



European University Association

UNIVERSITY OF MITROVICA Report of EUA site visit, 10 - 13 December 2002

I Introduction

1.1 Background

The EUA team visit to the University of Mitrovica was organised in response to a request from the UNMIK Education Department in autumn 2002. It was undertaken in the context of EUA's priority activities in South East Europe, and funded within a World-Bank programme to support the regeneration of higher education in Kosovo.

UNMIK invited EUA to undertake this visit within the context of its efforts to reform higher education in Kosovo. Public higher education has long been a source of actual and potential conflict in Kosovo, making the issue of institutional provision highly sensitive. Yet ensuring that Kosovo citizens have access to good quality European higher education is also one of the key actions to bring about a positive future for citizens in the region. Reform of higher education, in line with European trends and developments, has therefore been central to the mission not only of UNMIK, but also to other partner organisations of the International Community.

The establishment of the University of Mitrovica has been nurtured and supported by UNMIK, and the role of UNMIK and in particular the personal contributions of its staff deserve to be acknowledged from the outset. Professor Michael Daxner, former International Administrator responsible for Higher Education and Co-Head of the Education Department worked tirelessly and with enormous diplomacy from 2000 – 2002 to develop the University of Mitrovica as a vital higher education provider which should not become a focal point for political confrontation. Without his major efforts to foster international engagement, and to encourage European reform, the progress that has been made in ensuring educational rights for all Kosovo citizens would not have been possible. The idea of involving the European University Association in this process also came from Professor Daxner, and it is therefore no exaggeration to say that without him this report would not have been possible.

The present reform project continues to be fully and skilfully supported by Dr Aziz Khan, Michael Daxner's successor as UNMIK Head of Education. Meanwhile in Mitrovica, a close and trusting working relationship has been built up between UNMIK and the University of Mitrovica, thanks notably to the efforts of UNMIK's Regional Education Officer, Patrick Duong. Over the past two years, the impact of Patrick Duong's work has been considerably strengthened through the involvement of international expert, Georg Woeber, who is working directly with the University of Mitrovica to implement concrete reforms aiming to bring the University in line with European trends, developments and standards. While Georg Woeber reports directly to the UNMIK Head of Education, his close working relationship with Patrick Duong has been a crucial factor in the great progress which has already been made in restructuring and reorganising the university. Without this combination of UNMIK political support, technical guidance offered within the university reform project, and the positive attitude to cooperation shown from the University leadership, none of the achievements so far made would have been possible.

1.2 Purpose of the visit

The purpose of this preliminary visit was to find out as much as possible about the conditions under which the University of Mitrovica is operating, and to advise upon plans for providing appropriate and good quality higher education in the region.

The EUA team was lead by Alojz Kralj, former Rector of the University of Ljubljana and member of the EUA Institutional Review programme Steering Committee. The other members of the EUA team were Professor Ivan Ostrovsky, Vice Rector of Comenius University, Bratislava, Manja Klemencic, former Secretary General of ESIB – the national unions of students in Europe – and David Crosier, EUA programme manager who acted as secretary to the team.

Although the scope of the mission was specifically limited to issues of a technical and academic nature, the highly sensitive political environment was fully recognized. The starting point for examining the University of Mitrovica is that all citizens with the wish and potential to benefit from higher education courses are able to do so. Without good quality higher education, benefiting from exchange within the European and international academic communities, positive transition towards a stable, democratic, tolerant society underpinned by economic development will not take place.

The conditions do not currently exist for Serb-language higher education to be provided in other higher education institutions in Kosovo, and the University of Mitrovica therefore meets a real societal need. Moreover the university has been established and licensed under UNMIK authority in the absence of an appropriate Kosovo higher education law. As the University of Mitrovica is an institution in Kosovo, it is to be hoped that the University of Mitrovica will be incorporated within a Kosovan legal framework in the near future.

The programme for this visit was exceptionally well organised by Secretary General Ranko Djokic in close cooperation with Patrick Duong and Georg Woeber, and over the

two and a half days, the team was able to visit all existing faculties, holding meetings with deans, professors, administrators and students. The interlocutors all seemed to have been well prepared for discussions. The EUA team would particularly like to thank Rector Gojko Savic and Secretary General Ranko Djokic for their hard work and flexibility to ensure that all the team's requests were met, despite very little notice.

