

Regional HERE Seminar
A Magical Triangle of Higher Education:
Funding – Research Capacity – Doctoral Education
Budva, Montenegro
25-26 September 2017

Erasmus+ office of Montenegro together with national HERE team of Montenegro was the host of the Regional HERE seminar with the topic a Magical Triangle of Higher Education: Funding – Research Capacity – Doctoral Education. The seminar will gathered almost 40 participants form all three countries. The Seminar was attended by three international experts familiar with educational reforms in ex-Yugoslavia republics: Ms. Melita Kovačević former Chair of Steering Committee EUA CDE and European HE expert, Ms. Srbijanka Turajlić and Mr. Vedran Mornar, University of Zagreb and former Minister of Science and Education of Croatia.

This topic of capacity building in doctoral education has been prioritized by the HERE in the 2015 needs-assessment, and has also been quite prominent in the technical assistance missions (TAM) in different Partner countries.

The main objective of the Seminar is to enable discussion on planning and design of doctoral programmes, structures to support the organisation of doctoral studies, such as doctoral schools, funding of doctoral education, quality assurance in doctoral education and international collaboration and networks in doctoral education, as well as generally building research capacity.

The event features presentations, discussions and group activities, involving different staff members and students with different perspectives.

After the representatives of Ministry of Education and Erasmus+ Office of Montenegro addressed participants, the Seminar started with keynote presentations of international experts. Ms Melita Kovačević pointed out that there are two perspectives: European perspective based on European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and European Research Area (ERA) and world perspective based on new higher education market, new demands and changing rules. Related to an investment in science and research in WB countries only Slovenia is within the average of EU

countries. Furthermore, universities should change their roles, they should educate people, invest in research and strive to be innovative institution. They should also take into account new demands on quality and set new role for students and teachers (academic staff). This all means that universities should become important generators of knowledge and development. Doctoral education, research capacity and funding scheme should be interrelated. Generally, mayor challenges for higher education institution are to change public and political perception of HE relevance for national and societal development, to increase GDP% of funding, in particular research, to implement long-term strategic thinking and to emphasize research relevance within the HE system. At the end of her presentation two main conclusions are highlighted: universities are changing and will change and universities will face number of new challenges.

Ms. Srbijanka Turajlić pointed out that we should not speak about triangle than about so many angles that is aspects when we argue about links between the quality of doctoral education, model of financing and research capacity. She pointed out that the Bologna Declaration is only the Declaration which doesn't consist of a lack of any kind of idea about further directions. The main topic of her presentation was that Europe and the EHEA don't undertake a discussion about possible forms and role of universities in the future. At the end of her presentation she concluded that every study program should be determine by an appropriate project because in this case responsibility is completely individual. Universities should reconsider a purpose and importance of study program before they start with them.

Mr. Vedran Mornar had a presentation related to PhD study and the research in Croatia. He pointed out that although the Croatian Qualifications Framework was adopted in 2013 there are not data for a number of master qualifications as well as PhD candidates and PhD graduates in Croatia. Croatia has go also a system of young researchers introduced in 1991. An employment of young researchers is approved at scientific projects supported financially by the Ministry of Science and Education of Croatia. The main aim of this system is obtaining a PhD title for candidates.

In the afternoon session there were a group work in the way that three separate groups was established which discussed about funding models, research capacities and a quality of PhD

studies. As the conclusion of all three groups the lack of funds, visions and strategies stood out as the main obstacles in all countries. Almost the same problems were presented by all participants.

The second day started with the discussion about the mobility of researchers and doctoral students in the EU. Ms. Melita Kovačević gave a presentation from the European perspective point of view. She pointed out that mobility is a mean for better educated young people, for better quality higher education and for enhancing research capacity. Today, Mobility requires institutional, national even regional rethinking strategy, mobility needs also institutional support, quantification of mobility is not enough and mobility could be a facilitator but also a restriction for quality. Mobility is a complex system, it requires costs, well organized system, skilled staff, flexibility, motivated participants, should be well planned and monitored and need to be promoted by academic staff. The main obstacles are unprepared institutions, visa system, accommodation conditions, non-motivated that is non-mobile students, language, costs, flow of adequate and timely information. Instead the conclusion Ms. Kovačević raised few questions: do we ask ourselves what is next, do we know what kind of mobility we want, do we discuss mobility at our institutions, how much were we mobile ourselves and how do we see our institutions 10 years from now?

Ms. Srbijanka Turajlić pointed out that there are different mobility programs and that WB countries should identify motives, obstacles and outcomes of mobility and they should make an effort about the motives. We should use best practices of ex-Yugoslavia when the most important persons from the field of science used their reputation to cooperate internationally.

Mr. Vedran Mornar gave an overview of main obstacles related to doctoral studies in Croatia which are reflected in the uncertain employment of PhD graduates outside the state system of science and higher education, lack of awareness of PhD candidate and a half of professional studies have been conducted at research universities. He highlighted very good practice in Germany where the private companies finance PhD candidates. He has got an opinion that countries should limit the number of research universities.

Before the final remarks, members of HERE teams of Serbia, Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina presented the current situation in their respective countries related to carrying out doctoral studies, the main obstacles and challenges.

Taking to doctoral studies in Serbia the main dilemmas (obstacles) are: although there are many of public doctoral works (thesis) has been published in SCI magazines it doesn't mean an excellence of the research, there is not a link between doctoral research and needs of labor market, doctoral studies have been carried out for the purpose of academic progress, there is not the same opportunity for all doctoral candidates. As a proposal for improvement the Mr. Nenad Zrnić, HERE team of Serbia pointed out that the criteria/methodology for ranking of doctoral studies should be established, the real model of financing should be created; raise the number of PhD mobility through Erasmus+ KA1 or similar programs; get closer to employers an importance of employability of PhD graduates in the economy; marked the research universities and strived to equal their importance.

Mr. Radovan Stojanović, HERE team of Montenegro, presented the current situation about doctoral studies at University of Montenegro. He pointed out that since 2015 there has been a Centre for Doctoral studies which aims to improve the quality of doctoral studies and to make visible the University within the ERA (European Research Area). The University strive to make doctoral studies more dynamic to reduce a number of challenges, and makes the doctoral studies sustainable and predictable. There are also a lot of challenges which should be removed in the next period.

Mrs Jelena Starcevic presented the current situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the area of PhD studies. She emphasized the problem of 14 different responsible institutions in the area of higher education and pointed out big differences between HEIs when it comes to the question of organisation of PhD studies and fees. As an example of too high fees for PhD studies she mentioned Faculty of Law, University of Sarajevo that costs 11.000,00 EUR. Finally, she opened several very important questions about the role of mentor, bad relationships between professors at PhD studies, publishing in the scientific magazines on SCI, AHCI or SSCI lists as a precondition for oral defence od dissertation and many other challenges for HEI's.

CONCLUSION

After two days of Seminar, it is obvious that the same problems related to PhD studies and sciences (research) are encountered in all countries of Western Balkan. There is a lack of motivation of the PhD candidates and researchers because there is not a reward system

introduced and implemented so that motivation aspects of candidates is lacking. The candidates, especially who work at higher education institutions, have got a solid salary and all comfort of life and without any kind of motivation they don't decide to go abroad. All participants agreed that a change of awareness of candidates and especially academic community because academic staff consider that with an election to the title of regular profession all needs for further education is stopped. At the end all participants agreed that Western Balkan countries should work together to improve the situation in this area.

More information about this event can be found at the seminar website: <http://www.neomontenegro.ac.me/>. Presentation can be found on the link: <http://www.neomontenegro.ac.me/t.php?id=86&l=mn>

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