underlined some initiatives undertaken for unifying the accreditation processes and replace different national procedures.

The publication on “The recognition of qualifications awarded by joint programmes“, which is an analysis of current practices by national recognition centres, published by European Consortium for Accreditation, is suggested by Mrs. Fiorioli for distribution to the seminar participants.

Montenegrin representative Ms. Nada Kovac, senior adviser for international academic mobility programmes emphasized importance of establishing joint degree programmes, especially in the Region in order to foster HEI’s cooperation, improve academic mobility and enhance joint scientific and research activities within joint doctoral studies. It is beside other things, important for intercultural understanding in the future.

Presentation and workshop part led to the following recommendations:

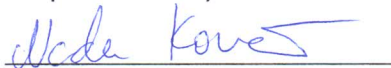
1. Creation of a new joint program might be done by combining different existing modules at both HEIs, or design entirely new curricula.
2. Based on the new promulgated Law on HE, the HEI’s statute should be adopted for creation of institutional legal basis for joint programs.
3. Language issuance of the diplomas should be taken into consideration (this should be regulated by Law/Statute, as well). The English Language has become the common language of academic communication.
4. University to develop internal guidelines and specialize people who would take care of joint program development.
5. Development of specialized units.
6. Kosovo Accreditation Agency to develop guidelines or checklist for development of joint programs.
7. While developing the Joint programs to take care of the European Professional framework.
8. Preferable solution: 1 program = 1 qualification = 1 degree (“Joint” degree).
9. During the development phase to include ENIC NARIC National Office.
10. Careful selection of partners - preferably reliable partners (HEIs that the Faculty/University has cooperated so far).
11. Careful planning.

12. Detailed planning of contract.
13. Development of too many joint programs at a Faculty is not preferable.
14. Including too many students is not feasible and practicable.
15. Defining the treatment of students to be done by the HEI's administration.
16. Program should undergo accreditation and multiple recognition procedure in each country.

BENEFITS for developing joint programs:

1. Advancement of teaching methodologies, academic network strengthening, academic mobility.
2. Institutions are getting international reputation.
3. Added value - more possibility for international labor market for the graduates.
4. Graduates getting language and inter-cultural skills.
5. Easily recognition of the degree in the partner country.
6. Possibility for joint research.
7. Possibility for joint funding.

Report made by Nada Kovac



Ministry of Education and Science of Montenegro
Department for higher education