



Petrovac Conference on Higher Education

Towards some Conclusions

Rapporteurs:

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Preamble

Participants representing:

- variety of countries (9),
- institutions/organisations (14 HEIs, 11 HEAs, 2 International Organisations, 3 NTOs),
- academic community representatives and decision makers (rectors, vice-rectors, high level policy makers, coordinators of national and WU wide networks and others)

have gathered in Petrovac, Montenegro for the International Conference on Higher Education Reform, 25-26 May 2012.

Organisers

The Event has been organised by the Consortium of the STREW Tempus Project under the auspices of Novi Sad Initiative and Regional Cooperation Council.

It is the fifth event sustaining the Novi Sad Initiative events and the first in the series of international events to be organised within the framework STREW Tempus Project.

Support

The Conference has been supported by:

- The European Commission
 - Tempus Programme IV
- Two International Foundations:
 - King Baudouin Foundation
 - Open Society Foundation, Serbia

Proceedings (1)

- Highly interactive and intensive benefiting from wide-ranging presentations and discussions
- Informative presentations at four plenary sessions (inputs from International organisations, HEAs from the EU and WB Region, as well as research inputs from the qualitative and quantitative analysis of the responses from the STREW survey)

Proceedings (2)

The three Round Tables:

- Strengthening the role of professional administrators, managers and policy makers at ministries, agencies and universities
- Public-private partnership
- New instruments/platforms for Regional cooperation and benchmarking

show that change is happening ...

— Feeling that regional cooperation is gathering momentum ...

Mission of Higher Education

- Several participants outlined why higher education is so important: for (knowledge) society, to catch up lost economic ground (also illustrated in Irish presentation), to ensure a future
- Higher education within the Region has always been one of the prominent sectors in the European scene
- Presentations from countries in the region highlighted current national developments
- The Region belongs to a broader European policy agenda and should fully participate in its development

Regional Cooperation

- Important issue for the region – looking forward to an institutionalised solution
- Awareness that brain drain is a short-term challenge – not a major reason for not fostering Inter Regional mobility
- Need to establish proper platform for inter regional cooperation, benchmarking and monitoring in order to ensure regional capacity building and development
- Strengthening the existing regional cooperation on quality assurance

Is the region ready for change?

- Systems have to adapt to today's fast changing world.
- Higher education is the best investment for the future
- Investing in higher education is an excellent opportunity for developing countries of the Region to progress (frog leap strategy)
- Change is going to happen anyway. The point is to make it as positive as possible...

The place of STREW Tempus Project and Novi Sad Initiative

- Inspirational & concrete
- Key actions now needed, especially filling administrative gaps through training – high level policy making staff, buffer body / agency staff (QA, recognition), administrators within higher education bodies – structures & professionalisation of public management and governance, increase of regional cooperation and

- benchmarking and amendment of higher education legislation to enable private investments
- Most can be done at regional level (within a Tempus project, under umbrella of RCC)

The message in brief

- Embrace reform as opportunity
- Need for increasing the role of professional administrators and policy makers
- Importance of fair, adequate & sustainable funding including and an increase of involvement of the private finance through establishing an adequate public-private linkages
- Need for greater cooperation in the Region as a part of an interdependent world

Ideas for the future

- Setting-up a regional platform and roadmap for joint initiatives, including regional databases
- Collecting and disseminating good practices
- Exploring quality beyond established views
- Establish different mechanisms for enhancing regional mobility
- Enhance cooperation and mobilisation of resources in HE (both education and research)
- Strengthen links between the public and the private sectors for improving HE in the region

Way Ahead

The conclusions of the Conference will serve as valuable inputs in the development of:

- a joint roadmap on structural higher education reform in the Region
- a regional platform for Cooperation, Monitoring and Benchmarking,

building on:

- rich and diverse regional academic heritage and
- clear democratic will of regional authorities to continue to work together in partnership,

while:

- promoting the exchange of good practices,
- facilitating mobility and
- strengthening Regional attractiveness and competitiveness.