University of Cukurova

EUA Evaluation report

July 2006
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1. Introduction

In May 2005 the University of CUKUROVA (CU) made a formal request to the European University Association (EUA) for an Institutional Evaluation Programme (IEP). This request was made in order to have a third party view about the mission and vision of CU and its strategic management.

EUA
The European University Association, as the representative organisation of both the European universities and the national rectors' conferences, is the main voice of the higher education community in Europe.

EUA's mission is to promote the development of a coherent system of European higher education and research. EUA aims to achieve this through active support and guidance to its members as autonomous institutions in enhancing the quality of their teaching, learning and research as well as their contributions to society.

In serving its members, both individual and collective, EUA's main focus is:

- Strengthening the role universities play in the emerging European Higher Education and European Research Areas (EHEA and ERA) through contributing to and influencing policy debate and developing projects and other membership services in the interest of its members;
- Working with member institutions through the organisation of membership services and the implementation of projects on key issues that aim to improve quality and strengthen individual universities' European profiles;
- Enhancing the European dimension in higher education and promoting the flow of information through the organisation of regular meetings and conferences as well as through the preparation and publication of studies analysing current trends and highlighting examples of good practice;
- Providing advocacy on behalf of its members, both at the European level to promote common policies, and at the international level to promote increased cooperation and enhance the visibility of European higher education in a global context.

EUA fully upholds the values and principles enshrined in the 1988 Magna Charta

As of 1 April 2006, EUA has 777 members in 45 countries across Europe.

The EUA has a strong international reputation in quality assurance having conducted institutional reviews of some 150 universities in some 33 countries during the past ten years. The tenth anniversary of the EUA programme was celebrated in 2004.

The EUA evaluation takes its point of departure in the mission and objectives of the university under evaluation. It focuses on the university’s capacity for change, including its strategic planning and its overall quality management. The visiting evaluation team is composed of experienced European university leaders. The overall orientation of the evaluation is formative, i.e., it supports the university in its efforts to improve its strategic and quality management. The strengths and weaknesses of the institution are judged primarily in light of its own mission and not against external criteria.
The distinctive features of the EUA’s Institutional Evaluation Programme are that:

- It places a strong emphasis on self-evaluation;
- It is undertaken from a European and international perspective;
- It is undertaken by peers;
- It is strictly independent from national agencies and government evaluation programmes;
- It has a non-profit approach, being geared towards the interests of the university.

The EUA institutional evaluation methodology is guided by four central strategic questions:

- What is the institution trying to do? This question refers to the mission of the institution. A clear mission is important in order to decide on priorities, strategic objectives, and the means to reach these objectives.
- How is the institution trying to do it? The evaluation investigates the way in which the institution attempts to fulfil this mission in terms of organisation, governing structures and processes.
- How does it know it works? This question points at the necessity to have sound internal quality arrangements in place. The evaluation team looks at the institutional policies and practices regarding quality and other relevant processes, in terms of actors, structures and procedures.
- How does the institution change in order to improve? This is a key question for EUA’s institutional evaluations. It is the institution’s capacity for change and improvement that allows it to deal with a fast-changing environment and to respond to evolving needs.

Following the request received from the Rector of CU, the Steering Committee of the IEP appointed a team for the institutional evaluation of CU. This team was composed of:

- Julio Pedrosa, President, Former Rector of the University of Aveiro and former Minister for Education, Portugal
- Jiri Holenda, Former Rector of the University of West Bohemia, Czech Republic
- Lothar Zechlin, Founding Rector of University of Duisburg Essen, Germany
- Jacques Lanarès, secretary, Vice Rector of the University of Lausanne, Switzerland

In accordance with the IEP guidelines, CU appointed a self evaluation committee. The committee comprised one representative from each faculty, chosen by the Rector. The process at CU began in early summer of 2005, with a self-evaluation process at departmental level and which was then consolidated at faculty level. The result of the work of this committee was a 30-page self-evaluation report (SER) sent to the EUA team in advance of the preliminary visit.

