



**REPORT  
of the Expert Panel  
on the  
RE-ACCREDITATION OF  
Faculty of Teacher Education in Osijek**

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**Contents**

**INTRODUCTION..... 3**

**SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE EVALUATED INSTITUTION..... 6**

**CONCLUSIONS OF THE EXPERT PANEL..... 8**

**ADVANTAGES OF THE INSTITUTION..... 8**

**DISADVANTAGES OF THE INSTITUTION..... 13**

**FEATURES OF GOOD PRACTICE ..... 18**

**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT..... 19**

# INTRODUCTION

This report on the re-accreditation of the Faculty of Teacher Education in Osijek was written by the Expert Panel appointed by the Agency for Science and Higher Education, on the basis of the self-evaluation of the institution and supporting documentation and a visit to the institution.

Re-accreditation procedure performed by the Agency for Science and Higher Education (ASHE), a public body listed in EQAR (European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education) and ENQA (European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education) full member, is obligatory once in five years for all higher education institutions working in the Republic of Croatia, in line with the Act on Quality Assurance in Higher Education.

The Expert Panel is appointed by the ASHE Accreditation Council, an independent expert body, to perform an independent peer review based evaluation of the institution and their study programs.

The report contains:

- a brief analysis of the institutional advantages and disadvantages,
- a list of good practices found at the institution,
- recommendations for institutional improvement and measures to be implemented in the following period (and checked within a follow-up procedure).
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The members of the Expert Panel were:

- Prof. Lasse Laponen, Department of Teacher Education, University of Helsinki, Finland (chair)
- Professor Assumpta Aneas Alvarez, Facultad de Pedagogía de la Universidad de Barcelona, Spain
- Prof. Javier Rosales, Facultad de Educación, Universidad de Salamanca, Spain
- Prof. Reinhold Stipsits, Institut für Bildungswissenschaft, Universität Wien, Austria
- Mateja Pernar, student, Faculty of Teacher Education, University of Zagreb, Croatia

In the analysis of the documentation, site visit and writing of the report the Panel was supported by the ASHE staff:

- mr. sc. Irena Petrušić, Agency for Science and Higher Education, coordinator
- Vlatka Derenčinović, Agency for Science and Higher Education, translator

During the visit to the Institution the Expert Panel held meetings with the representatives of the following groups:

- The Management;
- The Working Group that compiled the Self-Evaluation;
- The students, i.e., a self-selected set of students present at the interview;
- The Vice-Dean for Teaching and Students' Affairs, programme co-ordinators and teachers; Head of Study Branch in Slavonski Brod
- The Vice-Dean for Scientific Activity and International Cooperation and research projects' leaders;
- Teachers;
- Administrative staff;
- Teaching assistants and junior researchers.

The Expert Panel also had a tour of the library, IT rooms, student register desk, and the classrooms at the Faculty of Teacher Education in Osijek, where they held a brief question and answer session with the students who were present. The panel visited study branch facilities in Slavonski Brod and held meetings with teachers, students and administrative staff.

Upon completion of re-accreditation procedure, the Accreditation Council renders its opinion on the basis of the Re-accreditation Report, an Assessment of Quality of the higher education institution and the Report of Fulfilment of Quantitative Criteria which is acquired by the Agency's information system.

Once the Accreditation Council renders its opinion, the Agency issues an Accreditation Recommendation by which the Agency recommends to the Minister of Science, Education and Sports to:

1. **issue a confirmation** to the higher education institution which confirms that the higher education institution meets the requirements for performing the higher education activities or parts of activities, in case the Accreditation Recommendation is positive,

2. **deny a license** for performing the higher education activities or parts of activities to the higher education institution, in case the Accreditation Recommendation is negative, or

3. **issue a letter of recommendation** for the period up to three (3) years in which period the higher education institution should remove its deficiencies. For the higher education institution the letter of recommendation may include the suspension of student enrolment for the defined period.

The Accreditation Recommendation also includes an Assessment of Quality of the higher education institution as well as recommendations for quality development

## SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE EVALUATED INSTITUTION

NAME OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION: The Faculty of Teacher Education in Osijek

ADDRESS: Osijek, Ulica cara Hadrijana 10.

