

September 29, 2010

## LETTER OF INTENTION

*International Forum on Higher Education Reform - Foresight 2020, Dubrovnik, 27-29 September 2010*

We, the representatives of universities from the region, met in Dubrovnik on 27-29 September 2010, on the occasion of International Forum on Higher Education Reform - Foresight 2020.

This three-day Forum, as an event sustaining Novi Sad Initiative, and as a follow-up of the biannual International Conferences on Higher Education (Novi Sad 2005, Dubrovnik 2007, Sarajevo 2009), aimed to explore a wider context of European higher education reform. Forum represents a platform for discussion on crucial issues for further development of EU higher education area, with emphasis on implications of the process to the Western Balkans region.

Building-up of a knowledge-based society leading to increased competitiveness and sustainable social and economic development, and the development of human capacity are a challenge and a priority for the Western Balkans on their path towards EU accession. Regional cooperation in the field of Higher Education is an integral part of this effort.

Ongoing global challenges require introduction of new scientific sectors and technological breakthroughs, based on the solid grounds of reformed education systems.

Recalling importance of the Conclusions of the “Sarajevo Conference on Higher Education - Building Capacity for Change in the Western Balkans Region”, held under the auspices of the Regional Cooperation Council Secretariat in Sarajevo on 30 and 31 October 2009,

Rector of University of Zagreb, Rector of University of Novi Sad, Rector of Aleksander Moisiu University-Durres, Vice-rector of University of Sarajevo and Vice-rector of University of Zadar agree to undertake the following steps:

- Enhance regional cooperation in doctoral education ( i.e. Joint Programmes, Collaborative programmes);
- Promote and support mobility of doctoral candidates;
- Strengthen concept of joint supervision of doctoral candidates;

- Develop infrastructure for mutual recognition of awarded doctoral degrees;
- Set framework for exchange of evaluation programmes experts;
- Promote exchange of experts in Doctoral Theses Evaluation Committees;
- Initiate exchange of post-doctoral researchers;
- Participate in collaborative research grants in order to increase institutional capacities both in research expertise and infrastructure, with a long-term aim to set up Regional Centres of Excellence.

Signatories agreed to develop an Action plan on the above defined activities within the next 6 months.

Signatories will meet annually in order to evaluate achieved results and to discuss future modalities of cooperation.

Signatories invite universities from the region and other parties to join the initiative.

This Letter of Intention will be forwarded to attention and further consideration to the Regional Cooperation Council.

Prof. Aleksa Bjelis, PhD, Rector, University of Zagreb

Prof. Miroslav Veskovic, PhD, Rector, University of Novi Sad

Prof. Agim Kukeli, PhD, Rector of Aleksander Moisiu University-Durres

Prof. Hazim Basic, PhD, Vice-Rector, University of Sarajevo

Prof. Srecko Jelusic, PhD, Vice-Rector, University of Zadar