

**BÜLENT ECEVIT UNIVERSITY**

***EVALUATION REPORT***

*July 2016*

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## **1. Introduction**

This report is the result of the evaluation of Bülent Ecevit University. The evaluation took place between November 2015 and June 2016 in Zonguldak, Turkey.

### **1.1 Institutional Evaluation Programme**

The Institutional Evaluation Programme (IEP) is an independent membership service of the European University Association (EUA) that offers evaluations to support the participating institutions in the continuing development of their strategic management and internal quality culture. The IEP is a full member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and is listed in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR).

The distinctive features of the Institutional Evaluation Programme are:

- A strong emphasis on the self-evaluation phase
- A European and international perspective
- A peer-review approach
- A support to improvement

The focus of the IEP is the institution as a whole and not the individual study programmes or units. It focuses upon:

- Decision-making processes and institutional structures and effectiveness of strategic management
- Relevance of internal quality processes and the degree to which their outcomes are used in decision-making and strategic management as well as perceived gaps in these internal mechanisms.

The evaluation is guided by four key questions, which are based on a “fitness for (and of) purpose” approach:

- What is the institution trying to do?
- How is the institution trying to do it?
- How does the institution know it works?
- How does the institution change in order to improve?

### **1.2 Bülent Ecevit University’s profile**

Bülent Ecevit University is a fairly large Turkish university with its main campus in the city of Zonguldak on the shore of the Black Sea. Although it is a relatively young state university, founded in 1992, its roots date back to 1924 with the establishment of the School of Mining Engineering.

The university has approximately 30 000 students, with 11 faculties, seven vocational schools, three graduate schools and 11 campuses. As from 2011, the university has recorded a relatively high growth in the number of students (the student population has grown by a third in the last five years<sup>1</sup>) as well as an increase in the number of academic and administrative staff. Teaching activities at the university follow the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education in Turkey. The university is also a holder of the European Commission's Diploma Supplement Label.

The university possesses an academic autonomy in its teaching and research activities based on the national regulations. The university is likewise autonomous in determining the qualifications required from the staff. As far as funding is concerned, the university's budget derives, to a large extent, from the national budget and is subject to approval by the national finance ministry. Additionally, a part of the university's budget consists of funding from the university's commercial activities, primarily at the research centres.

The university recognises its important role in the city of Zonguldak and the region. It is important to note that the university is proud of its history and actively involved in the present and future development of the wider western Black Sea area. Given the social situation of Zonguldak, which is determined by the production of coal, the university is perceived as an awakener of the regional economy, mainly through its research and expertise in several areas. In particular, the university focuses on health sciences, nanotechnologies, and the environmental sciences. Through the hospital and the university's research centres, its teaching covers the field of modern diseases, such as obesity, diabetes and oncology research. Furthermore, Bülent Ecevit University is actively involved in Third Mission activities and organises a variety of cultural, musical and social events. These activities fit well into one of the university's primary missions which is to serve the region, not only with its teaching and research results, but also in developing and supporting the social activities within the region.

In order to continue playing a part in the economic recovery of the region, the university recognised the need to restructure its activities through:

- Raising the quality of all its activities
- Improving the infrastructure
- Strengthening and streamlining the research
- Internationalisation of the university's activities
- Continuously supporting the Third Mission activities.

Recently, the university has undergone several changes, the most visible being the improvement of its facilities. Furthermore, the institutional leadership recently introduced the word and concept of 'quality' into the daily agenda of the university. The application for the IEP external evaluation is based on the university's desire to further strengthen the quality of its activities.

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<sup>1</sup> Domestic students are placed in the public universities based on a national placement system.

### **1.3 The evaluation process**

The self-evaluation process of Bülent Ecevit University was coordinated by the university's evaluation team, consisting of representatives of the rector's office, five faculties, one graduate school, two vocational schools, a state conservatory, the student council and the selected administrative departments. Altogether, the self-evaluation team involved 15 people. This team prepared the self-evaluation report with 17 appendices and sent it to the IEP evaluation team in February 2016. The report provided a solid basis for obtaining a comprehensive overview of the university, and for identifying issues to be discussed during the site visits. The visits of the evaluation team to Zonguldak, Turkey took place on 21-22 March and on 29 May-1 June, respectively. In between the two visits the university provided the evaluation team with 12 additional documents.