Although the EUA team made considerable efforts to cross-check information, and in this report has attempted to outline impressions with as much objectivity as possible, a number of limitations need to be stated from the outset:

Firstly, given the short amount of time available for the visit, it was not possible to pursue substantial issues in great detail. Hence the observations in this report may in some respects be rather superficial and in some cases mistaken.

Secondly, very little reliable written information was provided by the university. Most of the questions regarding funding and management of information were met with answers offering subjective estimations, but not backed up by any authoritative statistical information. This means that it is impossible for the EUA team to be certain about the real nature of operations within the university. For example, it is difficult to know how many students, academic and non-academic staff are actually working in the university, and to understand fully the financing channels.

With such limitations, our preliminary review can only pose questions, raise issues and suggest options, while detailed comments upon particular choices taken must be the outcome of a more thorough future exercise. The ambition of this report is therefore to raise a number of questions which we consider important for the University to address, and certainly not to provide any easy solutions.

II. Preliminary observations

The first point which the EUA team would emphasize is that the needs for higher education of good quality in this region are absolutely critical if any decent future is to be envisaged for the citizens of Kosovo. Currently, the town of Mitrovica and the region of North Kosovo are not only suffering the effects of the human catastrophe brought about by the ethnically divisive politics of the past, but also from acute social and economic depression. The enormous and largely abandoned Trepca mining complex in Mitrovica dominates the landscape as a vision of an industrial period now passed, while no new economic development has yet taken its place.

It became evident over our stay that the University of Mitrovica is the only substantial public institution in northern Kosovo. Although no university can assume sole responsibility for addressing political, social and economic underdevelopment, the University of Mitrovica needs to play a key role in economic regeneration, providing hope for a better future.

It was nevertheless apparent that in this highly volatile and unstable period, the University of Mitrovica, having a complex and often turbulent history behind it, seems currently to be in search of its identity. While many students and professors we met cling to a nostalgic vision of the past, it is evident from an external viewpoint that the University of Mitrovica needs to look towards a different future. Rather than operating as an insular and inward-looking group of faculties with little concern for the outside world, it should develop from the outset as a genuinely European and international institution. Being an international institution means incorporating instruments at every level which will promote and facilitate international cooperation. For example, teaching and learning foreign languages, developing internet access, seeking foreign contacts for project development, promoting mobility in teaching and research should all be clear priorities of the university (as further discussed in this report). Developing international cooperation should not be perceived as an optional additional role of the university, but rather as part of its central mission to be integrated into all aspects of the university's work. This means that it is a long-term and labour-intensive process. It needs to happen through the concerted efforts of administrators, staff and students, who need first and foremost foreign language skills and access to internet to seek opportunities for participation at educational events and projects, and to take advantage of funding opportunities.

The University of Mitrovica needs to demonstrate that it can be an inclusive institution, opening up to the world. Instead of concentrating upon recreating the past university from which it has evolved, the University of Mitrovica should look to its future in the region, in Europe, and in the wider world.

However, a considerable number of students and professors that we met considered the university still to be a “university in exile”, awaiting the opportunity to return to its original premises. This vision seems to be encouraged by Serbian media and politicians, and its conceptual force should not be under-estimated. Nevertheless, in our view, this is a futile and unproductive political vision which will only hinder the university's development.

Other key actors at the university – including the Rector, deans and Secretary General - projected to us a more realistic attitude, recognizing that the university must settle and develop in Northern Mitrovica. For these key players, it is clear that higher education in Mitrovica needs to be developed not as a temporary solution to current reality, but in the perspective of transforming current reality.

Despite important distinctions in perception of the role of the university, all staff and students that we met were in agreement that the future of the university should be closely linked to higher education developments in the rest of Serbia.

On a number of occasions the EUA team asked different actors about their expectations for future university financing through the Ministry of Education in Kosovo. For the overwhelming majority, the response was that such a scenario could not be envisaged for some time to come. Nevertheless, the university leadership declared that it was open to

discussions of this funding issue. In a meeting following the EUA visit, Minister Osmani also declared his willingness to meet the University of Mitrovica leadership for discussions of this matter, and the EUA team would certainly encourage such a dialogue.

III Basic Information about the University of Mitrovica

As the university has experienced such dramatic change and movement over the past few years, it is extremely difficult to establish a stable “photograph” of the situation of the university today. Indeed the EUA team was aware that many questions were answered by reference to the past practice of the university. Even the limited statistical information which was provided seemed to refer to a past situation rather than to current reality. For this reason, even the most basic information, such as numbers of staff and students, cannot be regarded as reliable.

