

EUA Institutional Evaluation Programme
“St. Kliment Ohridski” University of
Bitola/Republic of Macedonia

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Foreword

Following two successful conferences on the theme of Quality and Evaluation, the Committee of the Association of European Universities – CRE¹ – decided in 1993 to offer its then 500 member universities the possibility of being reviewed so that their strengths and weaknesses in the area of quality management might be assessed. The EUA offers an external diagnostic review by experienced university leaders from various higher education systems in Europe. This external diagnostic should be a tool for institutional leadership preparing for change. The EUA does not wish to provide the university with a blueprint for its development; rather the review process is a consultative one, or to use Martin Trow's terminology, an "external supportive review"².

In 1994, the Universities of Göteborg, Porto and Utrecht commissioned the then CRE to develop the methodology for the quality review programme and to test it in their institutions. This pilot phase was completed in January 1995. Since then, about 90 universities in western, central and eastern Europe as well as a small number of Latin American and South African universities have been reviewed. Central to the review process stands a set of guidelines, developed by Professor Frans van Vught, former Director of the Centre for Higher Education Policy Studies (CHEPS) and Dr. Don Westerheijden at the University of Twente.

In 2003, the "St. Kliment Ohridski" University of Bitola, Republic of Macedonia (UB), then led by the Rector Professor Dr. Bozidar Maslinkov, invited the EUA to undertake an institutional review of the university.

The UB's **motivation for participation** in the Institutional Evaluation Programme (IEP) may be described as an additive attempt in a developing quality oriented system of higher education in Macedonia: apart from UB also a second State University – Skopje – had applied for the participation in the EUA Institutional Evaluation Programme.

By signing the Bologna-Declaration in Berlin on 19 September 2003 by the Macedonian Minister of Education and Science, quality assurance has even more become a key issue in this process, and the request of the then two state universities in Bitola and Skopje to be reviewed by the EUA from a university-wide institutional quality assurance perspective is therefore most encouraging.

In anticipation of and preparation for participation in the Bologna Process, quality and quality assurance has been one of the major issues discussed in the Republic of Macedonia since the **amendment of the Law on higher education in 2000**. In accordance with this law on higher education, a national system of quality assurance and enhancement has been set up and is still in the process of implementation. Starting with a self-evaluation of the faculties in 2002, an external evaluation of the faculties is due to follow in 2003/2004. In addition, a system of accreditation (of study programmes) is planned as the third phase in this complex quality assurance system.

National bodies as well as intra-institutional commissions have been installed in order to fulfil the respective tasks. Experts from abroad helped to train peers, to develop and implement the Macedonian quality assessment system.

¹ On 31 March 2001, the CRE and the Confederation of EU Rectors' Conferences merged, and the new EUA – European University Association was established.

² Prof. Martin Trow: Academic Reviews and the Culture of Excellence, in Studies of Higher Education and Research, 1994/2.

What is **the purpose of the IEP** from the UB's perspective in this context? The review team had the impression that those held responsible for academic affairs mostly focused on the implemented quality assessment system on faculty as well as study programme level. Thus, the self-evaluation report preparing the external review was in the first place an aggregation of information gathered by the faculties' self-evaluation. However, there was at the same time both reluctance and a remarkable motivation of various persons to strengthen the central coordination of the UB, i.e. to face the challenge of restructuring and reorganising the university in a way that leads to corporate identity of all members of the UB.

Financial support provided by the Association of Universities and other Higher Education Institutions in Germany (Hochschulrektorenkonferenz HRK) by means of the Stability Pact allowed UB an immediate participation in the IEP.

The work done on the faculty level should therefore be used as a trigger to proceed in quality assurance and assessment issues on university level. By this means, the challenge of forming one university that is as whole more than the sum of its parts (the faculties) can be faced with a strong quality argument.

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The members of the EUA review team were

- Prof. Dr. Bent Schmidt-Nielsen (chair), former Rector, the Royal Veterinary and Agricultural University, Copenhagen, Denmark
- Prof. Dr. Winfried Müller, Rector/former Rector, Klagenfurt University, Austria
- Dr. Bas Nugteren, Secretary to the Board of Utrecht University, the Netherlands
- Dr. Stefanie Hofmann (secretary), Accreditation, Certification, Quality Assurance Institute, Bayreuth, Germany

In keeping with the standard EUA evaluation methodology, this reports focuses on the main issues related to quality assurance and strategic management, and identified by the review team for further consideration by the University. The review team will therefore outline the areas where they have recommendations and proposals for the development of the UB.

Introduction

The decision of the “St. Kliment Ohridski” University of Bitola to request an EUA Institutional Evaluation is part of its on-going implementation of a quality assurance system and its attempted integration with the European higher education area.

For a long time, the Macedonian system of higher education consisted of two state universities – Skopje and Bitola. Only very recently, a third state university was established in Tetovo. Tetovo is moreover the location of the South-Eastern European University, a privately funded institution of higher education.