The EUA team came to CU for a preliminary visit from 9 to 11 February 2006 and for a main visit from 6 to 10 June 2006. At the end of the preliminary visit, and in order to complement the information received through the self evaluation report, the EUA team asked the university to provide additional documentation on the decision process, budgets, management of resources, structures dealing with technology transfer. Between the two visits, CU undertook several activities in relation to the development of CU and in line with IEP issues. These activities, when appropriate, are mentioned further on.

During its two visits, the EUA team met the CU Rector, vice-rectors, self evaluation steering committee, Deans, Senate, staff and students from 10 faculties and several representatives of
external stakeholders and alumni (professional organisations, heads or representatives of leading companies, etc). The EUA team also met staff and researchers from research institutes and Technology transfer offices.

The EUA team would like to thank the CU Rector, Prof. Dr. Alper Akinoglu and all the staff, students and external stakeholders for their warm welcome and for the many interesting and useful discussions during the two visits. The EUA team would also like to thank Prof. Dr. Nejat ERK for his efficient and friendly support both in the preparation for, and during, the visit.

2. Context

The governance and the strategic management of CU are, of course, greatly influenced by the context in which it operates. Three aspects should be underlined: the regional environment, Turkish legislation and governmental bodies for HE, and the European Union programmes.

Cukurova University is located in a region which has had a very important industrial development in the past, but that is now suffering from the impact of the delocalization of traditional industry, such as textiles. Agriculture, another important economic activity in the region is also changing and demanding novel and innovative inputs.

Among several Turkish upper administrative bodies, the HEC (YÖK) has a major influence on the governance of the HE system and institutions since it determines the staffing of the Universities but also decides on opening up or closing down departments, student quotas for each department, the level of university entrance exam to be attained, priorities of promotion in academic life.

The way the staffing is determined allows little flexibility for the reorganisation of the university when priorities change. For instance, it seems very difficult, if not impossible, to suppress a position in one faculty. The only way to balance staffing seems to be through the creation of new posts.

The historical development of CU with two faculties at the beginning (Agriculture and Medicine in 1973) and the regular creation of new faculties or departments to date has somehow been crystallized by these procedures. Apart from these historical reasons, the Faculty of Medicine has a strong position (and therefore great influence) since it is linked to one of the largest hospitals in the country and provides the main part of CU internal research budget (revolving funds). It seems that this is the main reason why the Rector of CU is often a professor from this Faculty.

At the European level, the Bologna declaration and the transformation of the programmes of the European universities to favour student exchange has also a strong influence in recent developments at CU. This reform led to a profound transformation of the structure of the programmes, but also of their objectives (introduction of competencies as outcomes of the training), validation schemes and training methods. This reform is so important that it cannot be ignored. Besides curriculum, the European Research programmes, with the collaboration that they promote and financing involved also have a great impact on higher education institutions in Europe. CU is fully concerned by these transformations and in fact CU staff and students are well aware of these stakes.

A leading person in the strategic planning project, at CU, is also a Bologna promoter for Turkey.
**General impression**

During its visits, the Team had a wide variety of discussions with a number of academic and administrative staff and students, as well as with stakeholders from outside the university. Some general impressions came out of these discussions.

Great awareness

The Rector and members of CU seem very aware of all the transformations the University has to face. For example, they are aware of the constraints and the changes resulting from the national governance of higher education institutions, the changes in their immediate economy and the effects of these changes on their activities, the influence of the Bologna process and European research programmes. They are well aware of them and are fully engaged in a process of change to face this new situation.

A deep process of change

During its visits the EUA team had the strong impression that the CU leadership is engaged in a very intense process of change. Several influences have contributed to the phenomenon, in particular, changes in regulations of policies of governmental bodies (YOK, Tübitak, Ministry of Finance) with the introduction of strategic planning over 5 years, analytic and strategic budgeting over 3 years, the creation of a national accreditation body (which defined no less than 74 accreditation criteria), etc.