Within the stated student population of 11,450 it seems that active students, recently enrolled but “inactive” students, as well as students who were enrolled in the university previously are all included. With such an amalgam of information, it is impossible to state with any degree of certainty the number of students actually studying in the university. Normal tools of institutional management are therefore required to ascertain correct information, and such information should be presented without exaggeration.

As far as geographical breakdown of student numbers is concerned, from our own “straw poll” undertaken with students that we met in classes across the university, an extremely rough estimation is that about 60% of students come from Kosovo, with about one-third of these coming from Mitrovica. Other students have come from different parts of Serbia and Montenegro, and a small number from Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Accurate information about enrolment and completion rates was impossible to obtain. However, from oral reports, it seems that many – up to 90% - high school graduates enrol at university. Yet many – and how many is unclear – then drop out after their first year. The university needs to understand such enrolment and dropout patterns, and to take responsibility for its students.

It is also unclear how many students are registered under the Serbian state budget, and how many are so-called “self-financing”. From anecdotal evidence, it appears that about half of the students active in lessons are state-financed, while “self-financing” students who are from Kosovo are currently exempt from tuition fees. We have no reliable way of estimating the number of students paying tuition fees, and the level of fees seems to vary considerably according to faculty.

A similar problem of reliability of information concerns numbers of university staff. The number of academic staff presented on paper amounts to 728. However, of these, it is unclear how many are employees of the university, and how many are visiting lecturers employed primarily by another institution.

This information is basic to an assessment of institutional capacity, but is not presented clearly in official university documents. We learned, for example, on our visit to the economics faculty in Zubin Potok, that **none** of the teaching staff are resident in the town. This may be a particularity of this faculty, as indeed the reasons for placing the economics faculty in a town which is cut off from the rest of the university seemed not to be understood either by professors or students, and indeed we were unable to learn how and by whom this decision was taken. However, it is not tenable for a faculty to be entirely staffed by visiting academics, and such a pattern of staffing will have a serious negative impact upon the quality of teaching and learning in the institution.

In brief, it is important that if the university is to be able to reform and develop in a positive manner, basic self-knowledge obtained through reliable management information tools is an essential pre-requisite.

IV Institutional Structure

The University of Mitrovica is organised in the same manner as other universities in Serbia emerging from the former Yugoslav system. The university is a loose association of highly autonomous faculties which organize their own affairs as they choose, and with only minimal cooperation between them. The structure is thus highly fragmented, and the university as a manageable institution scarcely exists. Within such a structure, the role of the university leadership can only be to try to steer the different faculties in the same direction, but ultimately the scope for institutional planning is severely limited.

It seems that this current structure is a more a continuation of previous habit, rather than a positive choice or an obligation imposed by external forces. Clearly, it is easier to continue with the practice of the past rather than to develop and adapt new practice for the future. Such institutional behaviour is perfectly normal and to be expected in an environment which is highly unstable. For the university to maintain a sense of continuity, it is understandable that previous practice should be the dominant norm of institutional behaviour at this time.

Nevertheless, the university structure has serious negative consequences in the daily practice of the university. Among the most obvious are the overlapping of programmes between faculties, the lack of academic cooperation between faculties, and the inability of the university to plan and develop as a coherent institution.

No modern university, let alone the university of Mitrovica in its current situation, can afford to continue in this way. The current reorganisation of UM faculties and functions offers the ideal opportunity to move towards this modern European structural concept. Given this reality, the university leadership is to be applauded for the generally positive and open attitude which has been shown towards institutional reform.

V Accomplishments of the University of Mitrovica, and difficulty of material conditions

The EUA team was impressed by how much has been achieved by the university in a short time. The move back to the region has been generally characterised by pragmatic decision-taking. The main objective has been to ensure that “normal service” is resumed as far as possible. In this regard, reconstruction and renovation of buildings for university use has been managed efficiently, and although material conditions are extremely difficult, learning and teaching can now take place.

It was clear that the North Kosovo environment provides an exceptionally harsh reality for any higher education institution. Although there is a political and social imperative to ensure provision of Serb-language higher education, the environment is not attractive. Indeed, while many European universities are looking to the world of industry and business for partnership, investment, services and other links to wider communities, in Mitrovica there seems to be little outside working environment in which the institution can foster partnerships of mutual interest.

Of concern to the EUA team as well as to academic staff and students at the university was the lack of basic educational materials – and in particular books, information and communications technology, and equipment for laboratories. During our visits throughout the university, in meetings with students which “interrupted” classroom teaching, we were struck that students were hardly ever in possession of any books or other basic study materials.