The “St. Kliment Ohridski” University of Bitola (UB) was founded on April 25, 1979. Located in the south-west of the Republic of Macedonia, close both to the Greek as well as the Albanian border, UB has a visible regional mission. Today, the university consists of five faculties, one higher vocational school, two institutes and one bureau, located in Bitola, Prilep and Ohrid. During the 24 years of its existence, the university made great efforts to satisfy the needs of society. Especially in recent years, UB has attempted to realize co-operations with the industry and economy, with governmental and non-governmental institutions in the country and the region.

Today, UB is covering more than 35.000 sq.m, hosting more than 10.200 full-time students, 45 expert-associates and 128 research workers. Over the last couple of years, the number of students has constantly been growing.

The EUA review team came on a preliminary visit to the “St. Kliment Ohridski” University of Bitola on 12-13 June 2003 and then on a second main visit on 10-13 October 2003. These reviews were proceeded, in conformity with the EUA guidelines, by a self-evaluation process at UB and by production of a self-evaluation report. This report was elaborated by the Self-evaluation Committee of the “St. Kliment Ohridski” University of Bitola, under the leadership of Prof. Ph.D. Bozin Donevski, full-time professor at the Technical Faculty.

The self-evaluation report prepared by UB provided a large amount of information (in English translation). As mainly a mere aggregation of information gathered on faculty level (in 2002), the self-evaluation report was in the review team’s opinion more descriptive than analytical.

- The self-evaluation report describes the “national educational system”, limiting the description to “State” or “public” Universities. A more analytical reasoning might have questioned the competitiveness or competition in the country, in the region for funding, staff, students.
- The self-evaluation reports describes the “Aims and tasks of the university”, listing remarkable activities initiated by individual UB members and /or faculties that are to help reaching the set objectives. However, neither scope nor intensity of these activities are made transparent in the description. A more analytical reasoning might have been the start for a university-wide reflection of mission and strategic aims of UB, forming a basis for an ambitious strategic project as well as its implementation.
- The self-evaluation report has some weaknesses with respect to statistical data. In the review teams’ opinion, this is a strong indication of the lack in central coordination on university level.

However, the UB had attempted to do a SWOT-analysis, an attempt which was in itself approved by the review team.

In addition, the Law on Higher Education (amendment from 2000) was quite useful to understand not only the situation in the country, but also in trying to find out in the discussions where there were the real legal constraints in comparison with those weaknesses and problems which occurred by not fully using the creative scope provided by the law.

Additional documents and brochures especially on the Quality Assurance system (institutional self-evaluation, external evaluation) requested by the review team were provided immediately; they allowed an even deeper insight into the current situation in the country, further proceedings and necessities.

During the two visits, the review team met with over 200 people, including the rectorate, senior members of the university management, the Senate, the Deans of all the faculties, and a range of staff and students of four faculties. The review team also met the self-evaluation committee of the UB, the student delegates, the Directors and staff of both research institutes, as well as staff of the central university administration. The team was also pleased to meet a selection of UB's external partners including the mayors both of Bitola and Prilep, who provided a frank and valuable insight into the role of the university in Bitola, Prilep and Ohrid and the region. The mayor of Ohrid attended the presentation of the oral report. Last but not least, the review team was especially pleased and honoured to meet the Minister for Education and Science, Dr. Azis Polozani, to discuss with him recent developments in Macedonian system of higher education and their implications for the future development of the "St. Kliment Ohridski" University of Bitola. The review team also discussed with the Minister the implications of signing the Bologna Declaration for the Macedonian universities – aims and objectives (employability, academic quality, mobility); tools and structures (three-tier structure Bachelor/Master/PhD, ECTS, Diploma Supplement, Quality assurance, lifelong learning etc.). The minister confirmed the intention of the Macedonian government for integration of the higher education in Macedonia with the European university system. He explained the intended legal changes concerning the higher education in Macedonia and admitted the foundation of a third State University in Tetovo. Especially, he confirmed his interest in the strengthening of the Macedonian universities. With respect to the actual relation between universities and more or less independent faculties he supported a gentle way of integration.

As is customary during the EUA reviews, the last day of the main visit started with a final meeting between the review team and the Rector. This meeting was followed by the presentation of an oral report given by the chair of the review team, Prof. Bent Schmidt-Nielsen, to the UB representatives. The oral report is the basis for this written report, which is structured according to the standard EUA layout.

The review team is most grateful for the hospitality shown by the "St. Kliment Ohridski" University of Bitola, as well as the open and frank atmosphere which both Rectors created. The first visit had been based on the invitation of Rector Professor Dr. Bozidar Maslinkov. On 1 October 2003 a change on senior leadership level occurred: former **Vice-Rector, Prof. Violeta Panovska was elected as new Rector on 27 June, 2003**. The review team was pleased to see that Rector Panovska is strongly committed **to continue and strengthen the improvement for constructing the university without delay**.

The review team would especially like to thank the Chairman of the Self-Evaluation Committee of the University, Prof. Bozin Donevski, who organised our visits to Bitola, Prilep and Ohrid in a most hospitable and efficient manner and who helped to provide all the information which the review team requested.

The review is focussed on the institutional mechanisms of quality assurance and strategic management which were observed at the UB, and which can guarantee the quality of the operations undertaken by the university. The report therefore does not discuss the quality of teaching and research itself. The comments of the review team are based on reading the UB self-evaluation report and other supporting documentation, as well as on the information and impressions gained during two visits to UB.

