



Special Edition :

Education Reform and Its Political Repercussions

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All the countries of the "western Balkans" suffer from a dilemma of simultaneity: they have to overcome the disastrous effects of the four Balkan wars of the 1990s, tackle the legacy of forty years of communist rule, and on top of that jump directly into the age of globalisation. For Serbia, this includes ten critical years of international isolation during which Europe transformed profoundly. For Bosnia, it includes dividing an entire society in all its spheres into three parts, thus causing a need to start actually from scratch after Dayton.

This is also true for the area of education. ZEI recently published "country profiles" documenting the state of affairs in the schools of each country of the region, concentrating specifically on the European dimension of teaching in secondary schools. The result is hardly encouraging: almost no teaching material available on that topic, teachers without any training on "Europe" in the widest sense, curricula reforms in an early stage and without a European vision, teaching methods still "top down" without much interaction with the pupils. Just some pilot projects in Romania and Bulgaria, sponsored by TEMPUS, give rise to some optimism in the long run. However, both countries are ten years ahead.

These are the schools where future European citizens are educated. Education is politics. What we sow today, we harvest tomorrow. Assisting in educating "European minded" young people all over the

region has therefore become a primary task of our Center. However, in some respects, this resembles a "Sisyphean" task. Resources for the transformation process are scarce in the region. Education is hardly seen as a priority. Building new highways is more attractive than investing in top research journals or paying decent salaries for university personnel. The state of the education system is therefore alarming: professors, often even without an M.A., having to assume several other jobs besides teaching to compensate for the minimum salaries they get; outdated libraries, which still contain not more than what was acquired in the "old" Yugoslavia; laboratories without the most basic instruments and material; deficient research given the lack of incentives; a brain drain, which deprives the countries of the most bright and talented; and a virtually non-existent scientific regional cooperation, which just recently began to unfold due to the determined efforts of the International Organizations.

Particularly in the framework of the first working table of the Stability Pact the international community has assumed its responsibility to assist in the education reform, concentrating on such pivotal tasks as reviewing and rewriting the history books, which according to a UNESCO report of 1999 still contain what became the seeds of ethnic nationalism ten years previously. One should not forget that institutions like the Serbian Academy of Sciences were not simply instrumentalised by their regimes but actively encouraged and legitimised

the policies of their political leadership. Still, even disciplines like archaeology are used to justify historic claims on territory. Thus, one has to be self-critical in order to evaluate properly what really promotes *sustainable* change. Especially, one should be guided by a realistic picture about the state of reform today. Otherwise, we simply build Potemkin villages.

This SOE-Monitor tries to shed some light on a few facets of the education system in the region. It will mainly concentrate on the judicial faculties in the countries of former Yugoslavia (Sebastian von Münchow) and on the university reform process in Albania (Pandeli Pani) and finish with some remarks from the donor side (Karen Roberts). All authors have extensive experience in the field. We decided to give them more space than usual. The articles deserve it. What they portray goes far beyond simply analysing education systems. It touches upon the preparedness of whole societies to join the European mainstream.

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Higher Legal Education in the Successor States and Territories of Former Yugoslavia. An Obstacle to the Promotion of Rule of Law in the Western Balkans

1. Introduction

The progress of judicial reforms in most of the successor states and territories of former Yugoslavia is reported of to be of slow and difficult character.¹ Studies criticise the lack of independent judges in Bosnia, unskilled public prosecutors in Kosovo or entire lawless areas within Macedonia. The essence of the rule of law is more or less evident. Scholars, international advisors and mission staff members classify this absence as a serious obstacle for the creation of a sustainable peace in the "Western Balkans".

Often the stagnation of the legal transformation process is explained with ethnic gaps, clan structures or an incoherent international policy for the region. Meanwhile, some voices underline that native legal professionals often lack the necessary background to apply local law. However, a closer look into the higher legal education in former Yugoslav law schools is rare. This paper shall demonstrate that the current status of legal education may hamper young citizens to become acquainted with the rule of law. It alleges that regional legal education will hardly provide societies with a judicial elite, which will contribute to a democratic society based on rule of law. On the contrary: A lot of law schools direct graduates to corruption, abuse of power, misconduct in office, incompetence and ethnic discrimination.

The article concentrates on the conditions observed in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo between 1998 and 2002. It also includes that Croatia, Serbia, Macedonia and Montenegro evince similar findings and thus match the conditions found in Kosovo and Bosnia.