Although at some faculties students confirmed that they could use computers, there is no access to internet. This means that students are practically cut off from vast and easily-available information resources. No access to Internet for the members of the Mitrovica University community also means that internationalisation is paralysed, as neither professors nor students can communicate with peers in other countries.

It appeared that access to computer facilities for students is also rather limited, with computer rooms being closed more often than they are opened. As resources are already limited by financial constraints, it is unfortunate to exacerbate the problem through such poor management.

Students provided considerable information about the problem of lack of books. The usual way of obtaining books is by copying them from professors – who are normally the authors. They are also available for purchase in faculties, but prices range between 10-20 euros – a prohibitive expense for the vast majority of students in such dire economic circumstances. The problem is further complicated by the non existence of a university library, which is a great problem both for providing core study literature, and in reducing the possibility of further research.

On a number of occasions the EUA team was also informed that books in Serbian language “belonging” to the university remain in Pristina, and have not been “returned”. However, when this issue was pursued, a number of students admitted that their preference would be to find the means of obtaining more recently-published texts, rather than struggling to get what in many cases would be obsolete books from Pristina.

Students also forcefully presented the difficult study and living conditions in Mitrovica and Zubin Potok. Most remarks were related to the general living conditions, characterised by electricity and water cuts, combined with heating problems in faculty buildings and dormitories. These conditions were often presented in contrast to the perceived high quality study and living conditions which had been enjoyed in the past in Pristina, and from which most believed that Kosovar Albanian students are now benefitting. Although there is no denial of the harsh conditions for living and study in the University of Mitrovica, both the impressions of remembered life in Pristina, and the imagined comfort of today’s Pristina citizens seem greatly exaggerated from reality.

Dormitory facilities have been provided, and continue to be developed. However, they cannot fully address the accommodation difficulties of students in Mitrovica, and indeed the issue of insufficient student rooms in dormitories, the overcrowding of students in rooms and the price of private accommodation were all problems often articulated.

Students also pointed out that they have no library facilities, no sports facilities and no cultural facilities in either Mitrovica or Zubin Potok. There doesn’t exist a student-gathering place (café/pub or student centre) where students can socialise. To the question what do they do in their considerable spare time, students answered that they socialise in each other’s rooms or they sleep.

Some specific issues were raised in particular faculties:

- 1) students in Zubin Potok (Faculty of Economics) and in Leposavi_ (Faculty of Pedagogy) were especially concerned by the lack of any facilities (library, cultural/social places, sports facilities) in the villages where the faculties are placed, and the feeling of ‘being cut off from the (future) student places/activities in Mitrovica’;
- 2) Economics students also said that they are unable to access the faculty building outside the times when the classes are taking place - which also seems to be the situation in other faculties;
- 3) students and professors in the faculty of Arts (painting section) complained about the extremely limited and inadequate space they are working in;
- 4) students of Medicine were concerned about the extremely poor conditions of the hospital building they work in, and the fact that there are no patients in the hospital, but they were unable to suggest equipment that would be urgently needed to improve their study. One student mentioned that 'only the oldest students who studied before in Prishtina and have been working with patients [on machines] have some practical knowledge'. According to the same student 'later generations have had no exposure whatsoever to practical training'.

- 5) Students at the Technology faculty also mentioned lack of equipment as a problem, but as with medicine students were unclear about what equipment they would actually need.

VI Funding sources

The university is the most significant public employer in northern Kosovo and for the moment is entirely reliant upon public funding. The university finances were not presented in a transparent form, yet it was stated on several occasions that no significant funding has come through the Kosovo budget.

Funding is provided primarily by the Serbian state, although it is not clear how much money is provided, nor how such funding is channeled (it seems likely that finances are coming from more than one government department, but as little explanation was offered, this report is unable to comment on this issue). Both Serbian state finances, and the University of Mitrovica finances remain opaque, and in such circumstances it will remain impossible to meet basic democratic needs of public accountability. If existing university finances are not presented openly, this will also create a major obstacle in any fund-raising activities with potential international donors.

Although the current university funding arrangements – essentially an arrangement between the Serbian state and the University of Mitrovica - may be understandable from the point of view of a pragmatic institution, nevertheless they are problematic for long-term development. Indeed, reliance upon such funding mechanisms could prove to be a short-sighted policy in an evolving political future, and it is therefore important for the university to shape itself towards a European future in which it has a viable role to play. In this context, the university leadership has been working upon reform plans which look towards a rational and positive development of the university.