NAME OF THE HEAD OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION: interim dean Damir Matanović,  
PhD, Associate Professor

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE:

- Department of Social Sciences
- Department of Philology
- Department of Art
- Department of Natural Sciences
- Department of Lifelong Learning

LIST OF STUDY PROGRAMMES:

- Integrated undergraduate and graduate university Class Teacher Studies
- Undergraduate and graduate university studies of Early and Preschool Education

NUMBER OF STUDENTS: part-time 84 / full-time 807 /final-year 52

NUMBER OF TEACHERS: full-time 19, external associates 9

NUMBER OF SCIENTISTS: 32 doctors of science, elected to grades 18

TOTAL BUDGET (in Kuna): 18.083.771,63

MSES FUNDING (percentage): 83

OWN FUNDING (percentage): 17

SHORT DESCRIPTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION:

The history of teacher education in Osijek dates back to 1733 when Franciscans ran the first course for teacher education. The Faculty of Teacher Education continues this tradition. After a period during which occasional courses for teacher education were organised, in 1893 Teacher Academy was founded in Osijek. From the academic year 1961/62 teachers were educated at Pedagogical Academy and later at the Faculty of Education. In the early 90s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century education system reforms were implemented in Croatia in accordance with European standards and outlined proposals for education of teachers in independent institutions – colleges. Thus in 1998 the Croatian government passed a resolution on the foundation of Teacher Training College in Osijek.

In the academic year 2009/10 two new university study programmes were developed at the Faculty of Teacher Education: undergraduate studies of Early and Preschool Education and graduate studies of Early and Preschool Education. The first generation of students was enrolled into the university undergraduate studies.

Some of the critical issues were related to inadequate facilities and insufficient number of the teaching staff. The lectures were organised at the Faculty of Philosophy in Osijek, and students in Slavonski Brod had lectures in two classrooms in primary school "Hugo Badalić". Since November 2008 the lectures in Slavonski Brod have been organised in new facilities which has, to a certain extent, solved the problem of inadequate classrooms.

In 2011 the facilities on the University campus in Osijek were refurbished and the Faculty of Teacher Education started organizing study programmes and other activities in these facilities. The Faculty of Teacher Education has thus become a respectable institution with a total of 5,500 m<sup>2</sup> at its disposal including 19 classrooms, 3 ICT classrooms and 1 laboratory. All classrooms are equipped with modern technology.

There are 65 members of the teaching staff, 35 holding scientific teaching job positions and teaching job positions, 27 teaching assistants and senior teaching assistants and 3 research assistants. The Faculty also cooperates with teaching staff from other constituents at the University in Osijek, Croatia and abroad.

The Faculty participates in a few Croatian and European research projects and closely cooperates with universities, faculties and research institutes from Austria, Great Britain, Turkey, Hungary, Serbia and other European countries.

## **CONCLUSIONS OF THE EXPERT PANEL**

The present statement summarizes the assessment of the Faculty of Teacher Education in Osijek. The process of assessment has proceeded from individual and independent assessments to collective and comparative analyses of which outcome this joint statement is.

The assessment work has been guided by the criteria for the assessment of quality of higher education institutions within universities set forth by the Agency for Science and Higher Education. Whilst making the assessments, the panel have kept in mind especially two things that should guide the actions of the faculty: the mission and the vision stated in the self-evaluation report by the faculty under assessment.

Next, the report turns to discussing the assessments of the faculty with regard to its compliance to the standards and criteria for re-accreditation. The panel's interpretations are based on the evidence provided by:

- 1) the self-evaluation report provided by the Faculty of Teacher Education in Osijek;
- 2) site-visits, during which the panel has interviewed the management, students and teachers, and discussed with administrative, technical and supporting staff.

## ***ADVANTAGES OF THE INSTITUTION***

The panel has witnessed and acknowledged the following issues as the advantages of the institution:

### ***Higher education institution management and quality assurance***

The Faculty has a clear mission, vision, goals and objectives. As stated in the self-evaluation report, the mission of the Faculty of Teacher Education in Osijek is to make a "contribution to the society by improving knowledge through research and training student for work in education". The vision of the Faculty is to "be a research Faculty with clear research profile oriented towards sustainable development". The mission and vision give a direction for the institute to proceed.



What is still missing, or should be sharpened, are the concrete actions to achieve the mission and vision, and tools to monitor and evaluate the process.

