



УНИВЕРЗИТЕТ У БАЊОЈ ЛУЦИ
UNIVERSITY OF BANJA LUKA

**REPORT OF A SURVEY CONDUCTED ON
EUROPEAN CHARTER FOR RESEARCHERS
AT UNIVERSITY OF BANJA LUKA**

The University of Banja Luka signed the Declaration of Commitment on the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers on January 30, 2013, as the first institution of Bosnia and Herzegovina which joined this European initiative. Preparations for the next step the University was obliged to undertake - conducting surveys among the researchers, lasted slightly more than 6 months. The Vice Rector for science, research and development, PhD Milan Mataruga, presented the planned activities related to the implementation of the survey at the 22nd session of the University Senate, held on November 28, 2013. A conclusion of the Senate (No. 02 / 04-3.3754-57 / 13 on November 28, 2013) was to present the information to all Vice Deans of faculties on the Extended collegium after which the Senate again considered this issue at the 24th session of the Senate held on February 5, 2014. By means of a conclusion of the 24th session of the Senate (No. 02 / 04-3.312-6 / 14 on February 5, 2014.) the Vice Rector for science, research and development was approved to conduct a survey on the Charter and the Code in cooperation with the Vice Deans for science, research and development of all organizational units and was obliged to send the final report to the Senate.

There were four meetings with the Vice Deans for science, research and development, where a procedure and a method of interviewing the researchers at the University were clearly harmonized. With the aim of conducting the survey, the possibilities of integrated information system were used for the first time. The survey, consisting of 40 principles defined by the European Commission, was electronically distributed to all researchers at the University. The researchers were supposed to vote on each of the principles, stating whether their existing legal framework and institutional policies allow the application of each of these principles or not (answer "no answer" was also permitted). Respondents were able to comment on existing institutional practices, propose necessary actions or a measures carrier as well as a deadline for implementation of the proposed measures. The final report on completing the survey, which polled 380 of the total 811 researchers or 46.86%, was submitted on April 16, 2014. Survey results by organizational units are shown in figure 1.

After conducting the survey, it was approached to analysis of responses. In addition to the expected response "accepted" or "not accepted", every individual researcher's comment, suggestion and proposal were analyzed. The result was the Action Plan adopted at the session of the Senate of the University of Banja Luka (No. 02/04-3.4241-71/14 on November 27, 2014).

**Figure1. Results of the survey by organizational units
(percent of total number of researchers)**

Academy of Arts	28,13%
Faculty of Architecture and Civil Engineering	51,02%
Faculty of Economics	45,31%
Faculty of Electrical Engineering	16,28%
Institute of Genetic Resources	33,33%
Faculty of Mechanical Engineering	25,58%
Faculty of Medicine	34,72%
Faculty of Agriculture	45,45%
Faculty of Law	53,13%
Faculty of Natural Sciences and Mathematics	37,35%
Faculty of Mine Engineering	53,85%
Faculty of Technology	42,31%
Faculty of Political Sciences	29,41%
Faculty of Physical Education and Sport	90,32%
Faculty of Philosophy	64,38%
Faculty of Philology	86,67%
Faculty of Forestry	48,00%

Analyzing the results of the survey, the following general observations can be singled out:

- Respondents indicate problems but do not always offer solutions for them;
- Respondents emphasize inconsistency in the application of laws and internal regulations more than necessary amendments to legal acts;
- It is the general opinion that the University as well as the state under-invest in scientific research and cause underfunding at all levels (investment in equipment, reward system, the mobility of researchers, etc.).
- Contradictory proposals are perceived among various authors within the same principles;
- Five principles have over 85% of responses implying that legislation and internal bylaws allow the principles.
- 15 principles have more than 80% of responses implying that legislation and internal bylaws allow the principles.
- 15 principles have more than 70% of responses implying that legislation and internal bylaws allow the principles.
- 5 principles have more than 60% of responses implying that legislation and internal bylaws allow the principles.