VII Ideas About Reform

Although the university has developed reform plans, and indeed has already embarked upon implementation, there was generally little understanding among professors and students of why reform is necessary, and indeed considerable resistance within the university to specific proposals. While to an outside observer, the case for reform is overwhelming, it is important for the university leadership and the more innovative personnel to acknowledge the strength of feeling against any change in the university, and to take steps to convince the different actors of the reasons underlying the reform project. However good the ideas for reform which are developed, they will be doomed to failure unless supported by those who will be the main beneficiaries. It is therefore vital that the public debate and discussion which our visit sparked continue in 2003.

The main thrust of the university's reform proposals is to transform the institution from one which mirrors other universities of the former Yugoslavia into a European University which is equipped to meet the needs of the region in the twenty-first century. For such reform to be effective, a clear understanding of these needs is vital, and this will require

thorough analysis which is yet to be undertaken. The university actors also need to find out about reform processes within other European universities, and in particular about the meaning of Bologna process reforms. While many professors and students had heard about the Bologna Declaration, it was clear that there is generally very little understanding of the contents or objectives of Bologna reforms.

Reform proposals will also have to be able to withstand the negative and even hostile reactions of many students and professors. Indeed, many students and professors now seem to be under the rather deluded impression that their education system is organised in an almost perfect manner, and that it is simply the material conditions which need to be improved.

When assessing the educational needs in the region, account should be taken of the effects of recent history, as well as of the political, social and economic environment. Another major factor is the general educational profile of the population, which is certainly disadvantaged in European terms. Although data may be difficult to obtain, it is very likely that the percentage of school students completing secondary education has dropped significantly below the level of other European countries, and that higher education in the region needs to play a remedial role for many learners in the community.

The University of Mitrovica cannot fulfil its social role with its eyes closed to this reality. If revitalisation of the region is the goal, it must offer services which are of maximum benefit to the local community – whatever the level of educational attainment of students upon enrolment. The offer of courses will therefore need to be re-thought in terms of the population's educational needs. The university should also think now about services not only aimed at traditional post-secondary school-age students, but also for the many citizens who have educational and training needs later in life, with currently limited employment prospects. At the moment, the University of Mitrovica operates in a vacuum which seems to be largely unrelated to the educational needs of the region and its population. To be able to respond to real needs, reform of the traditional fragmented university is essential.

VIII Lack of internal quality assurance mechanisms

Like other Serbian universities, there are no systems at all for quality assurance within the University of Mitrovica. Quality should be a concept which affects all aspects of university life – whether teaching and learning, research, human resource development, provision of common services, management or administration. Mechanisms to assess quality of university services are vital, and should be developed with the full involvement of students. Currently, however, they are totally absent.

Introducing a quality assurance culture is not a simple matter, and will require, among other things, a process of finding out and learning from experience elsewhere in Europe, and adapting practice for the situation of the University of Mitrovica. Particular attention should be paid to the attitudes of staff, some of whom may feel that their activities are

being controlled and their academic freedom curtailed. Quality assurance should not be about “control” but rather about recognising and building upon good practice, providing incentives for good performance and innovation – all aspects of university life which are in urgent need of development.

IX Curriculum and Teaching methodology

It is beyond the scope of this report to make a studied assessment of the curricula and teaching methodology being used in the university. However, as a result of the current organisational arrangements, certain issues merit comment.

Firstly, as has already been noted, there are a considerable number of academic staff (up to 100% in some faculties) who are working at the university on a “part-time” basis, and who have other employment and occupations within and outside the region. In order to accommodate such staff, lectures and course units tend to be taught and assessed in “blocks”, either over one continuous period, or over several. It is perfectly normal at the moment for a course unit to be taught and examined within a week to ten days, and it is also normal for professors to determine completely the contents of their courses, with little or no consultation with their colleagues. Professors therefore write their course text books, teach their own course, and then examine their own course.

It should be noted that in general, students offered considerable praise to their professors for the quality of their teaching, and it is a positive feature of the university that in difficult times a rather close bonding has been established between professors and students. Yet while the lecturing system described above may have certain advantages in current circumstances – especially for the visiting professors - it also presents a number of limitations for learners, and presents drawbacks in terms of curriculum integration and development.

