Address by the UNSA Rector at the 12th SC Assembly Session of 11/2/2013

Madam Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen MPs,

Thank you for the opportunity to address the Assembly, on behalf of the University of Sarajevo, regarding the incommensurately large burden that higher education should carry during the Great Recession, in line with the offered Cantonal Budget Draft for 2013.

The result of the first external institutional evaluation of the University of Sarajevo that was conducted in 2004 by the European University Association within the Council of Europe and European Commission Council’s project states: “The firm review of current situation is: the University of Sarajevo’s development is blocked and its irrelevance within the social community is increasing”.

The UNSA Senate is grateful to this Assembly’s Session for recognizing the importance of strengthening the public role of the University and following the platform for more absolute contributing to the development of society suitably to tasks which are facing any leading university in every state. Therefore, it is greater duty to point at some important implications of the offered Draft.

When the Great Recession that has been caused by the sub-prime mortgage crisis of 2007-2008 took place, all items in the EU budget were reduced, aside from higher education and research. Education and research are the way out of present crisis.

In 2013, the University of Sarajevo should be successfully undergoing the institutional accreditation process and began the platform one. Three years ago, the Cantonal Assembly adopted the Survey on Integration and appropriated two millions BAM of budgetary assets for this purpose. Out of aforesaid 2 millions BAM, up to present moment only 140 000 have been given. The failure to keep the word regarding the budgetary obligation of 622.000 from 2012 results in transferring only 8% in 2013 from the aforesaid amount.

One would need more than 8 million BAM for accreditation of current study programs of I, II and III cycle. Not even a single dime has been appropriated for this purpose – not even in 2013, 2014 nor 2015.

On 15/11/2012, the Cantonal Government rendered a Ruling to secure 3.859.082 € from the budget in the period from 2013 to 2015 for the implementation of building the University Library in Campus. In this Budget Draft, not a single dime has been allocated for that purpose. Also there are no funds for Preliminary Design of a new Faculty of Economics’ building, preventing us to begin with fulfilling the obligations form the signed Protocol on Restitution.

Instead of that, the Canton is planning to acquire 10 million BAM from selling the Neđarići Students’ Dormitory and from that sum to redirect 7.5 million BAM for other purposes. Which 7.5 million BAM? Those 7.95 which Council of Ministers kept after 1/3 of Campus area had been confiscated from the University without appropriate compensation, even 8 years after its entering into the land register. Which object to sell? The one for which UNSA Rector signed the Contract on Renovation, not the Canton nor the Students’ Center.

The purchasing power in B&H is 31% of EU average. To the contrary the percent of funds allocating for science and research is not three times lesser proportionally, but 17 times lesser than it is in the EU. There is no form of budgetary financed employed young researcher-PhD candidate, against 1.147 in Ljubljana or 1.351 in Zagreb, the Universities having three times more teachers than University of Sarajevo.

Which steps are proposed for a year in which the longest boundary with EU will be the Bosnian one? To reduce co-financing of higher education for 20%! Even if it would stay within the Budget Draft, it would represent a huge step in deepening the crisis.

According to the data from 2010, the Cantonal assets within University budget are 57.5%. This decrease would reduce the founder’s assets at 46%. In what kind of term are we a public institution, in an area legally determined as the area of special social interest?

In 2012, the average salary at the UNSA was 1025 BAM, with budget offered such as this one it would be reduced at 819 BAM; the average salary in at the “Pokop[[1]](#footnote-2)” is approx. 1.400 BAM. (Out of all ten utility companies in the Canton, the average salary in 2011 was 1.009 BAM. Out of 3.586 persons employed in those companies, only 12,5% have university education.)[[2]](#footnote-3)

The University does not have internal reserves to absorb such blow. It is not coincidental that in notional structure of subsidiary budget it says that share of salaries is 75%. Namely it is known that droop in budgetary financing of operating of a university to below 25%-30% means stagnation of that university and blockage of its development. How does our reality look like? By starting from that first evaluation during a decade, data on expenditure for salaries are: 92,56%, 92,69%, 91,26%, 93,28& and so forth. It is also worth mentioning that University does not have a single employed teacher or assistant who is surplus and that founder applies the moratorium on employing young assistant staff from the budget.

The University took on its shoulders the burden of extending study programs from 4 to 5 years. So, the tasks have been increased for 25%. In the years when there was cornucopia of benefits from introduction of the VAT, the University was not given a chance to enjoy them.

Nothing has changed in investments either. During the entire period they seem to be approximately same, and according to available data for 2012 they were: 0.45% for personnel, 1.98% for equipment and 1.85% for buildings.

The external debt of B&H from 2007 to 2011 was increased from 3.9 to 6.7 billion BAM. The University Campus area still looks the way it is now. 35000 UNSA students are among those who will be repaying that debt during their entire work lifetime.

In these Canton 35000 students, if we say that each of them monthly spends 300 BAM, annually spend 126 million BAM. Only through the VAT their annual contribution is 21 million BAM.

Such decrease of budgetary funds transfer for higher education, as it has been anticipated in the Draft, will shift the burden of crisis to students. In order to keep the amount and quality of the teaching process as it is now, it would mean the increase of their school and other fees for 377 BAM per student. The Students’ Parliament has already made their position regarding such way of covering some public companies’ loses.

The role of University is not to use its money, but to use its wits.

It would prove instructive to find the values in absolute figures, invested in reconstruction and maintenance of facilities, their equipping, employing the missing personnel, all out of University’s own incomes.

Ladies and gentlemen MPs,

14 years ago, the Sarajevo Canton Assembly took over the founding rights over the UNSA.

At the previous Session, by adopting amendments to the Cantonal Constitution, you proved that Sarajevo Canton is able to go forward, as it befits, in promoting and respecting EU standards, making its residents proud.

The University expects from this Assembly Session to, consistently to European declaration, enact legal measures that will (following the model in developed countries) implement the obligation of B&H as stated in the Framework Law on Accepting European Strategic Goals in the Higher Education Area, as presented in the Bologna Declaration.

The institutional autonomy is the first fundamental feature of European Higher Education Area.

In order to qualitatively fulfill our responsibilities for development of the B-H society, responsibilities we cannot disavow nor want to, we expect sealing of agreement on co-financing for the three to five years period, in which process the degree of founder’s participation within the University’s budget could not be the offered 46%.

Accordingly to the UNSA’s Development and Operating Agenda which was adopted by the UNSA Senate, we are ready to intensively cooperate on optimizing the available assets, transparency establishing through a different model of financing, figuring out new systemic solutions and benefits that will unchain the UNSA’s initiative and creative energy and enable our University to be more successful in acquiring the financial assets which its founder is not able to provide.

1. The funeral parlor with a 100% state-owned capital, whose founder is the Sarajevo Canton. Translator’s note. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. I would like to express my gratitude to Prof. Dr. Berko Zečević, UNSA Union Chairman who performed comparative analyses. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)