The Faculty of Teacher Education in Osijek (especially in the Slavonski Brod campus) has a great importance for the region and for the local community as well. In particular, the panel recognized the collaboration between the local community and the Faculty in producing a variety of opportunities for learning from each other. The institution appears to be an important hub for developing and establishing the social cohesion of the region. The location of the institution has the advantage of attracting students from different geographical areas (rural, city, countries such as Bosnia) and with different cultural and socio-economic backgrounds to educate themselves and to realize their human potential for the good of the future education. The institution also appeared to be aware of this advantage, and to further develop its activities towards this strength.

It is probably fair to say that the Faculty of Teacher Education is situated in an economically challenging area. The Faculty trains and educates students to this part of a country, giving them good possibilities and opportunities to be employed, and in doing so, generating a rich social and economic activity in the surrounding cities. A new opening is the collaboration between the Faculty of Teacher Education and the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering in Slavonski Brod, in order to produce a new profession of teachers, with technical and pedagogical competence. In these sense, the Faculty shows responsiveness to the labour market, and partly fulfils its mission. Quality management processes support the Faculty in achieving its vision.

The Faculty offers an encouraging atmosphere for interdisciplinary activities and development both for staff and students. The attitudes throughout the Faculty towards student influence and feedback are very positive.

### ***Study programmes***

The Faculty has rather well defined principles for the content, methods and development of study programs. The cooperation between the Faculty and its departments gives good possibilities to manage study programs systematically. It appears that authorized Senate board carries out the formal evaluation of the study programs. The distribution of labour between the

Faculty, the departments and their divisions in the preparation, implementation, and monitoring of degree requirements is a bit unclear (who is responsible of what). Is it the departments that are responsible for agreeing on the content, methods and development of teaching, and if, how and what kind of support they receive from the Faculty is not clear.

The Faculty is aware of the coming changes such as the new strategy of the Croatian education system and the National Curriculum Framework. The new national strategy and framework will have consequences for the Faculty to re-thinking the existing study programmes, and to create new openings. This is something that should be systematically considered and developed in the future.

### ***Students***

The Faculty offers students different possibilities and forums to be engaged in decision-making. Students have representatives in the Faculty Council, and their concerns and requests are being discussed at the Council sessions. Students are also a part of the Faculty's management structure represented by Student Council, associations and other organizations. Students are also members of established and temporary committees such as Board for Quality Improvement and Assurance, Ethical Behaviours Committee, Disciplinary Tribunal for Students and Committee for University Fair.

The Faculty encourages student participation in extracurricular activities as well, such as sports and humanitarian activities. Some of these activities are conducted in collaboration with the local community. The students of the Faculty were very satisfied with their studies, study programs and teaching. They also appear to have collegial relationship between their teachers. There are good communication channels between students and staff, and students have the opportunity to express their opinions and suggestions. The studying atmosphere was found to be open, and interaction between teachers and students relaxed. During the visit, the panel was told that the Faculty offers students counselling, and professional orientation. Student Union has a strong role in decision-making, and students also are familiar with all the students' rights and complaint procedures.

### ***Teaching staff***

The panel regarded the degree of commitment and motivation among teachers generally to be good. It appears that the Faculty has a good potential, especially what comes to the human resources. The teaching staff, especially, the young generation of teachers, had a passion and engagement in their profession. From the already established level of the expertise of the staff, the challenge and opportunity of the Faculty is to realize the potential of its teaching body. The panel would like to see the management to harness and further cultivate this potential.

The big part of the teaching staff is academically and pedagogically qualified, and has good experience in teaching. Teacher student ratio is 1/30, which, according to the criteria, is considered satisfactory.

The Faculty encourages the staff members in various ways to develop their skills as academic teachers.

### ***Scientific, artistic and professional activity***

The vision of the Faculty is to “be a research Faculty with clear research profile oriented towards sustainable development”. This is an important objective to pursue. If the Faculty will achieve this objective then it simultaneously has a possibility to establish a stronger research-based orientation to teaching.

### ***Mobility and international cooperation***

The Faculty is aware of the need to increase the mobility of students and staff members, and encourages students and teachers to engage more in international exchanges that promote competence needed in the increasingly internationalized field of higher education. The Faculty is also determined to create new national and international networks that support the management of education and research. There already appears to be some already established international cooperation, and some new agreements coming as well.