The evaluation team (hereinafter named the team) consisted of:

- Virgílio Meira Soares, *Former Rector, University of Lisbon, Portugal*, team chair
- Ingegerd Palmér, *Former Rector, Lulea University of Technology; Mälardalen University, Sweden*
- Marian Dzimko, *Former Vice Rector, University of Zilina, Slovakia*
- Simona Dimovska, student, *University "Ss. Cyril and Methodius", FYR of Macedonia*
- Goran Dakovic, *project officer, European University Association, Belgium*, team coordinator

The team thanks the rector, Professor Dr. Mahmut Özer, members of the senate, members of the administrative board, the self-evaluation team, Mr. Dinçer Biçer, the liaison person, and all other persons who participated in the evaluation, for providing coherent, clear and informative documentation, as well as answering the team's questions during the site visits, and their warm welcome during the team's visits to the university.

## **2. Governance and institutional decision-making**

The self-evaluation report demonstrated a clearly defined institutional mission statement, which provides a comprehensive guidance to the university's activities. The university offers services of tertiary education in a national and international context, it performs scientific research, and serves society with its societal and entrepreneurial activities. The university's vision follows the mission statement and summarises the university's aim to become one of "the preferable universities with [...] educational, scientific, technological and artistic activities in the national and international higher education area" (SER, p. 6). According to the self-evaluation report, the core values that define the organisational culture and foster the implementation of the mission and vision, are excellence, honesty, reliability, participation, accountability, entrepreneurship, transparency, social responsibility, scientific ethics, and academic freedom. Through the interviews with the institutional leadership, the team also learned about the three main institutional aspirations of Bülent Ecevit University. These are to provide the region with all the required research infrastructure in one place; to serve the region with the outcomes of its research; and to foster the internationalisation of university teaching and research activities, for instance by involving the university researchers in European projects.

Through the set of interviews, the team was interested to learn how the organisation and the implementation of the university's mission worked in practice. The university comprises seven vocational schools, 11 faculties, three graduate schools, one state conservatory and five schools, 30 application and research centres, and 21 administrative units. The team was especially interested in learning about the inclusion of vocational schools into the university structure. It was explained to the team that according to the national law all tertiary education institutions (including those that provide vocational higher education) should be part of the universities. However, as opposed to the schools, the faculties have a minimum of three different academic units. The team also learned that the application and research centres have the same status as faculties, as well as their own funds.

Faculties, the vocational schools, as well as the application and research centres conduct research in their respective fields. However, most of the research is carried out at the faculties, as they are the only institutional structures that employ researchers. The above-mentioned centres support interdisciplinary research between the faculties under the management of a director and the support of the administrative staff. The vocational schools and schools also perform research, in cooperation with the faculties and the above-mentioned centres, focusing on applications and concrete problem solving.

Within these structures, the administration of the university is carried out by the rector, the administrative board, and the university senate, with the rector being the highest university authority. The administrative board deals with the administrative matters, whereas the academic-related affairs are covered by the senate. The same division of affairs is reflected in faculties' structures with the setting of the faculty council and the faculty administrative board.

Additionally, every faculty is divided into departments, managed by the respective head of department. Based on the self-evaluation report, the team additionally learned that each faculty, the vocational school and the application and research centre (with deans or directors being the highest authorities), have the autonomy to design the educational/research processes within its organisation, as well as to organise the work of all teachers, researchers and administrative staff. The university also has a number of commissions at different levels, such as the faculty commissions for teaching and the scientific commissions for research. Among the commissions, it is important to make special reference to the recently created quality assurance commission that will assist the rector and the senate in developing a comprehensive quality assurance system.

The team notes that the general functioning of the university is in order. Duties and responsibilities of all university structures are clearly set out and follow the obligations of the law. Decision-making bodies are supported by administrative services to assure the functioning of all university units. Various commissions are in place, however, mostly assisting the rector and the senate. To date no department related to quality assurance have been created, or else the team could find no evidence of it. Therefore, the team suggests **to create a quality assurance department** to help the rector and the quality assurance commission in setting up a complete institutional quality assurance system. People working in this department should have a special training in quality assurance. The team believes that one possible way to develop such a department is **to find one or two partner universities with experience in implementing a quality assurance system**. Another possible way is **to engage special advisors in quality assurance** until the university has a system in place.