But change is not only due to external influences but is also to the will, clearly expressed by The Rector, to introduce changes in university governance and prepare CU for the coming decades and the challenges ahead. This impulse of change has led to several projects and, among them, the IEP and the strategic planning project.

As a matter of fact, the strategic planning project which began in 2006 is a major step in that direction. The point of departure for this strategic planning project has been a survey (68 questions) sent to staff. The results of the survey showed a significant dissatisfaction (aprox. 85%) in several areas (activities, salaries, administration, etc). The process started with a SWOT analysis (first at departmental level, then consolidated at Faculty level). On the whole, 63 meetings have been promoted, at all levels (departments, faculty, university) to explain the project and move it forward. This shows the efforts to support this project which has involved a lot of people at CU and concerned all the faculties.

The Rector and the steering committee of the strategic planning project wanted to take the opportunity of the IEP to improve this strategic planning process and have an external feedback on it. The EUA team considers that the strategic planning is a good process and that the combination of SP and IEP is very relevant.

The members of the EUA team have the impression that, although people at the university were involved in these projects and processes, it deserves deeper and wider participation of staff, students and external stakeholders. In fact, the EUA team noticed that a significant number of staff and students did not really know the aims and methodology of IEP. Furthermore, there has been some confusion between SP and IEP. The fact that several faculties wanted to present their faculty self evaluation report at length during the site visits, is, for the EUA team, an illustration of the confusion between the two processes. We think that the process could have been prepared and organised in a more informative and participative way, at least in some parts of the University.

The EUA team underlines the fact that the combination of the two projects is mutually beneficial. However, the superposition of the two processes (IEP and strategic planning) requires further effort in explaining the aims, processes and outcomes of the two exercises. Strategic planning is crucial for CU and will have many effects. It must obviously be continued and will certainly benefit from a very effective follow-up.
Open and informative discussions
Even though, some people were not completely aware of the process going on, the EUA team was able to have open, lively and informative discussions. In the view of the EUA team, this is a good sign that the evaluation process is being taken seriously, is considered as useful and should be continued. The EUA team thinks however that, had the university staff and students, as well as external stakeholders, been better informed and involved, these discussions would have been further enriched.

Openness to change
The EUA team members perceived a global awareness of the necessity for change, among the great variety of actors (academics, administrative staff, students, stakeholders, etc) they met. They also had the impression that the community is interested in contributing to improvements and is very concerned in having an excellent university. The EUA team also saw that some people in the university were ready to take action to change CU, whereas others expected change and solutions to come from the outside, mainly from governmental bodies. This is usual in universities and should not stop the project but underlines the need for developing internal communication and the involvement of every one.
In some meetings, the EUA team also noticed the difficulty some people had in thinking “university” instead of Faculty, in spite of the fact that the focus was clearly on the institutional level. It seems, then, that there is a strong need to develop, within members of the CU community, a global concern about their university as an institution.

General areas of concern
As well as receiving many positive general impressions at CU, the EUA team also encountered areas of concern. These areas are not related to any particular part of the University, but are rather institutional issues. These issues have been organized in four sections: Governance and strategic management, Research, Teaching and Learning and Quality assurance.