***Resources: administrative and support services, facilities, equipment and finances***

In the academic year 2012/2013 there were 21 employees at administrative, cleaning and maintenance positions (14 people performing administrative jobs and 7 people performing cleaning and maintenance jobs). The Faculty appears to have enough administrative and support services to run its daily teaching and research activities, and student counselling. The Faculty offers internet connections and access to electronic databases, through which teachers and students can access to up-to-date teaching and research resources, such as international journals.

## ***DISADVANTAGES OF THE INSTITUTION***

The Faculty appears to be rather well aware of some of its disadvantages, as listed on the self-evaluation report (pages 26-27). The panel does agree with these disadvantages stated in the report. However, to the understanding of the panel, there are other disadvantages (or the panel would say developmental challenges) that the Faculty should be more aware of. The panel has witnessed and acknowledged the following issues as the disadvantages of the institution:

### ***Higher education institution management and quality assurance***

The Faculty of Teacher Education is in the process of changing its name into the Faculty of Education, and simultaneously moving towards a genuine research community. As stated in the self-evaluation report, working towards these two objectives requires the restructuring of the Faculty. The observation of the panel was, that this work is in the very beginning, and should be deeply considered from the point of view of teaching, research and administration.

There are some issues and needs regard to quality assurance (QA) that should be considered and taken care in more detailed and consistent manner. These include issues such as; better documented objectives for QA on different levels of Faculty, on teaching and research; responsibilities in QA work and their practical implementation; the clarification of QA responsibilities and mutual distribution of the work especially between Board for Quality Assurance and Improvement in Higher Education, and the Office for Quality Assurance (not yet established).

The Faculty documents its quality work through a variety of reports on student and teacher surveys. The obtained information, however, could be processed more systematically and utilized more effectively at the all levels of Faculty and departments. The varieties of the quality assurance instruments used are very basic and methodologically a bit limited and one-dimensional. The panel recommends the Faculty to use sophisticated forms of qualitative data gathering as well.

The Faculty and departments have a number of committees and working groups. The panel observed that there exists quite a lot of overlapping responsibilities and duties between these groups. The panel recommends that the Faculty and departments would benefit of re-thinking the objectives and responsibilities of these different groups. The responsibilities and duties of the groups should, in the first place, serve the mission and vision of the Faculty. The panel would like to see, for instance, a working group that is responsible for organizing and taking care of the research activities in the Faculty, and another group that is responsible of teaching activities. This kind of groups would directly serve the mission and vision of the Faculty.

It is evident that students and teacher are actively involved in the decision-making process of the Faculty. Teaching personnel who are not members of committees or working groups must increasingly be offered with opportunities to participate in the development of teaching, research, and the preparation of decisions. While reforming the curriculum, teachers' qualifications, and students' learning outcomes, attention should be paid more carefully to the mission and vision of the Faculty: curriculum, teacher's qualifications, and students' learning outcomes should be in line with the mission and vision.

### ***Study programmes***

Although the Faculty of Teacher Education continuously monitors the quality of the study programmes and instruction, there appears to be a lack of in depth quality assurance of some of the central processes (design of study programs, teaching duties, organization of research), and responsibilities related to them. These could be documented, because they are the core processes of the Faculty. The information acquired through different feedback systems could be processed more systematically, and exploited more effectively at the Faculty and departmental levels.

The students' role in the planning of teaching should be highlighted more. Student feedback could be used even more systematically in the development of teaching, and this exploitation should be documented. Students should be provided with feedback on their feedback.

A wide variety of surveys have been conducted at the Faculty and departmental levels, but have they properly been taken advantage of the development of educational programmes is unclear. It appears that an abundance of data is produced and collected, but not used systematically. Cooperation and dialogue between programmes appears to be scarce in the preparation of

degree requirements. Extensive exchanges would ensure the transfer of good practices and development ideas between Faculty and departments.

### ***Students***

Students are familiar with their learning outcomes, but mostly through the website, which, according to the students, is not always up to date. In the student hearing, student told to the panel that they would like to have more practical activities and courses in their studies. However, if the Faculty is aiming to be a research institute, it would not be very wise to increase the amount of practical studies.