UB is on the verge of formulating a strategy for the future. Well aware of the importance and benefits of a corporate identity, mission and vision must be debated and agreed upon, strategies need to be formulated. In order to be successful, this will need a careful choice of priorities and attainable goals, which will then in turn contribute to the on-going reform process. Both Rectors of UB were aware of the necessary next steps for UB.

We hope that this EUA report, which presents an independent external vision of this situation, made by individuals with wide experience in various systems of higher education, will be of assistance to UB in continuing its challenging development process, both in Macedonia and in the wider European higher education community.

The report starts with an analysis of the mission and vision of the university, the institutional norms and constraints in and under which the university is operating, constraints that influence the opportunities and policies of the university. The second part of the report analyses the university's capacity for change and possible areas for improvement. The third part is a very short summary and contains recommendations the review team wishes to make.

The Institutional Review

UB's aims and objectives

Today's situation at the "St. Kliment Ohridski" University of Bitola might be described as follows:

1. UB (represented by staff and students) has the explicit and expressed wish to become a full member of the European Area of Higher Education – thus, UB has a strong advantage compared to some of those European universities which experience the Bologna Process as a governmental top-down decision.
2. UB's endeavours have been recognised and supported by the Macedonian Minister's signing the Bologna Declaration in Berlin, 19 September 2003.
3. UB is more or less aware of subsequent steps. The steps are explicitly stated in the Bologna Declaration, Prague Communiqué, Berlin Communiqué, but also those institutional prerequisites that UB has to provide – that need to be taken.
4. As a result of the former Yugoslav "model" of higher education institutions, UB is a loose amalgamation of its faculties and institutes. The faculties are highly autonomous in academic as well as administrative, esp. financial, matters. In order to become a full member of the European Area of Higher Education, UB now needs to find a satisfactory answer to the question: What actually is the University "St. Kliment Ohridski" in Bitola?
5. Starting from this core question, other questions will emerge: Which organisational restructuring proves necessary in order to reach the self-set objectives (as, for example, active participation in the Bologna Process)? Are these objectives really operationalised? Have these objectives been discussed and decided with a short-, mid- and long-term strategic perspective? What are the implications of the Bologna Process? What are the necessary prerequisites? What are the constraints and difficulties shaping UB's possibilities in this challenging situation?
6. Will there be more challenges, are there such (e.g. European research programmes, recent development of the system of higher education in the Republic of Macedonia)?

All these issues must be debated and answers found based upon broad university involvement and precise leadership by senate and rectorate.

According to the university leadership representatives, a necessary prerequisite for the UB's successful participation in the European Area of Higher Education is a strengthened autonomy of the university with respect to governmental influence (governmental micro management). Thus, the university's future and vision is strongly linked to a concept of academic and administrative autonomy. The following analysis of constraints and institutional norms tries to highlight those issue, where UB by own initiative and action might contribute to an enhancement of its own situation. In addition, it will point out those areas, where UB's autonomy is firmly restricted by external forces.

Constraints and institutional norms

Constraints are those boundary conditions which the university itself cannot change immediately, such as (1) the difficult economic situation in the country and the region, with a tremendously high rate of unemployment even for young qualified graduates, (2) recent damage to societal values and norms (commonly described as a phase of transition), (3) the

general educational profile at school level on the one hand, the varying profiles of education on the other, (4) the legal framework, and especially (5) the current levels and methodologies of resource allocation.

However, the review team repeatedly had the impression that in a number of areas, where on first sight there seemed to dominate external constraints, a deeper analysis revealed a considerable scope of possibilities for UB to change the situation. The review team therefore encourages UB, university management as well as faculty management, to face the challenges and take initiatives and actions. In general,

- The review team recommends to use the SWOT-analyses of the faculties as a starting point.
- In order to fully implement the SWOT-methodology, the review team suggests to consider external advice in this endeavour.
- UB shall then use these analyses on university level, e.g. represented by the Self-evaluation committee, to scrutinize the listings of strengths and weaknesses, of opportunities and threats in order to re-examine the questions: What are general restrictions and problems that might better be solved for the university as a whole? Which opportunities of individual faculties might even be enhanced by university-wide policies? What are possible synergies of joint initiatives on university level? The challenge will be to identify the strengths, weaknesses of the university and to agree upon priorities and policies in order to use the opportunities effectively and to combat threats in a joint initiative.

In the following, the review team gives examples of constraints and difficulties (weaknesses), thus challenges, that the university will have to solve:

Systemic constraints and institutional challenges

In recent years, the higher education system in the Republic of Macedonia has experienced remarkable changes. New institutions have been set up, partially on private and international initiative, partially on governmental initiative. As a consequence, UB is faced with (national) competition for funds, staff and students.

