



Tempus STREW project: 511355-TEMPUS-1-2010-1-RS-TEMPUS-SMHES  
**Acronym STREW**

## **STREW RECOMMENDATIONS**

concerning further structural reform of higher education in WB Region  
an output of WP1 of the STREW project

<b>Document history</b>
Initial drafting done by STREW Core Expert Group, based on the outcomes of Regional Strategic Forum, Global Seminar and Regional Expert Forum of Dubrovnik Cluster of Events (Sept 2012), STREW National and Regional Reports and a series of other relevant documents including EU policy papers on Higher Education since 2000.
Refinement, creation of the final version and adoption done via electronic communication among STREW Project partnership and external stakeholders.
Formal adoption by the full membership of the STREW consortium at the Steering Committee Meeting in Sarajevo, on 7 February 2013.

### **Preamble**

Considering that STREW Tempus project is aiming to strengthen capacity for higher education structural reform in Western Balkan countries and that this aim can be pursued notably by joint action of Regional HEAs and HEIs, using the best European practice, **the Consortium members are united by their commitment in advancing higher education in the Region through European, regional, national and local policy and action, making the Regional Roadmap and the Regional Higher Education Platform a reality.**

This document captures various aspects arising from STREW reports created on the basis of institutional self-reflection and the personal views of Regional stakeholders, collected via the STREW survey questionnaires, discussions during the Dubrovnik Cluster of Events (in particular from the outcomes of the Regional Strategic Forum, the Global Seminar on Strategic Issues and the Regional Expert Forum) and the Petrovac Conference. These are informed by spirit of various EC and CoE documents concerning higher education. The target groups are HEAs and HEIs in the WB countries participating in the STREW project.

Taking into account these recommendations and best international/European practice, the National Task Force Group, established within the scheme of STREW Project, will identify institutions able to deliver national policy objectives (within the respective higher education systems), and recommend any changes required in the system that will support achievement of these jointly foreseen objectives.

Having regard to

- The public responsibility to provide a higher education system able to meet needs for personal, social, cultural and economic development and to respond to emerging global challenges;
- The increasing demands for harmonisation of national qualification frameworks and the need to remove obstacles in setting up a fast track for recognition of qualifications;
- EU policies on Higher Education since 2000, the EU2011 Higher Education Modernisation Agenda, EU2020 Agenda;
- The official launch of the European Higher Education Area at the Ministerial Conference in Budapest and Vienna, 11 and 12 March 2010 after a decade of unprecedented higher education reform;
- The conclusions of National and Regional Workshops issued at the EC Western Balkans Conference on Higher Education (Nov 2012);

- The outcomes of Regional Strategic Forum, Global seminar and Regional Expert Forum of Dubrovnik Cluster of Events (Sept 2012);
- STREW Project Reports (May 2011) on higher education structural reform in five WB countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia);
- CoE Recommendations CM/Rec(2007) on the public responsibility for higher education and research
- Novi Sad Initiative Final Document (Oct 2005), concerning the questions of governance in the course of creating the European Higher Education Area.

the following general principles concerning further development of higher education in the Region have been recognised:

### Principles

- The development of higher education in the Region should be informed by a strategic and long term vision, promoting a 'collective Regional voice' that resonates nationally and internationally.
- **Collaborative** solutions and strong partnerships in higher education shall be encouraged through Regional and international cooperation and benchmarking.
- A further advance in the professionalisation of public governance, management and administration of higher education needs to be fostered in the course of collective convergence to EHEA.
- Various instruments, including legislation, public policy, diversifying funding, projects and training shall be used in order to enhance internal structural reform
- Governments need to consider further amendment of their legal and policy frameworks to encourage the creation of various professional intermediary bodies to act between universities and the government.
- The higher education authorities shall draw upon both internal and external expertise to develop policies which lead to the establishment of best practices in HE and of innovation in learning, teaching and research.
- Regional high level groups should be established to encourage strategic level debate and exploit joint opportunities in the higher education sector which can impact on and support economic and social development.
- As universities recruit and serve in a global higher education environment, recognition of the importance of both the global market and transnational bodies and agencies, becomes paramount.
- Governments should give sufficient autonomy to higher education institutions to allow them to develop the above good practice for internal and not rely on global market forces to determine the future of HE in the Region
- Benchmarking and ranking shall be used to improve the capacity and quality of the whole system, and not just to reward the achievements of elites and flagship institutions.
- In the future, any quest for genuine quality in higher education should increasingly rely on collective self-monitoring and peer review, and self-management of higher education combined with open networking with global higher education institutions.

and the following questions need to be answered:

### Questions and Concerns

- How can a longer-term strategic view inform the development of a stable higher education system given that governments may sometimes be focused short term political concerns?
- How to manage in the future the contradiction between the fact that higher education is inherently international while funding and legislation still remains mostly national?
- How the issues related to the changing patterns in the relationships of universities to national / supranational states and international financial and trade interests will be addressed in the future?