According to students, teachers mostly use testing, and less practical tasks, projects and self-regulated learning. Perhaps teachers should consider expanding the repertory of their teaching methods.

Students should make better use of their opportunities to influence the preparation of degree requirements. The role of the Faculty is central in activating students on this issue.

Students receive feedback on the measures and solutions based on their own opinions but mostly through the website and less through other communication channels, for example face to face.

The Faculty should not only increase its own students' mobility but also be able increase the number or of incoming international students. This would require increasing the number of courses given in English.

The Faculty does not offer any PhD studies. The opportunities of postgraduate students to do their PhD studies should be promoted with greater effort. This would offer a pathway to educate the new generation of staff members.

### ***Teaching staff***

The Faculty needs to be strengthened by increased number of competent teaching staff with academic titles, especially staff that is able to do research, and research-based teaching. The Faculty research and teaching strategies should be taken into account in the filling of posts so that qualified teachers are recruited to all of the Faculty's focus areas. The competence of professors and associates at study programmes could be evaluated according to the following

variables: teaching quality, participation in research and professional projects, publication of course books, scientific and professional papers.

The orientation of new employees deserves greater attention in the future. Whenever new employees start work, their orientation and introduction should be carried out in accordance with the University and Faculty's mission, vision, instructions and with consideration for the special features of the post in question.

The panel did not observe any documentation about how the teaching duties are distributed and teacher's time allocated between teaching, research, and administration. Because the Faculty is strengthening its research based approach, this implies that the workload of teaching staff should be organized in a way that it offers opportunities and time for research. This appears not to be the case at present. The possibility to engage in research should be agreed upon with every teacher individually. Faculty also could consider measures such as sabbaticals for research activities to increase the motivation and encourage explicit research. A prerequisite for the maintenance and development of professional skills is that teachers have time that they can devote to research.

Although the Faculty encourages the teaching staff for international collaboration and for mobility the opportunities are too rarely exploited. A part of the teaching staff had good communication skills in English. If the Faculty is really going to go international, it should find ways of unceasing the language competence of its entire staff.

### ***Scientific, artistic and professional activity***

The vision of the Faculty is to be a research Faculty with clear research profile oriented towards sustainable development. The panel noted the willingness to develop scientific activities of the Faculty.

The panel observed that the Faculty does not yet have the culture of promoting true scientific research. There appears to be no established strategy and structures for scientific work. The Faculty does not have a doctoral program of its own; there are too many research focuses; too little research units (or groups). What the Faculty also lacks is the external funding for research. These entire dimensions are indicated by the low scientific activity of the Faculty.



The management of the Faculty should create some strategic goals of research activities that include the focus areas of research; the recognition of developing disciplines; cooperation between different departments and people, and the systematic development of teachers' research competence.

The panel did not observe any documents or procedures related to the recognition, planning, implementation, monitoring, reporting, and evaluating of the research projects conducted in Faculty. Making these things visible is crucial for the dissemination of good practices of conducting scientific activity. There could also be a rotation principle established for leaves of absence among the staff to join research activities from abroad such as CEEPUS, ERASMUS et.al

### ***Mobility and international cooperation***

The Faculty encourages teachers and students for mobility and international collaboration with different partners and institutions. However, the concrete activities of harnessing international teaching and research networks are quite rare. Teachers and students are not very active in using available international exchange opportunities. The number of outgoing teachers and degree students from this Faculty could be increased. Students are not familiar enough with the possibility of student mobility, potential destinations and grants that are available to them.

### ***Resources: administrative and support services, facilities, equipment and finances***

The Slavonski Brod campus probably needs some renovation. The Faculty's staff in support services needs training to keep up and advance their expertise.

## ***FEATURES OF GOOD PRACTICE***

- The management of the Faculty appears to have a rather clear understanding of the importance of having relevant and future oriented goals and activities.
- The management encourages and supports staff's professional development in a variety of ways such as participation in conferences, for mobility, and publishing activities.
- The institution supports students' extracurricular activities.
- Students' opportunities of participation in the decision-making processes of the Faculty
- New forms of innovative practices of creating a close collaboration between the Faculty of mechanical engineering and Faculty of teacher education
- The encouragement and realization of students' talents in a variety of projects such as, publishing books, organizing conferences, and doing it in a multidisciplinary way.