- The review team suggests that the ministry shall set priorities in the field of education and focussed research and lead an open discussion with the Universities in the Republic of Macedonia on the future development of the higher education system.
- UB, however, will need to adapt to the up to now unknown situation of competitiveness.
- UB will profit from a profound competitors' analysis, their fields of subjects and fields of research, their future strategies.
- UB will need to sharpen its own profile, i.e. corporate identity, in order to become a visible and recognizable player in the competition and possible future collaboration, aware of its own strengths and capacities for further development.
- As a regional university, UB should use its external partners in the region, mayors and municipalities, labour market representatives and industry to find support for the future of UB.

Legal constraints and regulatory weaknesses

The review team identified the **overregulation in legislation as a considerable constraint**. This overregulation **is symbolised by a University Law with 198 articles**. The legislation seems to be very much input-oriented, defining by law what the level and possible realizations of quality will be with respect to aims and means.

The overregulation in legal terms is reflected in the university's own statutes, bylaws, rules and regulations. Claiming to rule all university activities, this overregulation seems – in the review team's perception – to hinder spontaneous engagement and initiatives, empowering, ownership and commitment on all university levels. The review team experienced a number of situations where members of (decision-making) bodies of the university were not informed about their rights and obligations as defined by the University Statute and steadily used laws and regulations as an excuse for lack of own initiatives.

- The review team gained the impression that this issue means a great challenge to UB. The overregulation was perceived as symbol of attitude and mentality; however, in order to proceed on the way to an autonomous academic society, UB and its members will need to take initiative.
- The review team recommends to rule only those problematic cases in bylaws that formally need regulations.
- The review team suggests to start a process of scrutinizing those rules and regulations that exist at UB, starting with a central documentation. The review team has the impression that UB might profit from external advice in this matter.

Constraints and challenges in terms of (financial) resources

The review team perceived both constraints and partially solvable difficulties with respect both to level of funding as well as the factual allocation procedures.

The legal framework sets the rules for allocation of resources that are not adequate for an effective university management: (1) resources are mainly distributed directly to the faculties, and thus no budgeting via the university level; (2) a line-to-line budgeting instead of a lump sum budgeting; limiting the autonomy of the university; (3) budget is based on the number of teachers and students enrolled (ignorant of their success rate); funding is neither linked to quality measures, nor to output factors or good performance in priority areas.

- Even if UB cannot change the allocation system immediately by its own efforts, the review team recommends the UB leadership to express its criticism against this system self-confidently and proactively in front of the government. Drawing upon comparative data of the European Higher Education Area, UB might highlight the competitive disadvantage of Macedonian universities.
- The review team had the strong impression that there was a severe lack of information on the factual budgets of the respective faculties on university level. This deficit shall be solved in order to request support for UB in front of the government. An analysis, describing today's practices of funding, giving a detailed overview of the financial income of the faculties and institutes may give UB leadership the opportunity to give evidence of the underfinancing of UB compared to international standards.
- This listing of the overall university budget may in addition help to discuss issues of internal reallocation.

- Distribution procedures and practices will need to be changed by legislation, in order to allow for central coordination, strategic development of UB, to allow for innovation by putting incentives.
- The review team is well aware of the effort this will take on university level. The review team therefore strongly recommends that the UB Senate shall take its responsibilities as defined by legislation and university statute and be aware of its possibilities and duties.

All in all, the limited university budget especially in respect to research, is a major constraint to UB's development.

- The review team suggests that the ministry shall, as a first step, change the restrictive and inflexible financial regulations preventing the development desired by the university (e.g Tobacco Institute, Prilep). Aware and confident of the possibility to use its own income, the university shall be motivated to generate more income by transfer and cooperative projects, applied and research projects.
- The review team suggests in this context that UB shall develop a university-wide strategy for knowledge transfer into society, exploring administrative necessities and institutional policies. The university shall thereby use the experience with the planned establishment of a Science Park linked to UB.

Challenges in terms of teaching and learning

The signing of the Bologna Declaration by the Macedonian Minister in Berlin, September 2003 will have a remarkable impact on the development of higher education in the country. The review team was impressed by the overall awareness of the process. However, the review team also gained the impression that information on purpose and content of this process was not equally shared among the different groups of university members. As such a number of students had not yet heard of the Bologna Process.

- In addition, the review team felt that the Bologna Process was mostly discussed as a merely structural reform. The review team therefore wishes to emphasise the “new” spirit and culture of the European Area of Higher Education that is of major importance for a successful implementation. All universities throughout Europe are confronted with a new paradigm of teaching and learning. The shared objectives of the process – academic quality, employability and mobility – are the guiding principles. Tools, like the ECTS, a two- or three-tier structure, the Diploma Supplement, are not merely structural changes. They mean a profound change of mentality, being all in all learner-oriented, target- and objective-oriented and more output- than input-oriented.
- The review team suggests to UB to share their experience and ideas of concepts with international partners. UB shall actively participate in European conferences, projects and discussions. UB, in turn, may consider to invite an international audience by hosting international conferences. Financial support should be found through public (national as well as European) as well as private means (e.g. the tourist industry).
- UB will need a strategy for the broadest participation of all stakeholder-groups in this process. UB shall pay considerable attention to the involvement of students.

The review team recognized a general lack of information and transparency on the objectives of study programmes. These will need a thorough consideration and reflection, last but not least in the emerging European Higher Education Area.

