

## **PARTICIPATION OF UKRAINIAN UNIVERSITIES IN ATHENA PROJECT SUPPORTED BY EUA**

**Key words:** institutional autonomy, European University Association, project, ATHENA, higher education.

The European University Association represents and supports 850 European higher education institutions as well as 34 national associations of rectors and other partner organisations active in higher education and research in 47 countries across Europe. EUA capitalises on its long experience in higher education governance, institutional and financial autonomy, and has conducted extensive research and led capacity-building efforts on these topics in the framework of EU- and self-funded projects.

The ATHENA project directs its efforts to contribute to the development, modernization and reform of higher education systems in the Eastern partner countries such as Armenia, Moldova and Ukraine. It is set up to support structural reform processes and the development of strategic frameworks at the national level. ATHENA's purpose is to enhance the quality and relevance of higher education systems in the targeted partner countries and to increase their voluntary convergence with EU developments. The project analyses and policy roadmaps of all three partner countries. [4]

The analyses are the consequence of a joint effort of the partner countries' delegations including partner universities, national rectors' conferences and the responsible ministries as well as EUA. The conclusions are based on the methodology of EUA's autonomy scorecard. According to this scorecard you can compare Universities autonomy in different European higher education systems in four autonomy areas (organisational autonomy, financial, staffing and academic one) and rank countries according to the level of autonomy they have in each of these areas. The analysis based on the methodology of above-mentioned scorecard enriched with information gathered in bilateral meetings between EUA and the partner countries' delegations shows the state of play of university autonomy at the beginning of the ATHENA project and also reflects the development over the past three years. The analysis is complemented by a policy roadmap including an action plan indicating the remaining challenges and proposing concrete steps to address those as well as the level of priority and feasibility for each. The exercise has helped to structure the dialogue between the Ministry and the universities in the three systems and shall also help to continue this in the future to facilitate further reforms and implementation. [7]

The duration of ATHENA is three years (October 2012- October 2015). Project main steps were: first year – to focus on research (data collection & analysis: university autonomy and funding in partner countries), to start the policy dialogue (country workshops, policy roadmaps); second year – to focus on capacity building: organisation of study visits for partner country staff to EU partners, drafting of implementation roadmaps; third year – to focus on policy development and regional benchmarking - dissemination of project recommendations and policy roadmaps, publication.

It is essential to mention the partners of the project. Among the Armenian partners are Yerevan State University, Gavar State University, the State Engineering University of Armenia, the Armenian State Universities Rectors Council and the Republic of Armenia Ministry of Education and Science. Among the Moldavian: Academy of Economic Studies of Moldova, Cahul State University, the Free International University of Moldova, the National Council of Rectors of Moldova and the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Moldova. Among our Ukrainian ones are Taras Shevchenko National University of Kiev, Donetsk National University, Lesya Ukrainka Eastern European National University, Odessa National University, the National Rectors' Council of Ukraine and the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine. And also EU partners: the

University of Coimbra, Coimbra Polytechnic Institute, the University of Helsinki, Haaga- Helia University of Applied Sciences, the University of Amsterdam.

To sum up it is necessary to point out the main recommendations which EUA advises to be taken by the project partners in order to stimulate reform in the Ukrainian higher education system. Among them are: to streamline and simplify rules and procedures for universities (a single legal status and legal code to govern higher education institutions, less bureaucratic and restrictive procurement processes); update the modalities through which public funding is dispensed; raise the level of public investment in higher education, particularly in research activities; give universities more freedom to set tuition fees for fee-paying students, in particular international students; give universities the freedom to decide on the language of tuition and dropping mandatory course content; develop and build institutional capacity and human resources; improve internal allocation models; balance centralisation with decentralisation; develop a network at different levels with other institutions to exchange expertise and implement agreed actions from ATHENA, etc. [1]

Undoubtedly, the steps of the Ukrainian higher educational institutions within the framework of the projects supported by European University Association are very important for our country. European University Association plays great role in building the institutional autonomy for Universities and society at large. Of course the autonomy shouldn't mean the absence of regulations but it is needed to modernise higher education in Ukraine.

## REFERENCES

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