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FROM EDUCATIONAL TOWARD RESEARCH UNIVERSITY – MONTENEGRO CASE STUDY

Abstract: One of the main roles of the universities is to educate researchers capable to deliver innovations for the benefit of the economy of the country. Universities which are focused mainly, or only on education cannot fulfill this mission. Strategic approach for building the research capacities at the University of Montenegro will be presented.

INTRODUCTION

Higher education is considered to be the main driver of the economic growth, individual and social prosperity. In circumstances of fast advancing, and taking into consideration that Bologna process gave European Higher Education a different role at the global scene, one question arises: how higher education can respond to the increased pressure for the improvement of efficiency and quality.

As it is the case with many other European countries, Bologna declaration also in Montenegro had a great influence on evaluation of the quality of the education process, standardization of procedures for recognition of acquired education, beginning of the internationalization, as well as on harmonization of curricula at higher education level within the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

Aware of the fact that a good strategic approach to higher education and research development enables progress of the academic community, Montenegro, slowly, adopts the principle of higher education internationalization, external evaluation aiming to define future directions in development, as well as quality assurance in education and research at all levels. During this dynamic process a set of questions arouses, where role of the state policy towards meeting the demands at the European level is one of the most important ones. As it is the case in South-East Europe, especially in Western Balkans, higher education in Montenegro also faces multiple challenges in combining extensive and deep institutional reforms with the new approach regarding quality assurance in education and research.

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Higher education in Montenegro deals with another great challenge: how to avoid being labelled as a „teaching” higher education institution, and how to improve research conditions and results. Regarding this, some steps are taken through the use of European funds, especially FP 7 and IPA funds.

Regarding research, harmonization of national and international strategy for development of scientific and research activities with the context of the Lisbon strategy is very important in higher education, where focus is on the maximum use of research results, effective management of intellectual property, but also on the harmonization with the activities within the main European initiatives. Answers to some of these questions could be found in the University of Montenegro Strategic Research Plan (2008-2016).

RESEARCH AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MONTENEGRO, CURRENT STATE AND PROBLEMS

You could discuss about higher education outside the research context. University of Montenegro shares the position with other science and research institutions due to the fact that research is not highly positioned at the scale of national priorities. In numbers, this means less than 0,5% for science and research activities allocated from the gross domestic product.

There is no specific fund for research at the University. Budget funds are dominantly allocated to the education process servicing. Additional incomes from scholarships or development projects with region are, in some part, used for the improvement of the teaching and research process.

Nevertheless, the University has recognized the need for stimulation of research. The Fund for Academic Staff Support is established in 2006, which financially supports participation in conferences, i. e. short-term or medium-term study visits. Some of the financial means are allocated to academic staff as stimulation for publishing research results in Science Citation Index and Arts and Humanity Citation Index journals.

The University also finances publishing activities. Editorial Board of the Senate proposes the annual plan for publishing activities.

In order to approach to the strategic planning of research activities, for the first time in its history, the University went through the process of external evaluation of research capacities (EVOLUNIMONT FP 7 REGPOT-2-2008 project) that lasted several months. The objective of external evaluation was to overview research conditions at the University, and results would be used as a basis for strategic planning of further activities. Some of the considerable weaknesses in research were defined during this process:

- The University has a dominant teaching character, i. e. teaching is dominant in relation to research,
- Low criteria in student selection due to the necessity to service real financial needs through scholarship incomes,

- Insufficiently balanced quality of research results and infrastructure between certain university units and scientific areas,
- No significant synergy between university units and related scientific areas,
- Insufficiently available and developed library service which should be a basic precondition for a qualitative research,
- Low number of publications per researchers, and dominantly, publications with low impact factor,
- No adequate funds for financing of research activities,
- Low number of PhD students (1-2 % of the total student population),
- Insufficient participation of research groups from the University in international projects.

On the other hand, it can be said that the University still encompasses a wide scope of scientific areas, and that it is referent in certain areas (regarding equipment and researchers).

As a result of the strategic planning process, research plan is defined for the period of the next three years, addressing issues such are: University mission and vision regarding research; strategic research priorities in the following period; strategic objectives and measures for their accomplishment; roles of administration, information and library system, human and financial resources in achieving goals; quality assurance in research; activity plan for the implementation of measures for achieving goals. Strategic Research Plan of the University is adopted by the Managing Board as an obligatory document at the University level.

OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH DEVELOPMENT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MONTENEGRO

Within the existing circumstances, the University of Montenegro puts an effort to connect the existing qualitative research capacities with the determination to establish „research culture” and improve research results.