3. Governance and management

The historical development of CU, the centralist context of governance both at CU and nationally have, to the view of the EUA team, led to some disparity in some areas which is described in more detail below. The meetings and discussions that the EUA team had during the visits have shown that the leadership of the University as well as the staff are aware of this. The decision to apply for IEP and to start the SP project shows a marked intention to tackle these issues and the involvement of the faculties in the processes illustrates a clear will from the Rectorat to introduce changes in these aspects.
The EUA team thinks that the SWOT analyses at departmental and Faculty levels, the setting of objectives, and the elaboration of action plans have been realised in a very serious and constructive way. The EUA team noticed the growing acceptance of and involvement into this process as well as its results. However, the SER and the meetings the EUA team had with various actors show clearly that CU faces several imbalances at different levels. This appears to have a negative effect on staff motivation and limits CU development.
The EUA team identified three levels where this question could be considered: decision taking and participation, staff, and budget allocation.
Decision taking processes and participation
Higher education law has created a highly centralized structure which influences many main aspects of CU governance (nomination of deans and Rectors, attribution of staff, opening up or closing departments, sometimes definition of programmes, etc).
The principal governing body at CU is the University Senate which has 40 members (Rector, Vice-Rectors, Deans, Academic secretary and the Faculty representatives). On the other hand, the faculties have a strong autonomy to decide on their own policies and strategies (“formidable fortress” SER p. 14) but do not have clear and adequate responsibilities on resources allocation and management.
In this context, the staff is rarely involved in strategic decisions and students are rarely consulted. In some cases, student representative exist and can contact the Dean or other authorities but they are not really involved in the governance of the University. The trend in Europe now is to involve the students more in governance. Of course the situation can differ from one university to another, but it is quite frequent now to have around 30% of students in governing bodies or specific committees, in European universities.
At CU, in reality, main decisions are taken by the Rector, although the Rector is trying to increase delegation and involve deans and faculties in more decisions. However, it seems that this effort is facing difficulties, probably due to the historical centralist mode of governance of CU and the control of HEC. It seems that on many occasions, the Rector is personally involved even though other structures or bodies could easily deal with the questions raised.
Even if this new approach of governance has not completely succeeded, these steps are important to build the trust in a new governance approach. Nonetheless, in the view of the EUA team, more action could be taken to increase participation of staff and students in the decision process and will be mentioned in the recommendations.

Staff allocation
In the view of the EUA team, staffing is a critical issue. As has already been mentioned, there is no real correlation between the number of staff and students. According to the SER, the student to staff ratios can vary more than five times from faculty to faculty, without a clear reason for such a variation. Compared with the average at CU, it seems that there are too many staff in some faculties and not enough in others where they are needed. Again, this appears to be a combination of history and governance. The oldest faculties have more staff because when a position is free, although it is supposed to go back to the Rector, in fact it remains in the same faculty. So the only way to balance staffing is to create new positions (which depends on HEC and is very difficult in times of financial difficulties).
One other problem is “inbreeding” because people usually build their career in the same faculty and quite often in the same department. Therefore it appears that the university is lacking governance instruments to deal with the tension between collective, institutional needs (to have staff according to the number of students or specific projects) and individual careers.

Budget allocation
The main part of the budget concerns staff and is in fact controlled by HEC who determines the number and kind of positions allowed. Therefore the budget (apart from building and equipment) is historical and does not follow the strategic planning. The money for research comes mainly to individual projects of teachers, financed by Tübitak. There is a small internal budget for research, which comes mainly from the Faculty of Medicine. So there is clear imbalance in this matter.
It seems that some opportunities exist for other faculties, apart from Medecine, to increase the internal research budget but there are some obstacles. In some cases the legal framework does
not allow keeping the money for the faculty (ex. Faculty of Economics) and the percentage of the revolving fund is very high. Faculties hardly get 30% back from their mandates or other services provided to external clients. Therefore motivation for these kind of activities is quite low. On the other hand it appears that applied research is not given sufficient importance to stimulate projects with external stakeholders. Considering the need for more academic staff (e.g. research assistants) and research output, it would be useful if CU could raise more money for research and have a more balanced funding of the internal research budget.

Considering these difficulties, from the EUA team point of view, the main internal issue faced by CU is one of recalibration. Since it is critical to get a balanced university inspite of the historical situation, the EUA team considers that CU should put a massive effort in creating a strategy to reallocate resources in a participative way. This could be done as part of the following developments of the Strategic Planning project:

1. Completion of the institutional strategic plan, which will help to define and clarify priorities. This should also include a clear statement about the University mission in pursuing the project. The EUA team believe that it could be supported by a network of people so that the leadership can have a better understanding of the different points of view regarding issues in discussions. To improve the coherence of the governance, the EUA team would suggest the introduction of a contract-programme Rectorate-Faculty in relation to strategic objectives.