2. The Bologna Declaration for a "Europe of Knowledge" vs. the former scheme of legal education

International agencies dealing with higher education reform base their efforts on the Bologna Declaration from 1999. This Declaration calls for a partnership between the academic world and a society on the basis of tolerance and active civic engagement. With a view on Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, Bologna also seeks to overcome academic isolation. To implement these rather am-

bitious goals, the Declaration suggests a few tools. It generally calls for an increase in the level of quality and effectiveness of higher education. In order to achieve comparable degrees and methods, universities offer two cycles: A Bachelor degree shall be obtained after three years of studies. Successful post-graduate students will be rewarded with a Masters degree after an additional two years. Another concrete plea can be seen in the desired proportion between obligatory and optional courses (40 - 60 per cent).

The former higher legal education scheme of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia foresaw regular studies composed of four academic years. Graduates were rewarded with the title of a "Jurist". It allowed access to all sorts of legal professions. In almost all places this scheme is still in place. However, students need to study more than seven years to finish their university education. Those who intend to continue specialised research may subscribe for a post-graduate cycle which rewards graduates with the title of a "Master of Sciences". Finally, the "Doctor" title is the highest achievable academic degree. Often, this degree is obtained by candidates at the age of around 50. Most current students are part of the four-year program. Approximately 40 graduates leave law schools per year. This number has to be seen in relation with around 400 students who start their studies every October. Unfortunately, graduates often tend to emigrate from their countries of origin. It is in any case questionable if the remaining human resources are prepared to contribute to their local judiciary.

3. „On the ground“: students, teachers and faculty administration

Access to all kinds of education related services are provided mostly according to financial contribution. For instance, yearly tuition fees may rise up to 400 EURO. This amount is certainly out of proportion considering the low average income. In some cases, students seeking to enrol in the first year, the amount may be even higher due to its career guiding character. Sometimes, young aspirants fail to pass dubious entry tests (e.g. "On what date did Italy sign its capitulation in the Second World War"?).

Then, financial transactions may help to bypass bad results. The post-graduate cycle is another field of mysterious financial management. Enquired to provide bookkeeping, the administration in Pristina was unable to prove the whereabouts of countless fees students were asked to pay for tests, tuition and thesis reviews. Mysterious additional charges may even be required for attending special courses. Disturbing enough, this may also take place if foreign guest lecturers are financed from international budgets as it was recently reported from Serbia.

The average student concentrates on a minimum to pass exams. Autonomous learning such as Internet research, foreign languages, etc. are not popular. When being interviewed why motivation is low, students tend to give the expected answers commonly known in the region: lack of future job opportunities or political insecurity. In parallel, it seems that the true roots of frustration and lethargy lies deeper than a first glance analysis may explain. In accordance with regional customs teachers are worshipped on official events. They enjoy the appreciation for academic title-holders, which can be often observed in South-Eastern Europe.



S. von Münchow (centre) with his former colleagues of the Kosovo Law Centre

However, these rituals can only pretend a unity between students and professors. Behind the curtains, complaints are being made that faculty teachers and administrators could be blamed for the general level of frustration and desire for migration. Young voices request deep changes to ensure that motivation for serious law studies returns to the faculties. Hence, it is worthwhile to glimpse at local teaching style, curricula, syllabi, faculty management and the student-

teacher relationship.

Firstly, the teaching style often hardly allows anticipating legal background. Frequently, teachers read from books. Sometimes they prefer the works they have published. The lecture may occur in endless monologues without discussion or time for questions and answers. Students do not learn to approach legal problems through common judicial techniques.

Secondly, as far as content is concerned, courses often refer to old Yugoslav law. It can still be observed that programs are overloaded with historical subjects such as History of State, History of Constitution, History of Law, etc. Some curricula contain subjects unrelated to the discipline of law. At least most faculties gave up on former socialist courses like national defence or civic education. Introducing new content, Bologna requires changing "from supply to demand". It urges higher education institutions to offer a content, which satisfies current scientific need rather than what teachers wish to offer. Even though introducing new courses such as E-commerce, negotiation techniques, media law, environmental law, etc. challenges European law schools as well, they simply cannot be implemented in most law schools in Bosnia, Serbia, Macedonia or Kosovo. Transformation is also hard in the international law field. Although many international covenants were signed by the Yugoslav successor states and lots of laws were re-drafted under international influence since the 1990's, most syllabi do not reflect these changes. This is especially crucial for Human Rights and Humanitarian Law, as well as European Law or International Business Law. In consequence, what can be spotted with stressed legal local practitioners is caused by the faculties.

A look into academic research does not paint a more optimistic picture. Although works are impressing by volume, they often lack neutral research quality. Ph.D. works, for instance, reflect the political mainstream. While Albanian Kosovar researchers write on subjects such as self-determination, their Serbian mates focus on the non-alteration of internationally recognised borders.