Five strategic objectives are defined with the Strategic Research Plan, and within them a set of measures that could be defined as short-term and medium-term that supports long-term vision of the University.

Through determined basic values to strive to, which are: integrity, academic freedom, focuses on research, team work, cooperation, and above all, liability and quality based awarding, the University of Montenegro shall create a long-term vision with the aim to:

- Attract creative and talented minds by creating environment which would appraise and stimulate creative and team work, openness, encourage competitiveness, promote transfer of ideas, knowledge and technologies, and support implementation of results in different conditions,
- Increase its own significance and visibility, participation in international research projects, cooperation with industry, as well as participation in innovative projects that are of importance to socio-economic development of Montenegro and region,

– Increase its own ability to alter and adapt to the changes imposed by wider community, through definition of mechanisms for strategic planning and management of research projects, providing administrative support to researchers, planning and implementation of the communication plan.

Strengthening of the role of research is a long-term priority of the University. In order to strengthen scientific basis, it is necessary to emphasise five long-term strategic objectives:

Increase productivity and efficiency of human potential and research through:

- Increased flexibility of the system, more efficient and significant financing,
- Long-term plans for human potential development, which will be mapped according to the basis of future demands for researchers in all areas,
- Consideration of future sources of financing.

Reform of the system for financing the social competitive and liability strategy through:

- Increase of public investment in research with a clearly defined mechanisms for competitive research financing.

Development of scientific and research institutions/university units, interdisciplinary approach to research and integration of the education process of research through:

- Planned consolidation of units and integration of research and advanced forms of education,
- Defining the right position of the research institutes and more efficient integration of education processes.

Internationalization of research through:

- Frequent and sustainable international cooperation with the European universities,
- Motivation to cooperate with the European universities.

Strengthening of public-private relations in research through:

- Establishing University spin-offs,
- Forming a legal framework and institutional policy for stimulation of entrepreneurship.

MEASURES FOR REALIZATION OF DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES

Strategic objective	Short-term measures
1. Improvement of research capacities and competences, infrastructure and administrative support to research	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Intensify employment and development of „human capital” through the increased number of active researchers which will reach 85% for the next 3-5 years 2. Establish an operative centre for services support to research 3. Enable adequate environment and equipment for service support to research 4. Stimulate productivity of researchers and international connections 5. Reorganize library system and increase its efficiency
2. Development of nationally and internationally recognized research programmes, with the aim to improve research reputation of the University	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Define research priorities and programmes, and provide adequate internal evaluations of proposed programmes 2. Intensify implementation of research in the education process, strengthen internship schemes 3. Provide conditions for academic promotion based on the quality of results 4. Establish research WEB portal for the support and promotion of research 5. Promote research as a national priority competitive at the international level
3. Increase of creativity and innovativeness in providing external research funds	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establish a balanced level of participation in international research projects which will increase research activities, financing and mobility 2. Establish connections with the appropriate cooperation schemes in order to learn about the possibilities of application 3. Increase bilateral financing
4. Strengthening of cooperation with other national and international institutions, industry and government agencies	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establish interdisciplinary research centres for fundamental, and above all applied research with larger participation of PhD students 2. Establish joint master or PhD programmes with other universities 3. Join the international initiatives that define conditions of mutual access to large-scale equipment 4. Increase mobility 5. Establish Alumni research club at the national and international level
5. Enhancement of research results, evaluation conditions, as well as the liability in research activities and projects	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conduct a continuous monitoring of research activities 2. Establish a clear monitoring of research results, provide statistics in research activities through the establishment of extensive data basis of all parameters regarding research 3. Define clear conditions for evaluation and promotion of research results 4. Introduce an obligation of making annual research plans at the level of university units

CONCLUSION

Vision of the University regarding research shall be used as a framework for directions in research development within the period 2010-2013, and it will be embedded in each decision in each research aspect aiming to establish a qualitative sustainable development of research areas. Vision shall be a basis for all our future decisions and activities. University has to make an effort to:

1. Attract creative and talented minds by creating environment which would appraise and stimulate creative and team work, openness, encourage competitiveness, promote transfer of ideas, knowledge and technologies, and support implementation of results in different conditions

2. Increase its own significance and visibility thus contributing to the intention to make Montenegro a knowledge-based society, participation in international research projects, cooperation with industry, as well as participation in innovative projects that are of importance to socio-economic development of Montenegro and region

3. Increase its own ability to alter and adapt to the changes put upon by wider community, through definition of mechanisms for strategic planning and management of research projects, providing administrative support to researchers, planning and implementation of the communication plan.