- The review team therefore suggests a constructive dialogue on the content and learning outcomes of study programmes between academic staff and students as well as external stakeholders.

Finally, the review team has identified two issues where the university will have to take firm actions: (1) in some cases exceptional failure rates; (2) misconduct regarding student rights and objective evaluation of student performance.

- The review team stresses the fact that these problems if not solved, will prevent the effective integration and membership of UB in the community of European universities.
- UB shall start a process of discussion with the clear and unmistakable objective to solve this problem.
- The review team suggests that the result of this process shall be fixed in UB's mission and mission statement.
- In order to solve the problem of misconduct regarding student performance, UB may consider the introduction of a "four-eye-principle", of a student ombuds institution or a similar instrument in examination procedures as a rule.

Constraints and challenges in terms of organisation

UB's trilocation certainly is a specific challenge and difficulty. However, it must not necessarily be considered as a constraint. UB's presence in three naturally and culturally fascinating locations (Bitola, Ohrid, Prilep) may serve as an additional asset in the national and international competition. The recruitment of students and thus the area of interest in UB's activities is significantly broadened. Instead of being a merely local university, UB may profit from the full support of a number of municipalities in a wider region.

- First and foremost, the success of trilocation does undoubtedly depend on the **awareness of a corporate identity** of the "St. Kliment Ohridski" University of Bitola. UB will need to take joint initiatives to develop and strengthen this corporate identity and identification.
- The review team recommends that the university shall increase the awareness of competences across its three locations as well as stimulate and support collaborations in any fields of activity, especially in teaching and research, but also in marketing administration etc. Cooperation and exchange in all levels between the three locations have to be enforced.

Of high importance are the question of the internal organisation and structure, decision-making processes and procedures. The review team perceived a number of severe problems that urgently need to be solved:

- The review team perceived unclear decision-making structures on university level and as a general rule problems in decision-making:
 - the Senate as a rule takes decisions on the basis of consensus; this might be a result of avoiding problems;
 - the Senate sees its primary goal in formulating and deciding upon regulatory documents and statutes of the university;

- furthermore, the Rector is to realize the conclusions of the Senate – the Rector fulfils thus the role of “the manager” of the operative business of the Senate;
 - the Senate does not follow the intention to change the structure of the faculties;
 - the Senate’s communication with the Ministry concerning the university’s/faculties’ budgets are merely seen as adding up sums, the Senate does neither endeavour negotiations with the Ministry nor internal redistributions of funds
- There is a considerable lack of transparency in the decision-making process on the university level: The Senate as the supreme decision-making body gets only those issues on its agenda that had been discussed and approved by the Rector’s Administration/Board, i.e., for example, that minorities have no possibility to bring forward issues not accepted by the Rector’s Board. The minority could easily be the Rector herself or the representative of the students.
 - Problems in terms of distribution of power (The review team analysed a circular situation: the Rector is supreme to the university staff, i.e. professorial members in the Senate; however, the President of the Senate, who is a professor of the university, is supreme to the Rector). The challenge is to clarify the rights and duties of both Rector and Senate respectively, avoiding overlaps.
 - **Autonomy and strong status of faculties (staff and students mainly identify themselves with their faculties; there is no clear vision and commitment in respect to the university as a whole)**
 - Intransparency (e.g. data on the faculties’ budgets does not give clear evidence of tuition fees per faculty. In addition, the IEP review team’s preliminary visit was used by the Rector’s office to provide a first central overview.)
 - Unclear perception of tasks of members in decision-making bodies
 - Half-hearted implementation of legislation; not using the full scope of power, e.g. on the Rectorate’s level

Universities throughout Europe strive for more autonomy (in decision-making, financing, profile-building, staff etc.). In return, the universities need to be accountable with regard to their stakeholders, society, tax-payers, students, etc. As a consequence, a university needs within its structure some body who takes responsibility for the accountability of the university.

- UB will need to face this challenge, the solving of this challenging issue will decide upon UB’s future success in the national, European and global competition. The review team is fully aware of the scope of this observation. Nevertheless, the review team is also convinced that only an open debate and a joint effort of all parties involved will provide a successful solution.
- UB’s senior leadership shall try to find all possible support for this process, with the other Macedonian universities, universities in neighbouring countries in the region that are confronted with almost identical problems, with the government, external stakeholders, international partners, and, foremost, all members of the “St. Kliment Ohridski” University of Bitola, i.e. students, both academic and administrative staff.

The capacity for change

The mission

UB's primary goal is to become an active and full member of the European Area of Higher Education as described in the Bologna Declaration.

This is a significant challenge for the great majority of universities all throughout Europe. However, UB shall be aware that this is only one strategic line, prevalent at the moment. Independent of this specific stratagem, UB will need to implement organisational processes and procedures, that will enable the university to steer itself successfully in strategic and operational terms in any foreseen challenges.

At the moment, the UB does not have a formal mission statement. In addition, those who might be held responsible for starting a process of formulating long-term strategies on the basis of a university-wide mission statement have not yet taken the initiative. Policies, processes and procedures of defining the university's vision and mission have still to be developed and implemented.