Thirdly, the current administration of faculties does not provide the needed student-oriented service. When entering faculty buildings after 15:00 hours, it can be noticed that teachers are gone, libraries are closed, and computer rooms are locked. In addi-

tion, outside factors such as extreme heat or cold weather seem to be welcome in order to shut down the operations completely. Although international agencies offer help to overcome these obstacles, this is sometimes rejected. A striking example can be seen in a donated generator for the Prishtina law faculty. Some weeks after its installation, it remained unused, because there was no petrol tank and petrol. It would have supplied the buildings with heat and light until 18.00 hours.

Besides these rather visible obstacles, students face a general climate of disrespect by their teachers. Verbal comments such as calling undergraduates "cattle" do not head to penal or disciplinary consequences. Reactions in form of civil unrest are also uncommon. Student union representatives do not formulate a strategy to improve communication. They provide regular comments such as "This is the Balkans - there is nothing we can do!" or "It is not in our tradition to question leadership".



This helpless attitude certainly does not foster the implementation of sustainable reforms. Sometimes, students even recommend keeping a low profile while at the faculty. They tend to hope that once the educational part is completed, forthcoming positions will allow a similar approach to manifest unlimited power. They know that some professors managed to enroll their children in western universities. This raises the level of frustration on the one hand. On the other hand, they admit a certain understanding for those teachers by stating that they would not act differently if they would have the same options. This serves to display the obvious threat to sustainable development. It seems that centuries of Balkan cycles of oppression and revenge are hardly to be broken up. Plus, the bad features of socialist heritage of the past four decades are deeply rooted in the social sciences

sector. The prior privileges of social reputation, tolerated low work ethics, power to influence careers, etc. are today endangered. International efforts have to understand that maintaining privileges may lead to nothing than lip service when it comes to face necessary legal education reforms. Sometimes, an unrealistic local self-analysis worsens the simple understanding for basic transformation needs. It could even lead to open obstruction of cooperation with the academic world outside.

For instance, in most European countries student exchange programs are appreciated and supported by various programs. Recently, the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) was launched to make exchange of young talent as easy as possible. In some law faculties of former Yugoslavia exchange programs are perceived as a threat. Students who return to their home law schools may have obtained knowledge and impressions of effective and open-minded legal studies. They are the ones who potentially question local conditions. Hence, it was not surprising when Prishtina law teachers ordered returnees to provide certificates that the quality of courses in the Netherlands can rival with Kosovo's standards of lesson content!

Finally, another example is the will to cement former power structures. The former Yugoslav scheme did not envisage optional courses and thus contradicts one of Bologna's goals. In consequence, western Balkan law schools launched debates about where the programs could be shortened and what lectures should be classified as optional or obligatory. From an outside look, discussions are around scientific lines of argumentation. However, a closer look may dismantle the true motivation of resistance to draft new curricula. Individual teachers may have their hidden agenda to argue against optional courses and insist on keeping their lectures as obligatory. Losing lectures does not only lead to a loss of reputation and power; it also touches a sensitive question: Since courses are to be completed by passing exams, the question of reform is also combined with the efforts to introduce a new exam system.

4. The exam system

Exam-relevant content derives from the sources cited by professors during lectures. Often, teachers recommend their works to prepare for exams. In some cases students are

forced to purchase their books and submit them to the professor. He marks the book to prevent students from paying for only one manuscript and copying it for their classmates. Some authors started to publish former works of other writers in the new western Balkan languages ("Croatian", "Bosnian", or old Serbo-Croatian works are printed in Albanian language). Often they simply copy what an author wrote in another successor state. These violations of intellectual property are hardly to be detected due to the new borders. Only internationally financed translations may prove that content from the 1970s and 1980s ignores international legal trends. Hence, students are forced to study books, for example on European Law, which do not refer to Maastricht or Amsterdam because they date from the end of the 1980s.



Students of the Kosovo Law Faculty

All subjects need to be passed successfully to enrol in the next academic year. Around six oral „exam days“ are scheduled per year. They are indefinitely repeatable. Students need to pay varying admission fees for each try. Mostly, oral exams refer to pre-war legislation. Sometimes, they are rather unspecific and more of general character ("What is the difference between Public International Law and International Private Law?"). Again, exams do not prepare students to argue judicial cases involving methodology. Often, candidates have to refer to Roman Law principles to answer questions. Questions are usually formulated in accordance with the teacher's publication. In Kosovo, a candidate was once even asked to tell the number of chapters in the author's publication. It is unnecessary to question the pedagogic purpose of this testing system. The most striking character seems to be to de-link examining from applicable law, which again preconditions local legal staff that is under-equipped in case-solving.