The team examined the university's governance structures in relation to its activities and the implementation of its current strategic plan for the period 2013-2017. A strategic plan is a document that every higher education institution in Turkey should prepare in accordance with the law and following the detailed prescription of the form and the procedural steps (the SWOT analysis of each department, the stakeholders' questionnaire, etc.) The implementation of the strategic plan undergoes an internal check by the university senate every six months. The team was informed that, in the case of no progress being made, the informal discussions take place with individuals responsible for these specific goals. Moreover, the implementation of the strategic plan is also checked externally by the Council of Higher Education, the Court of Accounts, the Ministry of Development, and by the Ministry of Finance under the Turkish General Assembly. The university is currently developing a new strategic plan for the upcoming period 2018-2022.

The team acknowledges the detailed processes in preparing, implementing and checking the implementation of the current strategic plan. However, the team wonders how well defined the processes are for acting upon the information gathered about the current implementation progress. The strategic plan namely contains a large number of goals of varying degrees of importance and feasibility. The team therefore suggests that the university **should prepare a separate, concise document on the university's strategic priorities for the upcoming period**.

This document should be very concise and complimentary to the strategic plan that is required by the Ministry of Development. This will provide the university with a more concise overview of the university's broad priorities in order to follow its vision more closely.

The team also explored the issue of student participation in governance and institutional decision-making processes. The interviews with the institutional leadership revealed two aspects of student representation. The first aspect reflects the legal obligations of the university towards the national higher education law. According to this law, students cannot participate in the decision-making processes at the university. However, they have a right for a student representative to attend meetings where student-related issues are being discussed. The second aspect relates to the university's position with regard to students' informal participation. The university has created a friendly environment, where teachers and the leadership are open to suggestions from students. In this manner, the university involves students in its daily governance. The interviews with students confirm that they usually express their views informally to the university leadership. Moreover, they also make their voices heard through the student representative of each department and by electing the representative of each faculty.

The team noted how prepared both teachers and the leadership are to create a friendly and open academic environment. The team acknowledges the legal limitations, especially the fact that students cannot participate in the decision-making processes. **Within the limits of the law, the team advises the university to include the students into the university processes as much as possible.**



### **3. Quality culture**

Through the series of interviews with the institutional leadership, the team learned that the university would like to strengthen the quality of its teaching and research. This was one of the university's primary reasons to start the voluntary national accreditation processes for some of their study programmes, as well as the IEP external evaluation. Some of the university's programmes have already been accredited, as listed in the self-evaluation report.

The team was impressed by the university's leadership initiative, which has brought the word and the concept of "quality" into the daily life of the university. The team found that many people are willing to cooperate with the university's leadership to establish a set of criteria that would allow for the creation of methodologies to implement the quality assurance system. The team recognised a set of important elements of quality assurance, applied at many levels of the university. These elements are effective and visible in the daily life of the academic community, such as the SWOT analysis of each faculty department prior to preparing the institutional strategic plan, the annual student questionnaire, the in-service training for non-academic staff, the national training of teachers in cooperation with other Turkish universities, the additional criteria for the appointment of teachers compared to the national ones, and the stakeholders' questionnaire.

The team notes that students confirmed this approach to quality assurance. Students are being consulted about the implementation of the study courses mostly through questionnaires at the end of every academic year. Although students do not obtain the results of these questionnaires, they do notice the change in a teacher's ways following the lodging of complaints. In regard to students' input to study courses, the team underlines the open relations between students and teachers that make it possible for the students to give their views and inputs throughout the duration of the courses, and not just at the end, thus enabling them to experience the changes during the course.

These examples as given above show that an effort is being made to provide a quality to the services. The difficulty that the university has to face is **to articulate all actions and structure them in a manner that would lead to a continuous improvement of quality**. This is a task to be ensured by a system, consisting of complementary and interlinked processes that concur with the same objective – the institutional quality. As already presented in the previous chapter, the creation of a quality assurance department would be important in helping this to be achieved. The team therefore urges the university **to formulate a set of rules which will establish the coherent quality assurance procedures**. The already existing good practices in the university could form a basis and serve as an inspiration for the institutional rules and procedures in quality assurance that are to be defined.