There are some strategic documents (Statute of the University; Strategy 1999-2003) which, however, seem not to serve their purpose. Rather they were claimed as being not sufficiently precise, neither representative nor respected.

The self-evaluation report might be interpreted as a first step in the direction of discussing and formulating a developmental concept. Even though the aims and objectives fixed in this document are quite vague, a consensus on these objectives was approved during the various discussions with the university's leadership. They include the education and training of students to fit in the modern society actively; to perform scientific research work at international level; to train scientific staff for its own needs and for the needs of other environments and industry; to participate in civilization changes and enriching the culture in the country.

Without doubt, the Bologna Process in itself is an excellent challenge, with and by which UB can shape itself for the oncoming future. The successful participation of the whole university in this process as an instrument for Europeanisation/internationalisation is claimed to be the UB's major strategic goal at the moment. Especially the senior leadership level kept referring to the "Bologna Process" as the main motivation for realizing the idea of a university – nevertheless, the review team got the impression that UB's members – staff and students – did not really have a clear insight in the background, objectives and tools of the Bologna Process. Last but not least, the faculties decide autonomously about their adoption of the Bologna tools (ECTS, two-tier structure of study programmes etc.).

- The capacity for change, i.e. the university's capacity to improve its performance, is based on the formulation of goals and the university's ability to live up to these goals.
- UB shall clarify its role both in the Macedonian as well as in European Area of Higher Education.
- As stated before, UB must agree upon a clear mission statement that serves the purpose of strategic planning and the formulation of concrete action plans and policies including
 - a comprehensive description of the university's mission with regard to society;

- a comprehensive description of the university's long-term objectives, and means to reach these objectives – future of UB;
- key strategic parameters that allow for setting priorities in strategic and operational decision-making processes.

Based upon European ideals of fairness and quality, the mission statement will help to strengthen the University's position in the European Area of Higher Education.

Long- and mid-term strategies and operation of change

Long- and mid-term strategies that operationalise the mission statement shall include issues laid down in the Bologna Declaration as well as the further Agreements of European ministers as defined in Prague and Berlin. The democratic decision upon these strategies on University level will help to secure a wide-ranging support and commitment of the university members defined as staff and students.

UB will need to find adequate answers in its processes and procedures to the four core questions building the backbone of the IEP as well as a goal-oriented philosophy of managing a university:

- What is the institution trying to do? (mission)
- How is the institution trying to do it? (programme and implementation)
- How does the institution know it works? (quality assurance)
- How does the institution change in order to improve? (strategic planning)

The operation of change, embracing the operationalisation of those four questions, requires careful planning. As a planning and implementation process depending on the specific contents of the plans, the operation of change follows a particular sequence and can, for example, be described as a cyclical process: defining the objective – implementation – monitoring/safeguarding success. UB will need to develop concepts for its own operation of change. Action plans, strategic plans, staff development plans will be useful tools. However, UB shall work on this challenging and only recently discovered field with great care.

In order to steer the operation of change successfully, UB will need to further improve and enhance its strengths and try to remedy some of its weaknesses. In addition to the general comments and recommendations with respect to the organisation and decision-making processes as mentioned above, the review team wishes to highlight the following principles:

- UB shall try to further improve its capability of (self-)analysis. The SWOT-analysis certainly serve as an ice-breaker in the sense of being a first courageous attempt in the right direction. UB might find it useful to consult an external supportive (re)view in this respect (apart from the external evaluation the SWOT-methodology, its adequate implementation and outcome shall be the subject of consideration)
- Participation and involvement of external stakeholders in all strategic decisions might have the advantage of broadening the scope and variety of perspectives on all UB's activities. Thus strengthening the support and acceptance in society, in the region and the country.
- UB will need to identify “champions” for the various fields of activities. Each central decision should be assigned to a management position (“champion”) to monitor the implementation process in all areas of the university.
- UB will need to invest in staff development.

- UB will need to start a long-term process on changing mentalities and attitudes. The individual university members and commissions should not only fulfil their duties (as defined by bylaws), but should be proactive and creative.

The institutional policies

What are the institutional policies, the processes and procedures set in place in order to reach the set objectives?

Taking, for example, the Bologna Process, UB will need to perceive the full scope of internationalisation:

- UB will need to realize that mere structural changes will not be sufficient.
- The implementation of the Bologna process needs to be operationalised.
- Internationalisation needs a clear strategy and clear policies:
 - At the moment, the exchange rate is very low, student mobility is very limited. UB will need to develop strategies and policies in order to increase mobility rates.
 - For example a policy for joint programmes, joint degrees etc. might be developed;
 - UB shall consider to define key international partnerships;
 - UB shall try to define objectives of its international partnerships, such as research, curricula development, exchange programmes, management etc.
- UB shall be aware that structural changes alone will not automatically have mobility impacts
- If mobility of incoming staff and students increases, UB will need to be prepared with adequate housing and infrastructure
- Especially a UB language policy will be needed to prepare for internationalisation, to become more attractive for students and staff from abroad. The review team thinks it worthwhile to consider, whether the partly replacement of teaching books in Macedonian language by foreign language text books and publications in international (research) journals would improve the state-of-the-art as well as the awareness of these publications.
- Courses in English language shall be offered.
- Strategies and policies will be needed in order to have an effective marketing for teaching and learning as well as for research at Bitola University
- Inter- and transnational co-operations and collaborations, will both be necessary and helpful to realize a European dimension; e.g. joint programmes might be a challenging first step; other examples are European curriculum development and mobility projects, international summer schools etc.
- UB will need to identify strategic international partners and partner regions and to set priorities