The survey has been composed of 40 principles defined by the European Commission and divided into four groups, namely:

- Ethical and professional aspects (1 – 11)
- Recruitment (12 – 21)
- Working conditions and social security (22 – 35)
- Specialization (35 – 40)

Ethical and professional aspects

In this group of principles, the most "not accepted" responses is given to the principle of freedom of research (about 12%), professional liability (10.76 to 11.00%), good practice in research (11.00 to 11.90%) and system evaluation / appraisal (10.20 to 14.16%).

When it comes to the freedom of research, the respondents state that the legislation does not precisely define the notion of freedom of scientific research. They point out the lack of investment in science, scientific research and departures at international scientific congresses, conferences, etc. A concrete example where the law does not permit the application of this principle is the example of the Mining Act, where the University or colleges have been abolished the right to develop the project documentation, as the article 31 states that the mining projects can be made only by companies, which implies that the phrase "and other legal entities" is quite unjustifiably left out.

The respondents consider it necessary to issue Regulations on copyright and responsibility at the University level. It is proposed to amend the Higher Education Act and the Regulations on the procedure for selection of professors and associates in order to introduce a provision on dismissal, prevention of further progress and cancelation of the current elections in vocations if it is determined that some of the works are plagiarisms. It is also proposed to ensure software at the University level, in order to monitor the possible plagiarism of scientific papers. Required actions: prevent the emergence of plagiarism and autoplagerism in scientific community establish higher criteria when reviewing scientific papers, converge the standards of scientific journals in the country to those of the SCI journal list, strengthen the accountability of scientific papers reviewers.

Recruitment

In this group of principles, respondents single out, with the highest number of "not accepted" responses, the principles concerning employment (10.48 to 11.30%), and in particular employment of post-doctoral students (13.88 to 18.13%). In terms of employment, the respondents believe that the employer should ensure that the standards for hiring and receiving the researchers, especially at the beginning of their careers, are clearly defined. It is proposed to amend the Regulations of Procedure and conditions for selection of professors or associates. This implies the elaboration of the Regulations, so that the position of "scientific researcher" gets its rightful place with the positions of "professor" and "associate". By acquiring the rights of choice for scientific research titles, the researchers' position would be straightened and scientific research work encouraged.

Regarding the employment of the post-doctoral students, the respondents believe that the status of the post-doctoral students, and consecutively their engagement, is not legally and institutionally arranged. Therefore, it is necessary to define the issue in both legislation and internal regulations of the University.

Working conditions and social security

Most answers "not accepted" in this group are attributed to the principles regarding the stability and sustainability of employment (15.58 to 21.25%), the availability of career counseling (18.70 to 22.38), career advancement (11.90 -15.00%) and evaluation of mobility (around 12%). The respondents believe the curriculum is overloaded, so little time remains for research, provided that there are funds for it, which are generally missing or are minimal, and thus insufficient for any serious research. On the issue of the availability of career counseling, the respondents believe that there is no counseling on career and that

community academic level. In line with modern practice, the field of career counseling should be included as an integral part of the support to researchers. This area should be regulated by the Law on Scientific Research Activity of the Republic of Srpska, which would prescribe the availability of career counseling for researchers.

When it comes to evaluating the mobility, the respondents are of the opinion that the legal frameworks allow it since it is not prohibited, but that the mobility is not recognized or stimulated. They find that mobility is not valued, even in the Regulations of Procedure and conditions for selection of professors and associates. Paid leave for a few months with the aim of specialization in foreign countries, when wages decrease by 30%, does not motivate young researchers to go abroad and get educated, especially the young researchers with family. It is proposed to develop adequate regulations for the evaluation of mobility, and that the relevant statutory regulations provide guarantees for the improvement and evaluation of mobility.

Specialization

Most "not accepted" responses are attributed to the principles of relationship with a mentor (10.20 to 11.61%), mentoring and managerial responsibilities (11%), as well as access to training and ongoing development (about 12%). For this group, the principles of the respondents do not provide specific solutions to any suggestions in terms of "what to do next."

The survey results will be used in preparation of strategic documents for development of science, research and innovation at the University, and the implementation of ethical and professional aspects of transparency in recruitment, ensuring better working conditions and social security, as well as progression through training and continuous education.

The Action Plan with the proposal of measures for all 40 principles is in the Appendix to the final report.

Vice Rector for science, research and development



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