



Univerza v Mariboru

International Conference “Organizing and Managing a Modern University”

Workshop “Reform of the Higher Education System and the RS University Act”

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Reforming the Higher Education System YES OR NO?

Reforming the higher education system in Slovenia is essential since we have recently witnessed entirely new situations in the field of EHEA and ERA, to which we did not adapted accordingly and in a timely manner due to numerous systemic problems.

If we would like to become a part of the European story, it is necessary not only to accept different views and situations but also to implement them as soon as possible within the framework of the higher education reform.

The reform could be carried out with or without the University Act depending on the possibilities and the status that will be conferred on Slovene universities by the basic higher education act.



Systemic Problems

- **Unsystematically determined legal entity** of the university and its members, which creates confusion.
- In practice, the **constitutionally guaranteed autonomy is taken into account “if necessary”** and with regard to the understanding of governing authorities.
- The conditions for establishing universities are not precisely defined, and the **criteria in the process of establishing are not the same for all universities.**
- **The role of the management board is not precisely defined,** which leads to duplication of competences.



Systemic Problems

- The regulation of working and teaching obligations prevents the normal operation of universities.
- The rights and duties of students are not adapted to the Bologna system.
- **Financing is not regulated by law** as required by the Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia.
- **The outdated Institutes Act** applies to universities.
- The Higher Education Act has so many shortcomings that other solutions are being sought (one of them being the University Act).



Systemic Problems as a Result of History

- Organisation in the manner of TOZD (*Temeljna organizacija združenja dela*; basic organisation of associated labour) and SOZD (*Sestavljena organizacija združenja dela*; composite organisation of associated labour) from the past
- In the past, the governing authorities did not want uniform and powerful universities that would be functionally organised.
- “Divide and conquer” → partially satisfying the needs of certain faculties led to an incoherent university.
- Ineffective and spendthrift university administration.
- Impeded development of the university.



Systemic Problems

- Universities lack appropriate financial autonomy:
 - **The lump-sum of activities is the prerequisite**
 - Not only study but also research activities!!!
 - Funds created by the university itself
 - Currently: consent of the Government of the RS for business start-ups (Article 4 of the Decree on Transforming the University into ...)
 - Difficulties in organising market activities



Consequences

- Legal entity of faculties (de facto, not de jure)
- **Study programmes are implemented through faculties** (Article 32 of the Higher Education Act)
 - Difficulties in developing interdisciplinary programmes
- **Professors are employed at one faculty**
 - Difficulties in conducting lectures at multiple faculties
 - Poor selectivity at the university level
- Incoherent awarding of faculty titles in a particular field of study for the entire university
 - Professors may be awarded faculty titles in the same field under different criteria



Consequences of Organizational Nature

- **Difficulties in joining EU projects**
 - Weak administrative support
 - Project Office (is financed by the university or must finance itself)
- **Difficulties in connecting the academic sphere to the economy**
 - The problem of intellectual property
- **Career centres, alumni clubs**
- **University sport**



How do we respond to these challenges?

- **Partial integration of the UM**
 - Enabled the establishment and development of new faculties
 - Uniform public procurements
 - Possible saving due to changes in the organization ...



University Act YES or NO?

- The current organization of public universities in Slovenia impedes the achievement of key objectives of the Bologna reform and many other things.
- The essence of academic freedom is not defined by law.
- Universities lack relevant legislation for considerable changes in the field of higher education.
- In the Republic of Slovenia, a pro-European legislation is needed, which would meet the requirements of higher education coordinators, which means that a consistent and high-quality act on the university as an institution of special importance is required.



CONCLUSION

- **Slovenia is not rich enough to maintain ineffectively organised and inflexible universities.**
- **With a great deal of effort, universities can achieve a lot by themselves although they could accomplish a lot more, much easier and faster, if the state would support and stimulate changes.**
- **We need a pro-European legislation, which would stimulate development instead of inhibiting it.**