In the context of academic quality, UB will need to raise awareness to the fact that staff and students are the main resource for generating and developing quality:

- Thus, the recruitment of staff is of highest importance. The review team recommends to scrutinize the appointment regulations (standards and, most importantly, procedures) for their adequateness and validity with respect to this objective. Announcement, advertising, application procedures, selection and promotion procedures must serve the purpose of recruitment of the best staff (nationally as well as internationally).

- To the same extent, UB shall carefully consider the question of recruitment of students, nationally as well as internationally. Probably it will prove necessary to consider a university-wide recruitment policy, that may include policies for grants and tuition fees. Concerning the enrolment of students, UB shall proactively develop an enrolment policy that might serve as a model for the government, finally leading to a consideration of necessary changes in legislation.

Conclusion and recommendations

Conclusions and recommendations in terms of academic leadership

The academic leadership faces a great challenge with respect to the future of the “St. Kliment Ohridski” University in Bitola. There are a number of difficulties in internal organisation and structuring of decision-making processes that urgently need to be solved. The Rector will need as much support as possible in order to cope successfully for the university with this unique challenge. The Law on Higher Education as well as the University Statue, though rather overregulated, still offer a scope for concrete and immediate next steps.

- The review team recommends that the Senate shall take full responsibility for its obligations and rights as regulated in Law and Statute.
- In order to be able to fulfil her responsible duties, the Rector shall claim her right to fulfil those duties on a full-time position.
- In order to further improve her visibility, the Rector shall think of means for publication of activities and day-to-day information (e.g. world wide web; university news magazine).
- The review team would strongly support and recommend an amendment of legislation and regulation in a sense that a re-election of the Rector on a 4-year mandate shall be possible in order to guarantee a continuation in the leading coordination of the university.
- The Rector might profit from a “think tank” on university level; the Self-evaluation committee as a responsible body of the Senate shall work in this direction.
- The review team met highly motivated, committed and sincere students: UB shall use their motivation and their potentials effectively in all university-relevant activities.

Following the objective of (1) integrating the various faculties and institutes into one university and (2) enhancing the individual commitment for the university as a whole, some supportive policies and initiatives can be identified that UB has already taken. The review team would like to encourage the academic leadership to further support these initiatives::

- Installing commissions for quality assurance on faculty as well as university level
- Using the evaluation procedures required by the law in order to enhance transparency as well as the communication between the faculties
- Cooperation with the Ministry of Higher Education
- Cooperation with the local industry
- Cooperation in international projects (e.g. TEMPUS projects)
- Implementation of Bologna tools (e.g. ECTS)
- Participation in national quality bodies (e.g. Evaluation Agency, Accreditation Board).

Conclusions and recommendations in terms of strategic management and capacity for change

During the discussion, some of the university representatives formulated their personal ideas of future necessities as well as possible or reasonable ways to be successful. Those individual ideas must be made transparent as well as jointly discussed.

There is a considerable lack of transparency in the decision-making process on the university level: As mentioned before, the Senate as the supreme decision-making body gets only those issues on its agenda that had been discussed and approved by the Rector's Administration/Board, i.e., for example, that minorities have no possibility to bring forward issues not accepted by the Rector's Board.

Universities in Europe strive for more autonomy (in decision-making, financing, profile-building, staff etc.). In return, the universities need to be accountable with regard to their stakeholders, society, tax-payers, students, etc. As consequence, a university needs to appreciate the Rectors role as responsible for the accountability of the university.

Several of the key activities of the University of Bitola and its members would *benefit*, according to our experience, from the realization of the idea of an integrated university. This can be seen with respect to:

- Participation in international (research and teaching/learning/mobility) projects; UB has taken some first steps in that direction with a number of TEMPUS projects. Since there are many more possibilities for transnational funding of initiatives, UB shall take this chance. The international office in the Rector's administration might give support in strategically as well as systematically exploring means of financial support and proactively advising all university members interested in this issue. In international collaboration the contracting partner is recognized as the university.
- Interdisciplinarity and the discovery of new subject areas; the example of the interdisciplinary study programme "Public Administration" at UB has proved highly successful. In this joint initiative, members of the faculties of UB found a way to strengthen the central coordination of the university: tuition fees are used for university-wide projects that serve the university community. UB shall support such creative approaches that allow for and strengthen the collaboration across faculties.
- Development of the region; the projected Science Park in Bitola, Lake Ohrid and the Institute of Hydrobiology in Ohrid are examples of good practice in collaboration with external partners. They show the great interest society, and the region take in the expertise and potentials of UB. They strengthen the acceptance of the university in society and the region.
- Competitiveness within a national and international system of higher education. Only the "St. Kliment Ohridski" University of Bitola will be in the condition to brand a name, i.e. a corporate identity, in national and international competitions for best staff and students, for research and teaching and learning projects, and financial means.
- Recognition of the university as a corporate identity.
- Achieving a critical mass with respect to teaching, research and administration;
- Substantiality with respect to funding and policy issues (e.g. legislation);
- Synergy effects (better coordination of study and research programmes);
- Improvement of necessary internal communication.

