



Higher Education in Latvia on the Threshold of Reforms

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As a result of the economic crisis that has severely affected many countries in Europe, and especially Latvia, discussions about the export of higher education as one of the sectors that may boost the economy in Latvia are taking place. These discussions are taking place on several levels, and one of the primary aspects is the one closely associated with the financing of higher education institutions (HEI).

There are three sectors in which the reforms should be taking place, with the end result being the enhancement of education and training in the HEI in Latvia:

1. Currently HEI in the Republic of Latvia are under the subordination of four different governmental ministries – Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Culture and Ministry of Agriculture. This institutional subordination remains the same as it was when Latvia was part of the Soviet Union; however many aspects nowadays have considerably changed – for one none of the HEI in Latvia no longer function within only one field, e.g., only medicine, only agriculture.

2. Each year the ministries listed above determine the number of students each HEI will have with a provided funding by the state. However, up to this day no criteria have been developed according to which finances are to be allocated from the state budget. Additionally, there are no criteria, which would determine what should be done in cases when students interrupt their studies whether upon their own request or because they are discharged from the HEI due to poor academic performance. Therefore, the distribution of finances and the resulting efficiency and attainable results in higher education are highly dubious.

3. The third factor closely tied to the reforms is directly associated with the quality of the studies. In terms of institutional and legal reforms it must be noted that there are no laws that envisage liability in cases of plagiarism that has taken place during the study process, and which is becoming an ever increasing problem in HEI. Thus, these issues are left in the competence of each HEI in Latvia in terms of available sanctions and further consequences.

Therefore, it is questionable, whether without serious institutional and legal reforms the enhancement of education and training strategies in the HEI in Latvia will be achieved, apart from those carried out in each individual HEI.