The university recently created a quality assurance commission, which is appointed by the university senate and approved by the rector. The team praises the university leadership for creating this body, which will cover the quality assurance issues at the highest management level.

The team notes that in terms of research the university already has good elements of a comprehensive quality assurance system in place. During interviews with researchers and the institutional leadership, the team learned that all internal research proposals are evaluated by a group consisting of internal and external reviewers. Such a group of reviewers is officially named “the Scientific Research Project Commission”. For every selected project, the progress is then monitored and evaluated biannually by experts appointed by the dean’s/director’s office. The same procedure applies for evaluating the final research report. The self-evaluation documents show that all these procedures are formally described and published in the university’s publication “Directive for Preparation and Evaluation of Scientific Research Projects.” This directive includes the prescribed forms for project proposals, the project monitoring (the interim and final reporting forms), the financial monitoring, as well as the clearly set ethical rules and a flowchart of activities when evaluating the research projects. The team praises the university for such a structured and transparent approach to quality assurance in research.

Last but not least, the team emphasises that the self-evaluation documents provided do not use the usually accepted terminology in higher education quality assurance, which could lead to the misunderstanding of the contents in the documents provided. The team therefore proposes for the university to organise additional seminars in quality assurance with the emphasis on **using the established quality assurance terminology in higher education.**

#### **4. Teaching and learning**

Bülent Ecevit University conducts associate degree programmes, as well as bachelor, master and doctoral degree programmes at seven vocational schools, nine faculties, two schools (Zonguldak School of Health and School of Physical Education and Sports), one state conservatory, and three graduate schools. In addition, the university recently established two new faculties, the Faculty of Communication, and the Faculty of Pharmacy, with no student admissions in the academic year 2015/2016. Altogether, there are more than 29 000 students studying at the university at present, with the largest proportion of students enrolled in undergraduate studies, closely followed by the number of associate degree students. In the upcoming strategic period, the university wishes to decrease the number of associate programmes and to increase the number of undergraduate programmes.

The team was informed that the university has increased its student population by one-third since 2011. The university would like to have even more programmes and students, taking into account the regional needs, and the national demands for certain study programmes. The team realised that in the near future this aspiration may create a challenge: a large increase of faculties and the student population could lead to difficulties in maintaining and improving the quality of teaching at the same level as now. The team therefore advises **a close monitoring of the teaching quality** at the university, especially in the newly created study programmes.

In this respect, the team acknowledges that the processes of establishing new study programmes already include the predetermined national requirements for proving the sufficient quality and the number of teaching staff prior to opening new study programmes for student admission. The university also follows the growing number of students with the parallel growth in the number of the academic and administrative staff. For instance, the team read about the 25 per cent increase in assistant professors, associate professors and professors since 2012. However, the interviews with teachers showed that they are still overburdened with teaching activities and that there is not very much time left for research. Moreover, some of the classrooms are overcrowded and therefore are not fully adapted to the growing number of students and this was confirmed during the interviews with students. The team noted that the university leadership is aware of this challenge and is working on improving the university facilities, as well as appointing new academic and administrative staff.

Since the academic year 2005/2006, the university has adapted its study programmes to the Bologna Process. The duration of study programmes and their course credits follow the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education in Turkey. In 2012, the university was awarded a Diploma Supplement Label by the European Commission. However, the team draws attention also to the other aspects of the Bologna Process. With the application of the Bologna Process, new concepts and the methodologies in teaching emerged. At the same time, the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) were approved by the European higher education ministers, including the concept of student-centred learning. The

team found many different approaches and understandings of this concept throughout the university.

For the institutional leadership, the student-centred learning means supporting the motivation and skills of the students. Students should take an active role in their learning processes, while teachers should arrange their teaching to support the learning process, e.g. by providing relevant assignments for the students. Moreover, evening courses have been listed as part of the student-centred learning, as well as the opportunity provided for students to freely choose parts of their curricula (university's study programmes consist of mandatory as well as elective courses) and to use the university e-tools during their studies. On the other side, teachers understood the student-centred learning quite differently. According to teachers, the student-centred learning means providing the opportunity to discuss the quality of their classes with students. This is done either directly (face-to-face meetings with students, the informal departmental meetings with students) or by using the questionnaires at the end of each study course.