The review team saw the faculties, departments, institutes, and, last but not least, the individual members of this university, i.e. staff and students, highly motivated to manage the operation of change successfully.

Such processes of change need to develop gradually and will need the full support and commitment of all university members. The individual member of the University will need to see themselves as owners of the process. This process of change means a great challenge and a unique chance in full accordance with the development throughout Europe.

In Berlin, 18/19 September 2003, the European Ministers of higher education stated: “Ministers recognise that membership of the Bologna Process implies substantial change and reform for all signatory countries. They agree to support the new signatory countries in those changes and reforms, incorporating them within the mutual discussions and assistance, which the Bologna Process involves.”

- The review team encourages UB to refer to this self-committing statement of European ministers.
- UB shall use European partnerships, both existing ones as well as new ones to be established, in order to exchange experiences in the process of constructing a European Area of Higher Education.
- UB shall strategically explore means and possibilities of a financial support for the university in this process.

As stated above, the UB senior leadership at the moment follows actively the objective of becoming a member in the European Area of Higher Education (Bologna Process). This objective requires a major effort of all members of the university: concepts of learning and teaching need to be discussed (in an international context), processes and procedures need to be developed and implemented. Especially the governing bodies of the university need to be fully committed.

Apart from this strategic aim, however, other goals need to be identified and expressed in mid- and long-term strategies which in themselves need an operationalisation.

- The enthusiasm and motivation shown by the self evaluation team could be used in this context and terms of reference for the future activity in the group should be formulated.

Conclusions and recommendations in terms of quality management

“How does the institution know it works?” is one of the core questions of the IEP: This question asks for the quality assessment and assurance systems implemented within the university.

Starting from 2001, efforts have been taken to set up a national Quality Assurance system, which comprises several phases:

- (1) self-evaluation of faculties (institutional self-evaluation);
- (2) external evaluation (institutional evaluation);
- (3) accreditation (of study programmes).

The University has started to implement a system of quality assurance. Self evaluation commissions were installed on University as well as faculty level. In 2002, all faculties run a self-evaluation of their activities. Those analyses formed the background for this EUA Institutional Review.

Quality and quality assurance is an emerging issue in the discussions at UB. The self-evaluation on faculty level will be run annually; the external evaluation every five years. Not surprisingly, the process of implementation seems to be quite difficult:

- The structure of the quality assurance system is in accordance with legislation; however, there seems to be a severe gap between quality management (which is good) and quality culture (which still needs to be developed).
- Student participation not only in decision-making bodies but also in the quality management is a formal requirement. A standardised questionnaire has been introduced university-wide. However, students of all faculties reported that there were diversified rather than standardised attempts to evaluate the teachers' performances. The review team noticed that the implementation of a university-wide system of student feed-back (questionnaires) had been initiated. Attention should be paid to the importance of making principles and results transparent in order to make the evaluation procedure meaningful.
- The results of the teachers' evaluation are in some faculties (e.g. Faculty of Economy) followed by the announcement of negative sanctions. Maybe the possibilities for positive feed-back in form of promotion or salary would be of even higher importance.

Still, there are a number of concerns which the review team formulated as follows:

- Can the university leadership level assure the information flow from faculty level to university level?
- How does the university leadership achieve the necessary transparency in financial matters (budgeting of faculties; tuition fees charged in the respective faculty etc.)?
- How does the university leadership get knowledge of the faculties' performances (in enrolment, in teaching, in research)?
- How does the university leadership use the results of the evaluations on the faculty level in order to improve the decision-making processes?

The review team was impressed by seeing that staff and students at UB are remarkably aware of the important issue of quality and quality assurance. Still, in accordance with the EUA's Institutional Evaluation Programme methodology, the integral inner connection between (1) setting objectives, (2) finding ways to reach these objectives and (3) the evaluation of this process might be improved. Quality assurance is more than data gathering; quality assurance and assessment resp. always have strategic implications.

- The review team therefore suggests that the Senate supports the full scope of (strategic) competences of the Evaluation Commission as regulated by the University Statute (article 109: "The Evaluation Commission at the University elaborates an evaluation report giving estimation of the condition as well as suggestions for overcoming the negative tendencies in realization of educational and scientific process, and submits it to the University Senate at least once a year.").

Envoi

As the review team had also mentioned in front of the Minister of Education, we found the whole process leading to this institutional evaluation had been governed by a high degree of enthusiasm giving an excellent background for further development. During the whole evaluation process, the review team felt fully supported by all members of UB.

UB can decide to take advantage of an immediate follow up offered by the EUA as well as an EUA follow-up evaluation a couple of years after the initial evaluation. Thus, there are possibilities for further collaboration with the EUA.

We hope that some of our comments may be of use in this process, and wish the “St. Kliment Ohridski” University of Bitola the best success in this process.