Blueprint for Bologna: University of Prishtina and the European Union

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ABSTRACT: Countries hoping to demonstrate an adequate educational infrastructure need a national framework that meets Bologna requirements, a national accreditation agency which sets out the approved framework, and national accreditation processes by which individual institutions can be measured against the standards set by the national accreditation agency. For many countries, the national framework remains to be articulated, the accreditation processes are non-existent, and individual institutions have no means by which to assess their internal readiness for accreditation scrutiny. While the status of Kosovo as a separate entity remains unresolved, the institutions within the potential country struggle to meet the infrastructure conditions necessary for inclusion in the European Union. Ironically, the Faculty of Education at the University of Prishtina is in a remarkably advantageous position if it were to overcome the current political bickering and start the preparations required for meeting the education infrastructure criteria. This paper articulates that advantage by laying out the process by which this could be realized – with optimistic disregard for the political uncertainties that mitigate against its realization. It also provides a summary of the tasks that would need to be undertaken as part of this process.

KEYWORDS: The Bologna Accord, accreditation, higher education, reform legal frameworks, post-conflict, transitions, democracy, international support, European engagement.

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education infrastructure. This paper articulates that advantage by laying out the process by which this could be realized – with optimistic disregard for the political uncertainties that mitigate against its realization. It also provides a summary of the tasks that would need to be undertaken as part of this process.

Countries hoping to demonstrate an adequate educational infrastructure need a national framework that meets Bologna requirements, a national accreditation agency which meets the requirements set out in an approved framework, and national accreditation processes by which individual institutions can be measured against the standards set by the accreditation agency. For many countries, the national framework remains to be articulated, the accreditation processes are non-existent, and individual institutions have no means by which to assess their internal readiness for accreditation scrutiny.

In Kosovo, the framework, the accreditation agency, and the process are all in place. The national framework is set out in The Provisional Institutions of Self-Government Law on the Higher Education in Kosovo, signed in May, 2003. In that document, a national accreditation agency known as Kosovo Accreditation Agency or KAA was created and national accreditation processes are articulated. The policies brought into existence through the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (usually referred to as UNMIK) and the new Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology (known as MEST) provide the necessary direction even while invoking institutional hostility. Ironically, the turbulence that disrupted the normal processes of the University of Prishtina have resulted in a policy framework that could be capitalized on as a springboard for the type of reform necessary for entry into the European Union (EU). The University of Prishtina, as the main provider of higher education in the region, has the opportunity to work directly with MEST to meet the requirements of the legal framework which, when accredited by the KAA, would be in compliance with the Bologna standards.

This paper ignores the ideological discourse on the desirability of entry into the EU as well as the ethical and educational debates that attend accreditation processes. It assumes that these issues have been resolved, that the European Union has survived its recent expansion, and that the political will within Kosovo has been directed at Kosovo’s inclusion in the EU. For those who see no hope that these admittedly monumental obstacles could ever be overcome, there is no point in reading further.