Besides examination methods, rumours of certain amounts per subject, faculty and teacher spread around the region. It can be indeed noticed that some professors show a flexible attitude to arrange individual examinations to ensure discretion. However, the level of shame and complicity has so far prevented successful investigation against potential perpetrators. Additionally, cases of sexual abuse did not lead to criminal persecution because female students preferred to withdraw their complaints.

5. The International Community vs. Southeast European Law Faculties

In sum, most of the Law Faculties in the successor states and territories of former Yugoslavia are behind current requirements of effective, modern administration and innovative teaching and learning. Many concrete attempts to reform content, teaching style and exam methods were made ever since the middle of the 1990s. Whereas Slovenia's old ties with Austria could be quickly revitalized and led the country's academic institutions to easily rival with West European Universities, other law schools faced rather multilateral initiatives to overcome above-mentioned conditions. The most extreme form of international intervention experience was Pristina's law school when it was administered by the United Nations from 1999 to 2002. Between these extreme poles of Slovenia's quickly recovered education and Kosovo's situation, various forms of academic reconstruction programs took and take place for faculties in Bosnia, Croatia or Serbia. Due to the different political, social and economic situation initiatives do vary. They had to respect the sovereignty of the institutions and base on the voluntary cooperation with the faculty's leaderships.

Accepting with the power structures since the middle of 1992, the international community may ask itself whether attempts to reform the legal educational sector failed. Maybe it is too late seven years after the Dayton agreement to influence Bosnian law schools? Was it a wrong signal to tolerate two law schools along the former frontlines in a small city such as Mostar? It could have turned out to be more sustainable to build a new law school from scratch in Kosovo instead of all the international assistance based on good will and mutual understanding. This would have not only been covered by the mandate, it could have also been

tacitly supported by the student community. A new start would have allowed introducing young, moderate and open-minded law teachers. This option was chosen in the Macedonian city of Tetovo which witnessed ethnic violence only years ago. Strong rules and careful supervision by international donors allowed for a new beginning, which was widely accepted by students of both ethnic communities.

Debates on various options in the West suggest that it is up to the regional academic world to overcome obstacles. This line of argumentation refers to the immense outside support to finance re-building of infrastructure and homes. The danger of this view lies in overlooking the primary role legal education plays in fostering future development especially in the area of ensuring an investment friendly climate. If the legal education sector does not become a priority of international post conflict peace-building agendas, future investment and aid will continue to be endangered to disappear in dark channels due to an insufficient elite handling judicial control.

Hope rises where internal reform-willing circles constitute themselves and request more participation. This can be partly noticed in individual law schools in Croatia and Serbia. Mostly, this goes along with a slow improvement of living conditions and in a climate where ethnic segregation is completed. Areas of ethnic tension such as Kosovo, Bosnia or Macedonia tend to keep a resisting attitude to reforms. Internal reform forces are still weak. Due to the climate of tension and distrust, it is hard for those individuals to overcome isolation because propaganda blames critics to serve the interest of "the others". Hence, politicized rhetoric's goals are two-fold: They neutralize internal critical voices and signal international advisers that time is not ready to address the issue of reform due to extraordinary political conditions. Internationally driven transformation activities should thus be careful in evaluating the true motives why local decision-makers wish to keep the status quo. A student from Bosnia provides a dry explanation: "Formerly, we bribed a Serbian, Croat and Bosniak professor. Today we bribe three teachers of the same ethnic affiliation!"

6. Outlook

At this point in time, many law faculties tend to produce lawyers,

who basically learn to ignore written law and to create facts, which guarantee individual careers. They might graduate with dubious legal ethics guided by the example of a few ruling teaching staff circles. Thus, a sustainable judiciary based on rule of law can hardly emerge. Since a shift of international focus took effect and local moderates, who did not migrate, might not have the chance to position themselves, negative reports will persist to dominate reports on the progress in the Western Balkans. Hence, new international academic reconstruction initiatives are advised to carefully analyse the specific conditions of each law school. Some means might be suggested here to direct law faculties to the family of serious academic institutions:

- The Bologna model should be kept to provoke internal debates at regional law schools. It still serves as a tool to identify moderate and con-

servative forces.

- Young open-minded teaching talent and students deserve outside support. Contradicting the hierarchical structures, staff members of the international community should see that the power-holders rarely speak on behalf of the faculty, but rather try to defend their privileges. Hence, direct political support signals the representatives of a promising future generation that they are not left alone while fighting attempts of isolation and oppression by the current law school regimes.

