

The University of Prishtina (UP) until recently the only public university in Kosova, was established in 1970. With a total of 17 faculties of various fields and around 33000 students, it is one of the biggest universities in the region. During the entire time of its functioning, the UP has been the main pillar in supporting the social and economic development of Kosova.

Difficulties of various nature have occurred during the development of the UP such as the lack of personnel, almost a decade of its functioning within a parallel system as a result of the repression exercised by the Milosevic regime, the consequences of which are most obvious even at the current day, financial difficulties, lack of labs and equipment etc, are only a few obstacles that need be mentioned as issues that occur during the reform process.

The lack of Kosovo's final status definition has been one the main reasons due to which Kosova was unable to sign the Bologna Agreement. However, since 2001/2002, the UP has voluntarily started with the implementation of this agreement thus applying the new schooling structure of 3+2+3 or 4+1+3.

The implementation of the Bologna Agreement as one of the main objectives of the UP requires the realization of imperative changes. In practice it has been proven that the realization of these objectives presented a problem even for the well developed countries with a long tradition in higher education. When the situation at the UP is taken into consideration, especially the lack of financial resources, the assistance of our international friends is considered crucial in making this Agreement a reality at the UP.

The support provided thus far by the international community has been significant, and to this regard the support provided by the Austrian Government to the AL in general and the UP specifically, deserves a special emphasis. Austria was the first to open its communication and cooperation doors with the Austrian Universities at the most difficult times of the UP functioning, at a time when we were functioning as a parallel system in private houses. Thanks to this support a large number of our students at the time have achieved academic and scientific degrees in western universities. Some of them have returned to Kosova and are providing substantive contribution to the economic development of Kosova.

In the postwar period, the history of the UP will be deficient if the contribution of WUS Austria's projects is not presented. The value of WUS programs has been heightened by the modern development approach and the project implementation. Hence, starting from the idea development until the finalization of the project proposal and through its detailed implementation in the later stages there has been constant cooperation with the UP management. Therefore, due to the efficacy of these projects although at points with small financial support they have managed to achieve tremendous goals.

The content of the projects such as: stimulation the brain gain from abroad, the support to the new course development, the purchase of equipment for labs etc, are some of the areas which required not only funding but expertise as well, this was something that was lacking in other institutions whereas WUS has managed to successfully achieve those. As a result the Chairman of WUS Austria Prof. DR. Wolfgang Benedek was honored with title of Doctor Honoris Causa by the UP in 2004, but by no means does this repay the contribution provided by WUS to the UP.

The implemented projects during this two year period have been continuity to this systematic and substantial support by WUS. Considering that we were directly involved during the implementation period, we can conclude that these projects where indeed directly referring to the needs of the University. Furthermore, I can say with full responsibility that these projects have directly supported the reform process at the UP and have mitigated the road towards the European Higher Education Area.

I would like to use this opportunity to express my utmost gratitude to the Austrian Government, as well as Austrian Development Agency for the support provided during this period of time, as presented briefly but of high importance. I will also use the opportunity to thank WUS- Austria for the sincere and professional cooperation during the project implementation period.

I remain with the hope that I can count on this support and this fruitful cooperation to continue in the future as well. We welcome and are in need of this kind of sincere and professional cooperation, and only through projects such as these we can smoothly overcome the difficulties with the UP is facing.

We consider and have strong convictions that with your support we are able to join the European University Association and be part of the European Higher Education Area, which I consider to be the main objective under my leadership of the UP.

Thank you,

Prof. Dr. Enver Hasani,  
Rector of the University of Prishtina