## ***RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT***

- The panel recommends the Faculty to formulate more clearly, what makes this university and Faculty unique. Formulating this requires probably, in the long run, to further consider the mission and the vision of the Faculty. Instead of just stating that the vision of the Faculty relies on research, the guiding idea and principle for the future could be, for instance, research-based teacher education. As the Faculty of Teacher Education (or Education in the future), the Faculty could have a key role to play in the entire University in terms of the pedagogical development of teaching staff. The management and the staff should guarantee that the design of the study programs and teaching should be based on state-of-the-art research in the fields of education and teacher education. The strategy for achieving these should be implemented through teaching, research projects, and training of staff and students through international collaboration.
- The Faculty has a twin challenge. It is moving, simultaneously, towards Faculty of education and towards realizing its future as a research institute. The Faculty is, according to views expressed during the panel's visit, committed to the transformations, but not yet very well prepared to them. The panel recommends the Faculty management to create a strategy for the transformations, and when implementing it, to continuously assess the improvements. The panel recommends the Faculty to think more deeply the process of restructuring the management, and teaching and research activities of the Faculty. From the management point of view, the restructuring is likely to mean a new Faculty and departmental structure, as well as new procedures for selecting the top of the management (such as the deans, and the number of vice-deans) and probably also the heads of department, and other administrative persons.
- The forthcoming restructuring will probably raise dissenting views within the staff, students and departments. It is the responsibility of the management to keep and bring coherence and collaboration in the middle of these transformations. Creating coherence requires new forms of cooperation between departments and networking with key stakeholders both within and outside the Faculty. The panel further recommends that the Faculty undertake a review of its arrangements for overall strategy formation and implementation of changes in order to clarify the vision of the Faculty based on a shared mission.

- The panel recommends the Faculty management to identify the key development areas on teaching, on research, and on internationalization, and put more effort on advancing these in the long run. The Faculty should create an overall strategy for the development of its human resources, especially what comes to staff's research skills, and international collaboration.
- The Faculty should collect feedback, not only internally, but also from outside the Faculty and university, to obtain valuable development ideas from external interest groups and partners (school communities, local partners and business stakeholders) to keep the Faculty's programmes up to date with the needs of the working life, and societal transformations.
- In a new situation, moving towards research oriented teaching institute, teachers' duties should be reviewed. Through the reviews and discussions the management of the Faculty has the possibility to see how teachers allocate their working time, and based on this, to ensure an even distribution of duties at the Faculty. Perhaps the management could even launch a working plan sheet for the staff members. With the working plan sheet the staff could allocate their working time for the academic year. The responsibility of the management would be to review and accept the working plans.
- The Faculty management should have a plan how to actively recruit international staff (visiting professor and teachers) and students, and promote more actively international exchange programs. The Faculty should be more active in various international networks that have been established, and also be able to create new ones.
- The panel encourages the Faculty to develop a more focused structure and shared framework for doing research. The panel recommends that the Faculty develop a research strategy that includes the focus areas of research, and functional structures for research, such as forming research groups or units around these focus areas of research. If the Faculty is going to apply more external funding for the research in the future, it probably needs a person for supporting research projects in planning and budgeting, administration, bookkeeping services, and reporting services. Targeted training designed for the Faculty's researchers and postgraduate students would provide opportunities for the entire staff to develop their expertise as researchers. Teachers and researchers as well postgraduate and undergraduate students

should take part in research activities in the Faculty. As a part of the research strategy the panel recommends the Faculty to set up its own PhD degree program. Setting up a one would be crucial for the Faculty to reach its vision, and to train and educate the next generation of academics.

- The panel recommends the Faculty to be more active in networking on national level with Croatian universities as well as to be more active on international collaboration. This should be done in different levels; students' level, staff level, and institutional level. Part of this could be the recruitment of international students, visitors and staff.
- To increase students' mobility, the short visits to foreign universities could be part of the degree requirements.
- The panel recommends the Faculty to think more deeply the knowledge and competence the students should obtain during their studies and to master, whilst they have completed their studies.
- The Faculty could make an initiative for building up a national research association for educational sciences, and in doing so, to take a leading role in research and research-based teaching in Croatia.