- As mentioned above, it might not pay off if financial support is offered in case of unwillingness to internal reform. Power-holders might easily refuse aid when transparency and participation come along with modernisation projects. In this case, political pressure might be needed to assist international educational activi-

ties. It certainly depends on the concrete conditions how pressure shall be exercised.

- If local resistance seems to be irreversible, modern legal education should still be offered. Instead of pumping financial support in hopeless projects, resources should be used to support private law schools. Similar initiatives in the region proved that the youth saluted institutions, which set strict rules and prevent misconduct by self-proclaimed power-holders.

Dr. Sebastian von Münchow
Office of the Coordinator of the Stability Pact

¹ *The opinions expressed in this article are exclusively those of the author and do not represent those of any organisation.*

The Albanian System of Higher Education - Current Status and Perspectives

1. General Overview - Albania today

Although on the surface and for outsiders the Albanian society functions surprisingly normal, it is an open secret that many shady activities take place behind the facade and a widespread black and grey economy flourishes in parallel with the legal economic activities.¹ Even though Albania is the poorest country in Europe according to official calculations, there is a lot of unofficial money in circulation. First and foremost, a great deal of money enters the country through family members living and working abroad, mainly in Greece and Italy. Income from smuggling, trafficking and other types of organised crime contributes significantly to the underground economy.

However, the greatest problem in Albania today is corruption. Corruption is completely incorporated in the system, particularly within the public sector. Another major problem affecting Albanian society in general and of the higher education in particular is the so-called "brain drain". After 1990 many young and well-educated people began to travel abroad to seek their fortunes. Many Albanians applied for the Green Card Lottery in the USA, while Canada even advertised for people with higher

education. Most of them would like to work in Western Europe, but strict immigration laws limit the opportunity. Even families where the parents have good jobs often leave the country to seek a better future for their children. Young post-graduates who



Dr. Pandeli Pani (centre) on a conference in Tirana.

have spent some time as Master's or Ph.D. students abroad often remain there after completing their studies.

2. The situation at the universities

Currently, the Albanian system of higher education continues to be characterised by a monopoly of state institutions. There are eight state universities (three of them in Tirana), three institutions of higher education

(High Institute for Martial Arts, Art Academy and Nursing College) and one private university. In this sense, the state continues to control the academic system.

As a part of the public sector, the institutions of higher education are facing problems with which the rest of society is struggling. There are, for instance, power shortages during winter as well as during summer. Thus one cannot use any computers, photocopiers or other lab facilities. University libraries often contain obsolete book collections from the communist era. Public budgets have not considered the libraries a high priority and modern literature is limited to donated international material.

The budget on university education covers only ten per cent of the overall state budget for education. Approximately eighty per cent of the budget is for payroll. The remainder can be used for other purposes. The payroll budget is the only part managed by the colleges. There is normally one secretary responsible for disbursing salaries in cash to all staff every fourteen days - a serious indicator of the unreliability of the Albanian banking system.

The other funds are administered centrally. One must apply for mere office needs, e.g. pens, paper, chalk, cleaning equipment, a new chair or a new shelf. It is clear that such procedures are time consuming and require more personnel, thus increasing the bureaucracy.

Admission to universities: After the communist times, a university education is seen nowadays as a privilege, not a public good. The idea that education provides the means to achieve private benefits to individuals and families is widespread, whereas only a few still perceive it as a social benefit to the society as a whole. Even today, admission in universities is still based on the *numerus clausus* - a controlled quota system, which seems to be a factor for Albania having the lowest per capita percentage of university attendance in Europe. Only six per cent of all high school graduates receive a university education. Approximately 30,000 students are enrolled at institutions of higher education in Albania, thus only one per cent of the population.

During the communist era party authorities in the local government institutions maintained restricted admission (*numerus clausus*) for all fields of study. Presently, current applicants to an Albanian university must also pass the admission test. These tests are required for all majors. The competition consists of a written multiple choice test in two parts: one part drawn up by the Ministry of Education, containing questions related to the upper secondary school (high school) curriculum; the second part is drawn up by college representatives and concerns subjects related to the applicants' desired course of study. The participants who gain the maximum points are admitted. The cost for participation is approximately 15 • and a young applicant is allowed more than one attempt. Those who pass and attend university pay a small annual tuition fee (approximately 20 •).