2. Definition of a strategy to know how to re-calibrate the university in a participative way. This supposes that decision-making rules are changed and that intention of the Leadership to empower people at CU is accompanied by a clarification of decision processes and levels. Which matters are to be decided at the central level by the Rector and senate? Which matters are to be left to the autonomous decision of the Faculty? The connection between these two levels should be agreed by negotiation between Rector at and Faculty and fixed in a written form. This contract negotiating could take place once a year in a formal and structured process.

To draw up and use common and explicit rules for fruitful use in the decision making processes requires that staff are clearly and regularly informed. Since the EUA team had the impression that there were some barriers in the circulation of information, a good global, up to date information system is needed.

These first steps would give CU the opportunity to elaborate rules such as the following: criteria and procedures for the recruitment of new staff, in accordance with strategic priorities. (e.g. staff/student ratio, taking into account the real instead of theoretical figures could be one of the criteria), criteria and procedures to distribute new academic positions, criteria and procedures for the re-allocation of technical staff.

To reduce “inbreeding”, positions for assistant professors, associate professors and full professors could be advertised and offered publicly when becoming vacant. A fair competition among all candidates should be organized and a first decision could be taken by a committee set up by the faculty. If the selection is made in this way, it will not necessarily exclude a CU PhD graduate. The best candidate for the post will be appointed regardless of provenance. The important point is not if the candidate comes from inside or outside, it is the open, transparent and fair selection of the best person for CU needs.

Many of these developments could increase transparency in the governance of CU. This is a critical condition to develop trust and get more involvement of various actors inside and outside the university.
4. Research

CU is obviously involved in research and the SER shows that output of research activities (publications etc.) have increased between 2000 and 2005, especially at international level. However, the documents and the interviews did not provide the EUA team with enough information to understand what the position of research at CU is and what it is going to be over the next 5 years. It is clear that in some faculties it is a priority. We have seen some very dynamic and efficient individuals who get research funds. So the EUA team saw clear signals of interest for research, but an explicit policy regarding this issue seems to be missing.

Of course, the EUA team could see that there are difficulties and obstacles to doing more research:

1. The teaching load is very heavy. On average, the teaching load is significantly higher than in many other European universities. Night classes, that many academics teach, increase this load. Even if there are limitations, some teachers have 30 teaching hours a week (and certainly need this supplementary income). The main consequence is that the time and energy left for research is quite short. Despite this, the EUA team observed in the SER that publication rate has increased, especially in the area of international publication, between 2000 and 2005. It must be underlined that some departments and individuals are very active in research but there exists a great diversity among the faculties.

2. From the figures in the SER and from comments from some staff, the EUA team saw that the resources for research are limited. The main part of the internal budget for research comes from the revolving funds of the medical faculty (5% of University Hospital income which represented more or less 6’000’000 NTL in 2004). From the interviews we had, this appears to be a difficult situation and may be a source of tension between faculties. On the other hand, as already mentioned, resources from external stakeholders are difficult to get because of legal constraints (in the end, the major part of the money does not go back to the faculty) or because applied research is not valued and then money coming from joint research projects with economic partners is rare. Nevertheless, involvement of CU in major projects such as Technopark or Usam, as well as comments from chambers of commerce, show that opportunities exist.

3. It also appeared from some comments that research is not adequately valued in the academic career. As soon as a professorial position is obtained, research no longer has much effect on careers.

4. The lack of research assistants and the utilisation of PhD students for teaching is also a clear limitation.

This situation points to the need for defining a clear strategy for research, which would imply looking at the following questions and issues:

- To what extent is research a priority at CU?
- What emphasis should the research undertaken by the university budget take? Should research play a role in the development of the local economy? Should it put the focus on traditional economy or contribute to the development of a new economy? Or both?
There is a need to define rules for the allocation of the internal research funds

How to increase resources for research by using the opportunities available, seize the opportunity of PhD grants from Tübitak, develop cooperation projects with industry.