The team found that one of the standards of the ESG for internal quality assurance has been incompletely applied at the university, which is the standard 1.3 (student-centred learning, teaching and assessment). Given the fact that the institution decided to adhere to the Bologna Process, the team recommends that **a thorough study of the ESG and the meaning of the concept of student-centred learning** is carried out at the university as a preparation for the implementation of the quality assurance system for the teaching and learning processes.

Nevertheless, the team would like to underline that one of the standards of the ESG (1.5 – teaching staff) has been substantially implemented. Firstly, the university has set up and follows a clear and fair process for staff recruitment. The basic criteria are set by the Turkish Higher Education Council. In addition, the team read that the university has formulated its own additional criteria for appointments of assistant professor, associate professor, and professor. The additional criteria come into force upon the decision of the senate and the approval of the Turkish Higher Education Council. Next, the university offers opportunities for professional development of the teaching staff. The team learned about the national programme for teachers' development among Turkish universities. Thirdly, the university encourages scholarly activities to strengthen the link between education and research. The team found that teachers are encouraged to apply for research projects, and to use the research outcomes as part of their teaching activities, but mostly in graduate schools. Last but not least, the university strives for innovation in teaching methods and the use of new technologies. The team read in the strategic planning reports that the university has recently set up an online study platform "The Student Information Package and Course Catalogue (EOBS)", as well as "The E-Catalogue and Database Scanning System (YORDAM)" and "Alumni Information System". The team encourages the university to take further advantage of using the new technologies for innovation in teaching methods.

## **5. Research**

The team found that research activities are performed at all faculties and graduate schools, while the vocational schools carry out the research only partially and in accordance with their applicative nature of activities. The main carrier of the research activities at the university are the graduate schools: the Graduate School of Natural & Applied Sciences, the Graduate School of Social Sciences, and the Graduate School of Medical Sciences. The research at graduate schools is carried out with the researchers from faculties, because the graduate schools themselves do not employ the staff. The university was also able to demonstrate the students' involvement in the university's research activities. According to faculty management, this is done mostly by doctoral and master-level students during the preparation of final theses, and by bachelor and vocational school students through the societal research projects.

As for research funding, the team learned that the research is mainly funded by the university itself, and run as internal projects approved by the rector on the recommendation of the Scientific Research Project Commission. The university has developed and uses a detailed and transparent procedure for selecting and following the research projects. As presented in detail in Chapter 3 on Quality Culture, all internal research proposals are evaluated by a group of internal and external reviewers. The progress and the final outcome of the selected projects is then monitored and biannually evaluated by experts appointed by the dean's/director's office. Following this, the team acknowledges that the quality of the research is being monitored taking into account the objectives as set out in the project proposal. Moreover, the team could already identify the closed quality loop in research, despite not being robust enough in some of its quality assurance processes.

The university also comprises 30 different application and research centres that provide application-oriented research activities that serve the societal and business sector needs. The team highlights the Science & Technology Application and Research Centre, which has been established at the university as a pilot initiative in Turkey and is, according to its management, currently among the top ten in the country. This centre gives support to the community in selected research areas, such as medicine, nanotechnology and environmental sciences. The management expressed to the team that there is a need for an official accreditation of this centre by the Turkish accreditation agency, in order to strengthen the centre and make it possible for the centre to attract international customers.

The self-evaluation report states that the university provides well-developed physical and digital research support facilities. Each of the 11 campuses comprise a library, the main one being the Professor Dr. Durmuş Günay Library located in the Farabi campus. The university recently also modernised its information technology facilities, such as introducing the E-Catalogue and Database Scanning System (YORDAM). The team found a significant increase in the number of publications, published in internationally reviewed journals over the last two academic years. However, the team was surprised not to find any distinction with regard to the lower or higher impact factor of these journals. This is a commonly used tool to gradually raise the quality of

research. The team therefore advises the university **to monitor the number of publications according to the quality categories of the scientific journals.**

The team found out that the university has a variety of incentive measures in place for the publication of scientific results. These incentives consist mainly of facilitating/funding conference participation. According to the interviews with teachers, the attendance at a conference should result in a research publication. Altogether, one conference attendance per academic year is approved for each higher education teacher, and three attendances per year for a higher education teacher, if the attendance results in scientific publications. The university also acknowledges extremely high-level contributions of academic staff in the fields of science, engineering, health, social sciences, and art, with “the Science Award”. The team encourages the university to continue with such incentives.