Although the admission test is advertised as a tool for selecting the best qualified applicants and as a possibility for free access to the universities, the actual tests are not professionally prepared due to a lack of expertise and thus have not yet proven very effective. The inherent defects in the entrance examinations can be summarized as follows:

Firstly: The section pertaining to the upper secondary school curriculum seems unnecessary. The Ministry of

Education should ensure that these tests are organised for all students and that these require a higher standard. The use of such tests creates the impression that the Ministry of Education admits the disparities in high schools.

Secondly: The teachers have to evaluate the tests within such tight deadlines that it is impossible to perform properly. Furthermore this time-pressure causes far too many mistakes in the evaluation of the tests.

Thirdly: Another element inherited from the communist times is the legal privilege of the Prime Minister and the Minister of Education to grant entries to as many as fifty persons, bypassing the admission test. Interesting is the fact that these entries are offered to students who could not pass the admission test.

Fourthly: It is difficult to secure a place in popular branches of study such as law, economics, business administration or foreign languages. Applicants for less preferred study programmes must also fulfil a minimum point requirement in the competition, but even here the "gifts" in form of cash given to the professors may help to get more points or to bypass bad results. The offered amount of money varies depending on the career offered when graduating. This is not surprising because university salaries are usually low. A university teacher in Albania receives a salary of approximately 300 - 350 • per month - which is low compared to the average Albanian's standard of living.

Teaching methods and teachers: The major problem of the education system in Albania relates to the traditional teaching methods of rote learning and rigid state curricula, which stand in the way of innovation and initiative. The lack of modern teaching materials and acceptable physical frameworks plague educational institutions. Although some positive results have been achieved in revising existing and introducing new curricula at the universities, the curricula are still too old. The teaching methodology is a grave concern. It frequently consists of monologues of the lecturer who reads his notes or a book he has published. Lectures do not include lively discussions or enough time for questions. Even the seminars consist of students reciting some pieces of lectures by heart, rather than debating and providing arguments to support their opinion. It is not rare for a lecturer to re-

quire students to buy a book written by him - furthermore the lecturers often sell their own samples.

The greatest problem facing higher education in Albania today however is the insufficient training of the teaching staff, both professionally and pedagogically. Because of the low salaries and lack of basic working conditions, it is not attractive to be a university teacher. Around eighty per cent of the academic staff is under 25 and have only recently graduated. Around fifty per cent of the academic staff is under-qualified. Although after 1990, due to the country's opening up to the world, there have been increased opportunities for professor mobility, the level of professionalism remains low. After the fall of communism a new university hierarchy emerged, dominated by senior professors. These traditional



University of Tirana (photo: Gend Halili)

professors often resist change in the method of teaching. On the other hand, poorly paid professors are either leaving the country or abandoning their profession for better-paid and less prestigious jobs, e.g. as a local interpreter working for an international organisation, because a monthly salary of an interpreter is five or ten times higher than that of a university instructor. Other problematic areas are the lack of research as well as a lack of collegial training provided by experienced teachers to young, less experienced teachers.

After 1990 High Educational Institutes were upgraded to the university level. This policy of establishing new universities and study programs outside the capital has been implemented in order to increase higher education participation rates and to bring higher education opportunities geographically closer to students in various regions of Albania. The low academic qualification of the staff is still of great

concern. The percentage of teachers without a degree is: Vlora University 92 per cent, Elbasan University and Gjirokastra University 75 per cent, Shkodra University 64 per cent and Korça University 61 per cent.

Studies, students and the exam system: Most university degree programmes are four-year courses and are completed with what corresponds to a Bachelor's Degree. In Albania efforts have been made to introduce possibilities for further graduate education to the Master's or Ph.D. level. Although there are some post-graduate courses e.g. at the faculty of Economy, Law, Medicine or Philology in Tirana, they continue to experience a shortage of teachers who are qualified to conduct research. Most of the university teachers lack a Master's or a Ph.D. degree. Written work, group work and exercises are rare. Under these circumstances, system reform becomes much more difficult. Socially, many students are often driven to study because of familial expectation and not personal initiative. Consequently, there seems to be a lack of interest among many students, who thus focus on a minimum level of learning, just to pass the exams. For example, low participation is evident in the auditoriums; students appear frequently without even bringing books or taking notes with them. Independent learning such as Internet research or studying supplementary materials not sufficiently encouraged. This is related to the low motivation to study, but also to the fact that most of the students do not speak foreign languages.



Corridors of the University of Tirana
(photo: Gent Halili)

All the students need to pass their exams successfully so they can be enrolled for the next academic year. If a student fails the exam, he or she has the right to reattempt. Failing for the 3rd time results in dismissal. As a rule exams are written (not oral) and

for some majors they are presented in the form of multiple choice. On the one hand this method is used to prove that the professor is objective, but on the other hand this means that the students are not trained in oral or written argumentation or in analysing or giving account of complex problems.