- How to enhance mutual visibility of higher education systems in the Region as a valuable resource for exchange and sharing information, policy analysis and policy development.
- How quality could be effectively enhanced, going far beyond benchmark thresholds, whilst avoiding unnecessary bureaucratisation of the procedures?
- To which extent private and commercial finance may influence governmental policy and whether the risk of its improper usage has been underestimated?
- How to create and maintain an effective buffer between higher education and powerful international financial and trade interests, in the course of a probable increase of private funding?
- Whether EU is willing to support, at the policy level, Regional higher education initiatives from the HE sector itself rather than deriving from national government policy.
- Following ten years of intensive campaign concerning higher education reform in Europe, should further innovations be considered as part of post-Bologna policy?

## Recommendations

Recognising that the evolution of higher education in the Region is influenced by the historical, legal, political and financial circumstances of each country, there are nevertheless certain general recommendations which could guide and inform decisions concerning further reform and development of higher education:

### 1. Towards further professionalisation of public governance, management and administration of higher education systems in the Region

Governments in the Region are recommended to support the strategic development of the higher education sector and make effort to:

- introduce specific expertise and management capacity in order to facilitate detailed steering of higher education within a broad policy framework determined by governments
- promote subsidiarity by introducing professional intermediary agencies and bodies;
- provide long term considerations to inform decisions and encourage strategic planning of the higher education system
- safeguard university autonomy, promote commitment and improve academic standards
- encourage benchmarking nationally, regionally and internationally
- limit unnecessary bureaucratic control, interference and micro management in higher education institutions
- limit direct political involvement in higher education institutions and an inappropriate use of the power of the purse to constrain institutional autonomy and academic freedom

### 2. Towards stronger internal integration of universities and their effective autonomy

Governments and higher education institutions in the Region are recommended to work together in order to provide the genuine features of integrated university including:

- central university services based on comprehensive central information university systems
- common standards for university procedures and efficient management with common resources
- professional administration and management across university services
- a central university development fund
- culture of a unified voice for universities (branding)
- appropriate additional funding to support internal integration reform process

Matters such as 'creation of one legal entity' for the university and 'the centralisation of decision making structures' are normally considered in the mature phase in the course of internal integration of universities.

The term Integrated University is a synonym for the professional governance, management and administration of the university having central university services at its core. Introduction of 'legal shortcuts'

such as enforcement of one legal entity and centralised decision making structure, without investment in a comprehensive central information system and development of a professionally managed and administrated central university service, could discredit the idea of university integration.

### 3. Towards consistent promotion of quality in higher education programmes across the Region

Higher education institutions in the Region are recommended to work jointly to

- promote better public understanding of higher education standards and ensure their comparability across the Region
- ensure continuous and systematic improvement of quality by setting out a joint Regional quality code
- create a data base about the performance of higher education institutions across the Region and make it publicly available
- develop external examining and a peer-review and support system to ensure consistency of quality across WB area

### 4. Towards collaborative solutions and strong partnerships

Governments and higher education institutions in the Region are recommended to

- strengthen the present exchanges between senior government, academic and administrative personnel in the Region
- provide fresh initiatives which could constitute a distinctive contribution regionally and globally
- work together on further development of joint Regional policy in higher education and ensure that the Regional Platform for Benchmarking and Cooperation becomes and remains fully operational
- reset higher education systems on a course that looks beyond the immediate issues and makes them fit to take up the challenges that will determine our shared future.

### 5. Towards a set of national recommendations

National Task Force Groups (the successors of the National Expert Groups), established in each of partner countries under the scheme of STREW Tempus project, are recommended to

- propose their own sets of recommendations within the respective higher education systems,
- provide proposals for amending respective higher education legislations and
- recommend any changes required in the system that will support the achievement of jointly foreseen objectives in the course of delivering national policy objectives.

## Related Documents

### Meetings

[http://ec.europa.eu/education/external-relation-programmes/confbalkans\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/education/external-relation-programmes/confbalkans_en.htm) / 20-21 November 2012 /

<http://www.petrovacconference.uns.ac.rs/conclusions.html> / 23-26 May 2012 /

[http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/2010\\_conference](http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/2010_conference) /12 March 2010 /

[995th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies](#) / 16 May 2007 /

<http://www.novisadseminar.uns.ac.rs/finaldocument.html> / 28-30 October 2005 /

### Other documents



[Questionnaire in English \(872.50 KB\)](#)

-  [Guidelines for HEAs \(23.53 KB\)](#)
-  [Guidelines for HEIs \(18.05 KB\)](#)
-  [National Report for Albania \(240k\)](#)
-  [National Report for Bosnia and Herzegovina \(231k\)](#)
-  [National Report for Macedonia \(232k\)](#)
-  [National Report for Montenegro \(224k\)](#)
-  [National Report for Serbia \(229k\)](#)
-  [Overall Report \(281k\)](#)

[http://ec.europa.eu/education/higher-education/agenda\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/education/higher-education/agenda_en.htm)

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/>

[http://www.coe.int/t/dq4/highereducation/PublicResponsibility/Default\\_EN.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/dq4/highereducation/PublicResponsibility/Default_EN.asp)

[http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/\(1\)/Bucharest%20BPF%20Statement\(1\).pdf](http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/(1)/Bucharest%20BPF%20Statement(1).pdf)

[http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/\(1\)/Bucharest%20Communique%202012\(2\).pdf](http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/(1)/Bucharest%20Communique%202012(2).pdf)