How to use university resources to improve quality (relevance, appropriateness, etc) of requests for external funds and therefore increase the probability of getting more funds. Tübitak has increased the total amount available for research, but on average, only 5% of the teachers at CU get the funds they apply for. Good preparation of applications could increase that percentage.

Define a policy to give research its proper value.

In the opinion of the EUA team, CU could try to create a framework which would stimulate the search and the chance of success in external funding for research. This could be included in a CU global policy on research which could set priorities for research. This would be in line with CU mission expressed in SER, “conduct research towards developing model and policies in line with needs” (p. 14).

Another matter for concern, which was identified, is the research infrastructures. On several occasions it was pointed out to the EUA team that there is not enough information about the infrastructures available nor a policy for optimising their use. Since the development of research supposes the best possible utilisation of resources available at CU, this would mean for instance, that the following needs should be addressed:

- a transparent catalogue of available infrastructures and rules for their use.
- a policy of acquisition and attribution of new infrastructure.

Some signals (e.g Tübitak) suggest that there is an appropriate environment to tackle these questions, and they should be an important aspect of the new strategy of CU for research.

5. Teaching and learning

CU mission underlines the priority of teaching at CU and, indeed, this activity seems to use up most of the time of the academic staff who are also deeply involved in night classes. Almost all the faculties have mentioned, in their self-evaluation report, that having strong, well trained, academic staff is one their “strengths”. During its visits, the EUA team saw several initiatives to improve teaching but also some areas of concern related to teaching and learning. For instance, external stakeholders strongly emphasize the need for students to be encouraged to have more placement and training opportunities in companies. Students, on the other hand, apart from also mentioning this dimension of change, pointed out the need for more experimental and problem-led learning.

Student centred Teaching

The information the EUA team gathered during its visits indicate that, generally speaking, the main teaching method at CU is *ex cathedra*. Although this is still the case in many universities, research in higher education during the last decades as well as the Bologna process recommend a profound transformation of teaching and learning environments and strategies. The focus is less on the content presented by the teachers, and more on the knowledge and competencies acquired by the students. Therefore, teaching is much more “student centred” than before. This shift from teaching to learning obviously has a deep impact on teaching methods and gives more space to active and interactive methods. CU has
already taken some steps in this direction. Some faculties intend to reduce the percentage of lectures in the programmes and try to introduce more active methods. One faculty (Medicine) has even created a pedagogical unit. Considering that teaching is already a priority at CU (according to the strategic plan process) and that teaching is the main activity of CU, the EUA team thinks that this trend should be accentuated. Since a good reputation for teaching could encourage more motivated students to attend CU (if demand increases, ranking does too), investment in teaching would be beneficial for CU.

The Bologna process leads to rethinking in depth the curricula and is a wonderful opportunity to reflect upon teaching methods.

In spite of the steps already made in this direction, there are other things that could be done at CU to seize this opportunity, and for instance:

Train the trainer programmes
Most academics are never taught to teach, how to introduce different methods, etc. They are experts in their fields but not in teaching. To improve their competencies in this domain, train the trainers programmes are very useful. CU has undertaken some initiatives which reflect the concern of the teachers for this matter. The EUA team strongly support these initiatives.

Create opportunities to exchange good practice
University teaching is often an individual, solitary activity and, since there is very often no teacher training, these competencies are learned through personal experience. Research about academic development shows that it is very useful to share teaching experiences between teachers. This helps to find new and appropriate methods to improve teaching. It is therefore interesting to create opportunities (workshops, practice analysis, etc) to share these experiences.

Improve conditions for practical work
In general, students did not complain about library and computer facilities, some of them even expressed their satisfaction. But there were more complaints about classrooms (space and furniture) and lack of material for practical teaching.

The need for developing experimental, applied and technical training was also mentioned by VHS representatives and by external stakeholders who see great potential in the training provided by these schools.

Relations with the outside world
The students’ completion rate at CU seems good (15% drop-out rate) but the EUA team could not compare this rate to other Turkish universities. The problem is that few graduates find jobs. There are 4.5 million job on offer and 5 million unemployed. This suggests a mismatch between training and professional needs and although it concerns training in general, it could make sense in higher education too.