3. International Cooperation

International cooperation, especially through the TEMPUS programme since 1992, offers a good opportunity for the establishment of academic links with European universities as well as for information and institutional modernisation. Furthermore, TEMPUS projects include experience exchange and training of teachers, both professionally and pedagogically, as well as training of administrators, for the reform on study programmes according to European standards and for restructuring of the physical facilities. With the assistance of foreign experts, Albania continues to strike for the reform of the academic process at the universities in compliance with the Declaration of Bologna.

In addition to the TEMPUS program, World Bank and SOROS Foundation have financed and supported the reform of Albanian universities. Several European universities have assisted various Albanian faculties. Another positive development is the cooperation between universities in Albania, Macedonia, Kosovo and Turkey, which is clearly visible inter alia in an agreement concerning mutual recognition of diplomas. The government and the donor community acknowledge that the education sector, especially the institutions of higher education, should play a decisive role in the development of Albania in the future. Of course the knowledge the graduates are empowered with will be decisive in their future work in the public and the private sector. But with the large number of government agencies and NGOs carrying out important reconstruction work in the higher education system of Albania, unfortunately, development assistance activity is less observable. This is closely related to the fact that coordination between all these different large and small organisations is practically non-existent. There is much duplication of work and dearly bought experience is lost due to the swift flow of short-term advisors.

4. Future perspectives

Albania needs a mid/long-term development strategy for high education based on a clear vision and definition

of needs in compliance with the Bologna Declaration.

One of the conditions the students should meet is their knowledge of foreign languages at least to that extent that they can read supplementary materials. Professors should prepare readers to enable the students to analyse different ideas and points of view.

Perhaps the universities in other cities would better be converted into high schools specialised in particular areas. It would be preferable for Albanian authorities not to support the idea of splitting the faculties into e.g. Faculty of History and Philology and Faculty of Foreign Languages. But the government could encourage the establishment of new specialised departments that would offer interdisciplinary studies.

The twinning between faculties through donor projects such as the ones from the World Bank or TEMPUS is very useful. Because of the lack of coordination between projects and donors it is best to have one cooperation partner who can provide and co-ordinate support in all areas: instructing the teachers in didactic methods, building the capacity of the management and administration, and preparing textbooks and other teaching materials. Through bids they could be able to find the best university in Western Europe suited for this purpose. This way seems more effective than the requirement of the TEMPUS programme that at least three different countries participate in an institutional project, two of which must be EU member states.

Despite institutional projects the TEMPUS program should offer more opportunities for long-term individual scholarships, because the greatest problem for the universities in Albania is the insufficient training of the teachers professionally and pedagogically. Scholarships should last at least six months, because short-term scholarships are considered more as tourism opportunities rather than possibilities for scientific qualification.

Despite difficulties of Albanian students due to language problems and Albania's problems with appropriate technical equipment and sufficient internet-access, the distance learning offered by Western universities via internet is an area that could successfully be targeted. This could support the efforts to provide more Albanians with the opportunity to continue their studies for the Master's

and Ph.D. degrees during the transition period. One good model could be the Southeast European Media College in Sofia that offers Master's studies for students from Eastern and South - Eastern Europe with financial assistance through the Stability Pact of South Eastern Europe. The students admitted to the programme have to be physically present at the University of Sofia only two weeks per

semester. Thus the students can cover their expenses themselves or through scholarships.

Summer Universities similar to the one organised in Prishtina by the Dutch foundation "Academic Training Association" would be of great assistance for the improvement of the education and academic level of Tirana University. Last but not least the refor-

mation of university libraries is indispensable.

Dr. Pandeli Pani
Editor, Albanian Section, SEE programs, Deutsche Welle

¹ The opinions expressed in this article are exclusively those of the author and do not represent those of any organisation.

Can Higher Education Cooperation Contribute to the Goals of the Stability Pact?

A Report on a Special Program by the German Academic Exchange Service



From early on the Stability Pact gave high importance to the role of education, culture and youth in promoting tolerance, ensuring ethnic coexistence and shaping modern democratic societies in South Eastern Europe (SEE). But need oriented and modern education opportunities are just as critical for the sustainable development of the newly established societies and their economies. Sustainable development requires qualified local experts and decision makers. Consequently, the modernisation of academic education is a crucial and long-term infrastructure investment.