Such curriculum arrangements regard students as passive consumers of pre-fabricated knowledge. It is impossible for students to follow their own learning path within a curriculum structure which is pre-determined by the physical presence or absence of a particular professor. Neither do students have opportunities to reflect upon information, to question professors outside courses, and to build upon acquired knowledge. Coherent development and integration of curriculum is impossible to achieve with professors travelling to and from the university. The learning experience of most students is likely to be fragmented, inflexible, uncreative, and uncritical, and the university community needs to think hard about the likely outcomes of such a system.

X Examinations and assessment

Currently, there are no formal channels through which students are able to affect the teaching process. Structured feedback on teaching does not exist, although some

professors may use student questionnaires for their own purposes. As professors have total autonomy regarding their courses, issues of misuse or abuse of power may occasionally arise, yet there is no system within the university to deal with such matters. However, this was not perceived by students as a major cause for concern. In case of a problem with a particular teacher, many students felt they would be able to speak directly to their Dean, which is yet another example of rather close relationships within individual faculties.

Despite these close relationships between the students and professors, in our view the authoritarian position of professors needs to evolve. It seems that the situation of limited books, no access to internet, and isolation from the wider academic community has tended to reinforce authoritarian behaviour among some professors, as they are aware that they are not well enough prepared and updated in their knowledge to be questioned and challenged by students.

There are a number of additional problems with the academic process at this stage in the university's development:

- 1) in some faculties courses didn't seem to have really started yet (e.g. Agriculture);
- 1) timetables and schedules of courses are highly irregular due to the commuting professors;
- 1) problems associated to "block" teaching outlined in the previous section.

With regard to examinations, students could generally explain the rules in regard to taking exams (how many times you can take it, what are the exam terms, etc.), but only in a few faculties (e.g. Law, Philology) did students know *exactly* what the rules actually are. In most cases, the answer was 'you take an exam until you eventually pass'. Students also complained of inconsistency among faculties in terms of charging fees for registration to the exam. On the same issue students questioned why fees are different, and what the money is used for. Such questions are entirely valid, and these matters should be made transparent within university regulations.

XI University Needs

A comprehensive list of university needs at this stage could only be developed through an extensive internal process of consultation – which should take place. However, from the external perspective of our short visit, several important aspects of a modern European University seem to be lacking:

- 1) Legal Framework

It is important for any university to operate within a normal legal framework. At the moment there is no such framework, and this lack of clarity creates considerable problems which are often beyond the power of the institution to resolve. However, the lack of legal authority could in some respects also be turned to the advantage of the university – for example by developing a university statute as the university would like it to be, outside external constraints normally imposed by government.

This period also provides opportunities to open up communication channels both within the university and with the local community. There are no legal obstacles preventing the participation of students and professors in university decision-making, nothing to prevent the establishment of different reform committees, or to prevent any good ideas being implemented. Opportunities for positive university development should therefore be exploited.

1) Staff

A number of personnel issues at the university are critical. The most important matter is the over-reliance upon commuting professors, as this is a model which is neither sustainable nor desirable. In our view, the university staffing priority should be to attract younger academic staff who have been educated for some time outside the region, and who will bring the university wider academic contacts, as well as foreign language skills (which are currently extremely under-developed).

1) Research

The EUA review team recognise the myriad difficulties which have been faced with regard to university development, and also the reasons why development of research capacity has not been the first priority. Nevertheless, a university with no possibility to undertake even the most basic research cannot lay claim to the title of university. An institution with no library, and no communication with the external academic community can scarcely live up to the title of educational institution. A university without research capacity will be unable to progress, and if this situation is not addressed the existence of the University of Mitrovica will be threatened.

1) Students

As with any institution, the students have the capacity to push the university forward. At the University of Mitrovica, however, students have important needs and require support. Within the university, students in difficulty need to be better supported in their study programmes. Students also need to be supported in their efforts to bring positive changes to the university. There is much to be learned from contact with outside student networks and organisations. The most vital need is therefore to make contact with the European student community.

XII CONCLUSION

Given the complexity of the challenges faced by the university, and the inadequacy of the information base for this report, it would be imprudent to offer any clear cut concluding statements. Instead, we would simply like to state our hope that this first visit and report will be a starting point for cooperation and future development of the University of Mitrovica, and the first important step towards a European future.

We recognise that the European academic community also has a responsibility to respond to the needs of the university and the region, and the EUA will endeavour to respond to the university in the most helpful and supportive manner possible. The strong impressions and memories of our visit will remain with us, and we look forward with optimism and expectation to our future work together.