Last but not least, the team wishes to congratulate the university on deciding to define three strategic areas in research, which will further stream the university’s activities towards the desired vision. These three strategic areas are obesity and diabetes studies, nanotechnologies and environmental sciences.

## **6. Service to society**

Being an important university in the Zonguldak region, Bülent Ecevit University feels a strong obligation to cover the societal needs for competence and skills of this region. The Zonguldak region depends strongly on the coal mining industry with not many large business entities. Next to it, the regional economy is comprised mainly of three other industry fields: steel production, ceramics production, and food engineering. The team learned that there is a relatively small number of small and medium sized companies which, on the one hand, leads to no or few opportunities for the input of practice into the university teaching and research and, on the other hand, provides students with little opportunities for employment within the region. The region therefore sees its population moving away from the area. With a relatively large number of students, the university softens the negative impact of this phenomenon. The team noticed that the university is largely perceived as a potential developer of the regional economy, or in the words of the university leadership, the university is expected to reverse the degrading of the city and the region in general.

According to the university leadership, the university receives sufficient support for implementing the Third Mission activities. The Ministry of Development publishes an annual call for strategic projects that encourages universities to scan for regional needs. The university, with the support of this ministry and the Ministry of Education, the municipality, and of other stakeholders, prepares joint studies on the regional needs. Bülent Ecevit University supplements these processes with stakeholder surveys. All university departments take part in the regional scanning processes. The interviews with teachers confirmed this approach to the regional engagement. In addition, teachers themselves usually propose Third Mission activities according to their teaching and research field, and the time available for this. Such proposals for societal engagements are firstly discussed within the departments and afterwards approved by the faculty leadership. Based on the university regulations, each department has to be involved in Third Mission activities through the so-called “social courses”, which are compulsory for all students. The team praises the university’s work in Third Mission activities, especially these compulsory courses.

Moreover, the team noticed the community focused research analyses at the university, i.e. the study on migration flows within the region, and the study on suicides, which are two significant challenges of the Zonguldak region. In medical and dental clinics, the university offers high-level health services using the latest technologies. All in all, the university offers a wide variety of services to different segments of the population. However, in addition to the existing activities, the team advises the university to **consider setting up a university business incubator**, which would offer a free or subsidised work space for the recent graduates with business ideas, including an access to mentors, advisors, business networks and other types of support during the creation of a business. The team namely learned from the interviews with students, that the students would like to stay in Zonguldak and open their own businesses, if adequate support were provided by the university and the region.

The team had the opportunity to meet the Governor of the Governorship of Zonguldak, directors of the Zonguldak Chamber of Commerce and Industry (TSO) and the Western Black Sea Development Agency (BAKKA), as well as representatives from local communities and businesses, and learned that there are several on-going programmes with these entities. It was reported that these programmes have been structured and formalised, in particular over the last five years. In addition, the university's three vocational schools fill the gap in preparing the middle technical, administrative and service staff with practical skills for various areas of the labour market. The team acknowledges that the work being done by the university is appreciated by the community. In addition, the team advises the university **to continue with the regular monitoring of their Third Mission activities**, especially their level of reaching the goals set for these activities.

Last but not least, the team realises that beyond the economic influence the university plays in the region, there is also a strong participation of the university in cultural, musical and social events. The campus is open to the public, with particular participation by the pupils from local high schools.



## **7. Internationalisation**

Bülent Ecevit University has recognised the importance of stronger academic cooperation with universities outside of the country. The self-evaluation report shows that the university has increased the number of incoming international students by 10 times in the last five years, with students coming mostly from Arab and Central Asian countries. In addition, the number of outgoing students has also grown, and there is a significant number of prospective mobility students at the university, aiming at completing parts of their studies abroad. The team learned that these students would consider student mobility opportunities, if new cooperation agreements with the European countries were to be signed.

According to the university management, the university provides preparatory classes in English for its students and this was confirmed by the students themselves. Moreover, students need to undergo a test of English proficiency prior to their mobility period. In addition, some of the faculty departments conduct their teaching completely in a foreign language, mostly in English, which supports the further international engagement of the university. The university expects that even more subjects or programmes could be provided in English in the near future.