Throughout the 1990s the DAAD was one of the few international actors in the field of higher education that maintained its scholarship programs in SEE. Drawing from this experience the DAAD strongly advocated the inclusion of higher education development in the objectives of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe and launched a special program for academic development and cooperation with SEE at the end of 1999. This was

possible thanks to the German Foreign Office, that has to date supported the DAAD's initiative with almost 11 Mio • from the German contribution to the Stability Pact.

The program's objectives include:

- quick and sustainable improvements of the quality of education and training at universities throughout SEE,
- academic qualification of young experts from the region with specifically targeted support measures,
- re-/establishment of teaching and research networks within the region and of academic cooperation with German partner institutions.

Today more than 40 academic networks look back on almost four years of intensive work in key subjects with particular relevance to the development of the region's infrastructure, such as engineering, information technology, agriculture and forestry, health, law, economics and European Studies. Coordinated by German universities, academic institutions from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro constitute the core group. Partners from Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Romania and Slovenia joined

various networks as well.

By involving several universities from the region in each of the projects, some 130 institutes, faculties or individual scientists and teachers share their know-how, jointly carry out intensive courses and summer schools, develop new curricula, teach modules and material, publish research results and make use of their German partners' input and facilities. To this aim in 2002 alone some 1,000 faculty and students from SEE visited their partners in neighbouring countries, German partner institutions paid almost 400 visits to their partners in SEE, and some 700 students and faculty came to Germany for short-term study or research stays.

In addition, the DAAD has established a regional scholarship program, which provides young people with the opportunity to obtain a university degree in neighbouring countries. Beyond the individual qualification the scholarship program strengthens well-established degree programs that were previously developed through German or EU funding, encourages regional mobility and prepares the ground for future academic cooperation.

The German Academic Exchange Service (Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst - DAAD) is one of the world's largest intermediary organisations supporting academic cooperation in education, science, culture and research world wide. With an annual budget of 265 Mio Euro (2002) the DAAD promotes a wide range of programs and projects open to all countries and academic subjects, such as the funding of individuals on all academic levels and supporting German Studies and German Language abroad. In recent years project related DAAD funding programs have increased significantly through the rising importance of higher education cooperation and development in international relations. Today DAAD coordinates a large number of long-term cooperation programs.

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When looking at the greater picture, the program's success might seem a drop in the ocean. Like in many other sectors the universities of the region were bled white through the consequences of armed conflict, and political and economic instability. There is a dramatic lack of qualified young staff, equipment and funding, academic reforms progress slowly, and the career perspectives for well-trained graduates are rather dim. And despite genuine efforts and many good practice models, there remains much room for improvement when it comes to the coordination between various fields of development assistance (for example between infrastructure and education).

Still, the interim results of the DAAD's special program are encouraging. A lot has been achieved with - comparably - small financial input:

- Through the funding criteria, inter-regional cooperation has proved to be beneficial to the networking partners from SEE. An "added value" was achieved by sharing scarce resources. Many of the projects have visibly improved the quality of academic teaching. Even entire master courses have been and are established. Joint publications and research results have raised the inter-

est of the international scientific community. Also, German universities show an increasing professional interest in maintaining academic contacts and projects with partners from SEE.

- In some cases the DAAD projects have lead to developing solutions for acute problems concerning more than one of the SEE countries - such as the results of the working group from Rostock, Skopje and Belgrade investigating questions regarding the optimisation of electric power supply in Serbia and Macedonia. Decision makers become more attentive to the competence of and the need for academic experts to solve problems locally.

- Also, cross-border cooperation on topics of common interest has helped to overcome isolation and even resentment among some of the cooperating partners.

- And finally, many of the partnerships that were developed through the DAAD program in the frame of the Stability Pact have meanwhile acquired additional funding from other sources (e.g. within the TEMPUS/CARDS program, the 6th Framework Program for Research and the German Ministry for Education and Research, BMBF, or the German Agency for Technical Cooperation, GTZ), be it for new projects or for an extended range of activities. The DAAD program has thus prepared the ground for (re-)introducing isolated scientists and academic institutions to the international scientific community.

Thanks to the commitment of the German Foreign Office, the DAAD will continue its support for the academic development and cooperation with South Eastern Europe in the coming years. The program remains open for new proposals and partners, from higher education institutions as well as from other international organisations working in related fields. Further information is available at <http://www.daad.de/stabilitaetspakt.de>.

Karen Roberts
 Program Coordinator, DAAD

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German Foundation for International Legal Co-operation
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the European Perspective”

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Zentrum für Europäische Integrationsforschung
Center for European Integration Studies
Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms- Universität Bonn

ZEI
Walter-Flex-Str. 3
D- 53113 Bonn
Fax: 0228/ 731894
e- mail: soe.monitor@uni-bonn.de