CU offers a wide range of education and training programmes, going from vocational to PhDs and in this context, it is not surprising that some training offers are more in line with the job market than others.

CU maintains good relations with employers and other stakeholders. All the representatives the EUA team met have a good opinion of the training at CU. However, the discussions the EUA team had with external stakeholders, alumni and students suggest that the links with the professional world, between theory and practice could and should be re-enforced. This is also part of CU vision (“Aiming education towards labour market demand” SER, p. 14). The EUA team fully endorse this point of view, especially in the context of graduate unemployment.
Several initiatives could increase these links, such as the life long learning programmes which have just started at CU. These are promising experiences to strengthen the relations between CU and its environment and they should surely be encouraged.

Develop a careers office and relations with alumni and graduates
CU proposes a database to follow-up the professional careers of its students. This would inform younger students and academic staff. In the view of the EUA team, this is certainly a good way to strengthen relations between university and professional world. Along the same lines, relations with alumni could be increased. Some opportunities already exist but the comments heard during the visits suggest that they could be more systematic and developed to influence the programmes.

Include soft skills in programmes
Although university educational programmes are not all professionally oriented, they can teach useful competencies such as soft skills to all students. This means including in the training, project management, team work, presentation skills, needs and problem analysis, etc. The representatives from the labour market underlined the fact that students arriving from university (and CU in particular) still had a lot to learn in these matters before they can be operational. Although they mentioned that they would be very pleased to hire students from CU, they might hesitate if they have to spend too much time and money in training their new employees.

Develop placement opportunities and long term projects with economy
CU, especially with the more professionally oriented faculties, has already developed relations with economy to give practical experiences to its students. But these are usually short term (one month). This does not always allow in-depth training and, in some cases, it would be useful to have practical training projects lasting a year or more. With longer projects, the employers would be more motivated to invest in the placements and stages and the students would be more fully trained. These relations with managers could also prove useful in order to improve the programmes. This does not mean that companies should “dictate” how the university should train, but more collaboration in the conception of programmes would increase employability of students.

Re-enforce International exchanges
CU has already made several steps to develop exchanges with other universities. These exchanges are increasing (e.g. SER p. 8), but the SER, as well as students and staff met by the EUA team show that there is a strong desire to increase these exchanges even more. In spite of the efforts made by the office of international relations, the perception of the EUA team is that the support and information about these matters, towards staff and students, could be improved. In parallel this implies more work on inter institutional agreements and equivalences. In that sense, the EUA team believes that the work of the international office, at both the internal and external level, should be clearly supported in the framework of a strategic plan for that office.
To increase exchanges, it would also be useful to have reference people in each faculty or department. It is much easier for the students to get information from people they know and have clearly identified as resource persons.
6. Quality assurance

Various influences create an appropriate context for “Quality” issues to have a high priority in the agenda. The requirements of the Turkish HEC, the need for transparency in the frame of the Bologna agreement, the vision of CU to improve the university (e.g. Strategic planning project) and the demand of some faculties and staff). The EUA team perceives that CU is fully aware of the necessity to be more involved in these issues. CU raised the question and got some input from students and stakeholders. Nonetheless a global concept about quality is still to be elaborated. Some actions go toward quality development (evaluation of teaching, train the trainers, creating feedback loops with various stakeholders, etc), but in the view of the EUA team, these interventions are not systematic enough and the results insufficiently used. The EUA team considers that other actions, at different levels, should be considered:

1. A policy and a strategy for quality assurance
In order to implement quality assurance, CU needs to develop a global quality concept which would clearly lay out the objectives and modalities of its quality assurance. It would also require the definition of a strategy to implement this concept, with a previous agreement on issues such as : what is quality at CU ? How is it measured and developed? Who is involved, and how, in quality assurance? How does CU wants to develop a quality culture?

