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**Round table 4:  
Higher Education in  
Western Balkans 2020**

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**What is to be done? Nine proposals to ensure that there is no difference between HE 2020 in the EU and in the Western Balkan countries**

1. Implementing the autonomy of HE institutions
2. HE institutions must be able to carry out research work
3. “Budget paths” in legislation to secure investments in HE and R&D
4. HE institutions cooperate with business
5. HE institutions increase their contribution to business and social innovations
6. The ministries responsible take on a new role as partner and advocate of the sciences and the humanities
7. Encouraging national, regional and international cooperation
8. Avoiding new, oversized national and supra-national bureaucracies
9. Collaboration in strengthening the “external dimension” of the Bologna Declaration

1. Implementing the autonomy of HE institutions

Autonomous HE institutions are more efficient than state-directed ones. Autonomy and state financing are compatible on the basis of partnership and contractual relationship. There is a ground to be made up here. A start should be made immediately as realisation will take some time.

2. HE institutions must be able to carry out research work

Freely chosen, interest-based basic research produces knowledge, renews teaching and determines the future direction of a HE institution. The state funding envisaged for this should be employed in a manner that is organized competitively.

3. “Budget paths” in the legislation to secure investments in HE and R&D

The relatively low economic efficiency makes tying expenditure for HE and R&D to the GDP, which is standard practice in developed industrialised nations, and also orientation according to Western European figures appear unsuitable. What are needed here are absolute budget figures that are higher than today. These are relatively high percentages of the GDP. These budget dimensions in absolute sums of money should be adjusted to the rate of inflation and raised yearly in stages and should be laid down in budget legislation over a period of ten years as a means of establishing security. The contributions finance teaching, research, as well as the infrastructure for teaching and research.

The rational and appropriate political justification for these statutory budget paths lies in the positive economic effects of investments in HE and R&D.

4. HE institutions cooperate with business

This collaboration must take place on an equal footing. The HE institutions work self-confidently, can assert themselves, and are ready to communicate. The HE institutions learn in the process. To avoid crowding out basic research work the extent of such cooperation should not be excessive. The income

generated serves to strengthen the HE institutions, not to ease the burden of the financing state.

5. HE institutions increase the contribution to business and social innovations

Innovations of a technical, economic or social nature arise on the basis of new knowledge and protagonists who are willing to take risks (entrepreneurs, politicians), and are capable of handling the new knowledge. New knowledge alone does not ensure anything. It must be applied and used in practice. The protagonists need qualified people who can work with scientific knowledge. Here the universities and other facilities acquire a key function: they research and train experts and, if they are good, they do this in a self-confident way, constructively and with a critical distance.

6. The ministries responsible take on a new role as partner and as advocate of the sciences and the humanities

The traditional sovereign relationship between state and university is not suitable for autonomous HE institutions. The ministries have a new role as partners on an equal footing with the HE institutions. Instead of issuing decrees, the approach must now be one of discussing and negotiating. If the ministries do not take on this new role, they can be abolished.

They should not relapse to their old ways because, if they do so, the HE institutions cannot become independent and cannot learn to take on responsibility for their decisions and performance.

The ministries also work to secure financing and to represent the concerns of HE and R&D to the public and in politics.

7. Encouraging national, regional and international cooperation

A HE institution cannot provide the performance that is expected of it alone. A single ministry, in isolation, cannot achieve what it ought to. Cooperation and distribution of work are essential. Existing structures should be utilised.

8. New, oversized national and supra-national bureaucracies should be avoided

The self-generated dynamic of bureaucratic development that is known from national bureaucracies, i.e. the development of organisations which, to a considerable extent, exist and grow for their own sake and not on account of their actual, required function must be prevented. They cost money and do not provide what they are supposed to but what they want to.

9. Collaboration in strengthening the “external dimension” of the Bologna process

The Bologna Declaration and the Bologna process have attracted interest in Asia, Africa and Latin America. The development of institutions that research and teach and are key players for innovations has become a global task. Collaborating in this task in the context of international networks, even where there may be an individual need to catch up, is part of individual and global development.