The self-evaluation report and its supporting documents show that the university is involved in two international student exchange schemes: the Erasmus+ Programme and the Mevlana Exchange Programme<sup>2</sup>. With regard to the recognition of studies abroad from these mobility programmes, the team advises the university **to continue its effort to ease the recognition processes in order to avoid prolonging the regular period of studies**. The team acknowledges that the procedural documents for managing the international mobility of students are already in place (the Bülent Ecevit University Directive for Erasmus+ and Free-Mover Exchange Programmes) and approved by the senate. However, comments from the students imply that there may still be some difficulties in implementation.

Furthermore, the team did not find any joint study programme presently offered at the university. The team learned that these programmes have been developed, but are, even after a long process of administrative procedures, not yet approved by the Council of Higher Education. The team encourages the university **to continue its efforts in establishing the joint programmes and to use the existing professional and language potential of the teaching staff**.

With regard to the internationalisation in research, the team notes that the university supports teachers to present their research results abroad. As already discussed in the chapter on research, the university has introduced an incentive system for the publication of scientific results. These incentives consist mainly of facilitating/funding conference participation. The team commends the university in its efforts for internationalising the research and hopes that it will continue with similar activities of opening up research to the international community.

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<sup>2</sup> Mevlana is a national exchange programme of students and academic staff between Turkish higher education institutions and higher education institutions from countries all over the world.

The team also learned that the university started to employ foreign professionals as consultants and teachers. In addition, the team notes that the university has set itself an ambitious goal of international students forming five percent of the overall student population. The team sees this as an important step to further strengthen the international aspects of Bülent Ecevit University.

## **8. Conclusion**

Bülent Ecevit University is a mid-size, dynamic, and forward-thinking university that has shown firm initial steps in introducing the necessary quality assurance practices to improve its activities in teaching, research and Third Mission activities. The several simultaneous changes are easily visible, the most evident of which is the improvement of the university facilities on all of its campuses. The team would like to emphasise that it could understand that students are happy with what they receive at the university; teachers are easily available to students; the research infrastructure has improved extensively (new laboratories have been created); the number of incoming international students is steadily growing; the university management has taken the initiative of undergoing the national accreditation of several departments; the university services are being improved (e.g. libraries at all campuses are open 24 hours per day); and the university continues with the effort to develop its Third Mission activities. Among all the listed changes, the main pillar is the introduction of the concept “quality” into the daily life at the university. Nevertheless, the team realises that the university is engaged in many development processes, which are difficult to put into place simultaneously. In this sense, the team fears that there may be a dispersion and much of the work already done may be lost if a minimum of regulations in quality assurance are not put in place in the coming years.

The team understands that at the moment much of the quality assurance of the university has been focused on the accreditation of programmes and departments. This is a very positive step, but it does not represent a comprehensive quality assurance system. On the other hand, the team noticed a number of good practices in quality assurance that are currently dispersed and could form a solid basis for a coherent quality assurance system, as understood by the evaluation team. One of such existing practices is the quality assurance circle in the university’s research activities. The summary of recommendations therefore draws attention to the areas that will help the university to develop its own coherent quality assurance system. The team certainly met a group of dedicated university members who are ready to consider these steps.

### **Summary of the recommendations**

#### *Governance and institutional decision-making*

- Create a quality assurance department.
- Find one or two partner universities with experience in implementing a quality assurance system and/or engage special advisors.
- Prepare a separate, concise document on strategic priorities for the upcoming period (a two-page document).
- Students should take part in the university processes as much as possible within the limits of the law.

#### *Quality culture*

- Use the usually accepted terminology in quality assurance.
- Give an order/articulate all actions that lead to the continuous improvement of quality.

- Prepare the steps and a set of rules to create a comprehensive quality assurance system for the whole university.

*Teaching and learning*

- Make a thorough study of the ESG and the meaning of the concept of student-centred learning.

*Research*

- Monitor the number of publications according to the quality categories of scientific journals.

*Service to society*

- Consider setting up a university business incubator for recent graduates.
- Continue with the regular monitoring of the Third Mission activities, especially their level of reaching set goals for these activities.

*Internationalisation*

- Continue the efforts to ease the recognition processes in order to avoid prolonging the regular period of studies.
- Continue the efforts to establish joint study programmes.