2. Develop feedback loops
Evaluation of teaching
The evaluation of teaching by students would appear to vary widely between faculties. Questionnaires (or other means of getting feedback from students) are not used systematically and in some cases, not at all. Continuous teaching evaluation is an important part of the quality assurance process. Besides this, it appears from student interviews that no feedback is given and that they have no idea how these evaluations are used. This points to the need for more effective feedback mechanisms to students following their evaluations.

The EUA team is of the opinion that CU needs a common approach across the institution for student evaluation of teaching, including the way this feedback, once obtained is given and used for the improvement of the teaching and learning process.

Besides regular evaluation of individual teaching, the EUA team thinks that it would be useful to hold meetings, for instance once a year, with students. This would be an opportunity to get global feedback on the training and the global learning experience. This could be organized in a more institutional approach on faculty or university level. In this perspective, the EUA team proposes that the faculties organize once a year a “SWOT” analysis of the faculty, realised by students. In this way, the information base would be expanded and students would be more involved in the development of their faculty.

Get feedback from alumni and employers
In order to improve programmes and training and to increase their relevance for the professional world, the EUA team suggests that CU get feedback from alumni and employers on a regular basis. This would help CU to re-enforce its strengths and correct its weaknesses.
Along the same lines, the EUA team thinks that the “train the trainers” initiatives from some faculties, or other means to improve teaching competencies (such as portfolios or group analysis for instance) should be generalized and contribute to the quality of teaching.

3. Include quality at management level

To the view of the EUA team, quality assurance should be fully integrated in the global management and strategy of CU. This would mean having an annual review of strategic planning based on data included in a global information system. CU needs such a global information system in order to have accurate indicators to evaluate the objectives. Such a system would also give transparency to governance since every one in CU could verify the basis for strategic decisions. It seems from the meetings the EUA team had that CU is ready to build this global information system.

The renewal of contract-programmes between Rectorate and faculties (c.f. Governance) could follow this annual review and be based on accurate data.

CU has several projects to systematize feedback. Namely the follow up of the action-plans resulting from the strategic planning process, the creation of a database for tracking previous graduates, the generalization of evaluation of teaching by students, etc. The EUA team believes that these initiatives are in the right direction and recommends that they become concrete as soon as possible.

The EUA team believes that all these initiatives and trials should be integrated in a coherent and global quality concept to ensure the development of a robust quality system.

7. Recommendations

On governance
1. Complete the strategic planning process, identify priorities and prepare its implementation using a participative approach for guaranteeing ownership by the whole institution.
2. Define a strategy to manage the recalibration of CU in a participative way.
3. Explore the possibility of contract programmes with faculties, for the implementation of agreed strategies and achieving negotiated and agreed goals.
4. Improve and increase internal communication and create a global information system.
5. Define rules and clarify levels of responsibility for decision-making processes.

On research
1. Define a strategy for research at institutional, faculty and departmental level.
2. Create a catalogue of available research equipment and optimize the use of the infrastructure for research.
3. Develop a strategy for cooperation and for contributing to the development and further innovation in the regional economy.

On Teaching and learning
1. Increase active learning strategies, develop conditions for experimental teaching and learning across the university and provide conditions for high standard professional education and training in VHS.
2. Increase relations with the outside world, paying particular attention to developing relations with alumni, creating long placement positions for students and increasing cooperation with industry and other local partners in VHS.
3. Re-enforce international relations (in research and education), the training in languages and the exchange programmes for staff and students.

On quality assurance
1. Define a policy and a strategy for quality assurance at CU.
2. Develop feedback loops, particularly for education and training.
3. Include quality at management level.
8. Envoi

The EUA team wishes to thank the university once again for the excellent arrangements made for its visit and work, for the hospitality offered and for the opportunity to get to know an impressive and interesting institution. It was a great pleasure to come to CU and to discuss with staff, students and external stakeholders the challenges which CU faces in its next phase of development and the various strategies currently being adopted to meet these. We hope that our comments and suggestions have been helpful, and we wish the university all the best for the stimulating future it is facing.