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STUDENTS DAY IN MONTENEGRO – A HOLIDAY FOLLOWED BY NUMEROUS QUESTIONS

Youth Group of the Centre or Civic Education (YGCCE) congratulates the Fourth of April - Student Day to all students in Montenegro, and at the same time expresses its concern about the overall situation in higher education, which is not stimulating for improvement of knowledge and social activism of students.

Implementation of the Bologna Declaration, initiated in 2003, is far away from expected results. Instead of a reform process that was supposed to bring new quality and energy, we got lack of alignment, improvisation, unsatisfactory level of information of student on the new studying rules, selective application of regulations, non-compliance of the professional titles with other countries who signed the Bologna Declaration, inadequate and not equipped faculties, lack of personnel and financial resources to adequately implement the reforms. On the other hand, a significant level of corruption, as well as non-activism and indifference of students for the change of the current situation, further contribute to a bad situation of higher education system in Montenegro.

The Bologna process represents European integration in the sphere of higher education. Its aim is to establish comparable national education systems and a common European educational space as a base for the future common market. This directly increases the efficiency and quality of the academic education in Europe, and also constantly adapts higher education to changing labor market needs and specific demands of society. Consequently, the reform anticipates series of changes such as the standardization of study programmes, creation of an integrated European higher education area that would allow seamless mobility of students and teachers, introduction of European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), inclusion of students as partners in the educational process, establishment of participatory forms of teaching with students as active participants, external and internal evaluation of administrative bodies, teaching staff and programmes, lifelong learning.

One of the most highlighted benefits of the **reform was reduction of the average length of study**, thus **saving the budgetary funds**. Despite this, there aren't enough budgetary resources for the University, and the current budget is often non-transparent and not used for the right purposes. This is followed by improvisation, and still in the halls of the faculties there are hundreds of students, although work in small groups is recommended. Consequently, **the participation of students in teaching, even though emphasized as necessary, remains low**. The production of the seminar papers is conducted in a strictly **formal** way. Students are not motivated for a more detailed elaboration, critical thinking and rethinking of issues, and furthermore they are not motivated to start a debate or some other form of discussion after the presentation of such work. **Evaluation of teaching staff is also just formally**



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implemented. Students are usually not familiar with the results of questionnaires that are filled in by them, nor does the average grade per teacher have any influence in his /her working status, programmes and methodologies, or list of references.

At the Montenegrin faculties, study programmes are differently organized, which refers even to those including three years of undergraduate studies. Neither faculties of similar profiles apply the identical formula. That leads to the situation that students of the faculties applying formula 3 +2 (+3) will be required to successfully do graduate work in order to get a degree which is eligible for admission to postgraduate master's studies, while their colleagues from the faculties using formula 3 +1 +1 (+3) get a Bachelor degree after completing three years (but without the thesis- graduate work), and they will not be eligible for enrollment of the masters studies. ECTS credits in both cases are the same – 180. The alignment of the academic degrees in overall European space is exactly what makes the mobility of those obtaining diploma or those that aspire to continue their education elsewhere. The question is whether the student from the first, above described, faculty would be permitted to enroll the MA studies at the second one? Or, would he/she be required to complete the first year of specialist studies, thus being obligated to prepare the thesis for the second time? **How can one talk about mobility at European level in the situation when there is no mobility within the country?**

In addition to this, we have another topic that got publicity within our public in recent period - student (non)activism. Mostly, this state of affairs amongst the students is the result of the overall system in which they are shaped and which is limiting their sense of belonging to a particular social group that shares common interests, although that interests can be implemented always as a group. **Young people (students) do not see themselves as carriers and agents of change, because often at the very faculties they are getting a bad example and promotion of a rather problematic value system.**

Youth Group of CCE believes that in the near future all societal institutions that (in)directly affect the quality of education, as well as students will become aware of the importance of the education system as a carrier of the overall development of a country. That may lead to the change in the existing, not at all encouraging state of affairs, and consequently have an effect in the development and democratization of Montenegrin society as a whole.

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Note: Youth Group Center for Civic Education, established in May 2010, as part of the Regional Programme for Human Rights Education and Active Citizenship in the Western Balkans. YGCCE was formed by students of the Montenegrin universities, which, through the implementation of various activities, work on improving respect for human rights and development of youth activism and the spirit of volunteerism in Montenegro.