



Regional Platform for Benchmarking and Cooperation
in Higher Education and Research

Minutes of the 5th Meeting of the Platform Council

held in the Rectory of the University of Belgrade,
on June 14, 2019

In attendance (listed in order of appearance of family names):

Dashamir Bërxulli, Vice-Rector, University of Prishtina, dashamir.berxulli@uni-pr.edu

Marjan Dema, Rector, University of Prishtina, marjan.dema@uni-pr.edu

Enver Halilović, Director, Agency for Development of Higher Education and Quality Assurance, Bosnia and Herzegovina direktor@hea.gov.ba

Dejan Jakšić, Rector, University of Novi Sad, dejan.jaksic@uns.ac.rs

Gentiana Kera, Vice-Rector, University of Tirana, gentiana.kera@unitir.edu.al

Mladen Kraljić, Deputy Secretary-General, University of Maribor, mladen.kraljic@um.si

Predrag Miranović, Head of the Centre for Doctoral Studies of the University of Montenegro, rektor@ucq.ac.me; pedjam@ucq.ac.me

Ladislav Novak, Platform Coordinator, ladislav.uns@gmail.com

Igor Papič, Rector, University of Ljubljana, Igor.Papic@uni-lj.si

Ivanka Popović, Rector, University of Belgrade, ivanka.popovic@rect.bg.ac.rs

Vladimir Popović, State Secretary, Serbian Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development and Vice-President of the Platform Council, vladimir.popovic@mpn.gov.rs

Peter Scherrer, Vice-Rector, Karl-Franzens University of Graz, peter.scherrer@uni-graz.at

Ivan Svetlik, President of the Platform Council, Ivan.Svetlik@fdv.uni-lj.si

Darinka Vrečko, Secretary, Directorate of Higher Education, Slovenian Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, Darinka.Vrecko@gov.si

Apologies (listed in order of appearance of family names):

Petar Atanasov, Deputy Minister of Education and Science, North Macedonia petar.atanasov@mon.gov.mk

Damir Boras, Rector, University of Zagreb, dboras@unizg.hr

Goran Latinović, Vice-Rector, University of Banja Luka, prorektor.nir@unibl.org

Snježana Prijić Samaržija, Rector, University of Rijeka, prijic@uniri.hr

AGENDA

10:15 - 10:30	Welcome addresses of the representatives of the host institutions
10:30 - 10:45	Election of the Platform Leadership:
10:45 - 11:15	Report on Platform activities between two sessions of the Platform Council
11:15 - 11:30	Coffee Break
11:30 - 12:00	Proposal for the Platform Action Plan for 2019 – 2020 and beyond
12:00 - 12:15	Voting on affiliate membership
12:15 - 12:30.	Forthcoming Regional Ministerial Conference
12:30 - 12:45.	Representation and Communication
12:45 - 13:00	Closing Session and Question Time

CONCLUSIONS

Ad 0. Statement on the Attendance, Excused Absence and Quorum of the Meeting

Belgrade meeting of the Platform Council attended representatives of 9 out 17 Platform members (3 higher education authorities and 6 universities) and 3 members provided apology (one higher education authority and 2 universities).

According to the Article 4.1.2 of the Platform Statute (Articles of Association) the quorum comprises at least fifty-one percent of the total number of members of the Council present at the meeting. *Since Belgrade meeting attended 53% of the total number of full members, there was a full quorum for making decisions.*

Concerning the universities invited to attend Belgrade meeting as candidates for affiliate status, 2 out 6 invitees were represented at the meeting and one of them provided formal letter of excused absence, confirming interest to join the Platform.

Ad 1. Election of Platform Leadership

Platform Council at the Belgrade meeting on 14 June 2019 has re-elected

Prof. Ivan Svetlik for the President of the Platform Council,

Prof. Damir Boras for the Chairperson of the Executive Board and

Prof. Ladislav Novak for the Platform Coordinator.

for the period of 4 years, on the recommendation of the Platform Executive Board.

Ad 2. Report on Platform Activities between two Sessions:

Platform Council has discussed and adopted Report on Platform activities since the last Council session in March 2017 in Ljubljana.

In brief, the main focus of the Platform activities between two sessions has been on creation of instruments for sharing the best human resources and capital research equipment in the Region. In this context:

- four universities (University of Belgrade, University of Ljubljana, University of Novi Sad and University of Zagreb), have committed themselves to
 - establish an *embryo of experts' data base*, the members of which will play, a role of external mentors for PhD theses and a role of external members of the doctoral degree-awarding bodies.
 - create a *data base of strategic research equipment* (over 130.000 EUR) along with a set of rules which define terms for usage of shared equipment.
- the University of Ljubljana and Slovenian Ministry of Education, Science and Sport made it possible for Platform to use information infrastructural service of the Institute of Information Science (IZUM) in developing these two instruments for sharing best human resources and capital research equipment.

Also, in the meantime, between two sessions:

- Pending vacancy for the Vice-President of the Platform Council, has been filled on March 30, 2018. Prof. Vladimir Popović, State Secretary of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, Serbia has been elected for the new Vice-President of the Platform Council.
- Slovenian Ministry of Education, Science and Sport has supported Platform with 20.000 EUR facilitating Platform project activities and enabling redesign of the Platform website.
- New version of the Platform web site <http://regional-platform.unizg.hr/events.html> has been launched from the University of Zagreb domain. This new version of the Platform website is more advanced and easily accessible from any smart mobile phones.
- Representatives of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, Serbia, representatives of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport Slovenia and the representative of Regional Platform agreed on the draft of a *Political Document* to serve as an input for the Regional Ministerial Conference on Benchmarking and Cooperation in Higher Education, to take place in 2019 or 2020.
- In 2019. the University of Ljubljana in cooperation with the Regional Platform submitted two projects within the framework of Erasmus + K2, Strategic Partnerships in the Field of Education, Training and Youth, with the aim to launch Regional doctoral studies in the following two fields:
 - ART: Doctoral education in the field of art - innovative practices in the development and implementation of doctoral education
 - ENERGY: Doctoral studies in the field of energy - sustainability and circular economy

Ad 3. Platform Action Plan for 2020 – 2022

Members of the Platform Council and representatives of the candidates for affiliate members, present at the 5th Meeting of the Platform Council, discussed in details the Action Plan for the period 2020 – 2022. Here we provide a brief version of the Plan which emerged from discussion while the full text of the Plan is attached to this Minutes.

Summary of the Action Plan for 2020 -2022

In brief, members of the Platform agreed to:

- continue with development of the experts' data base and the data base of strategic research equipment and to define terms for sharing these two data bases;
- set-up framework for creation of joint pre-funds supporting project applications capable to attain the higher ratings within European project calls;
- enable mobility of academic staff, PhD students and early career researchers, through various Regional research projects, EUTOPIA outreach project
- keep Platform membership policy of not having more than two universities and two higher education authorities on board from one member country in average (over all member countries);
- strengthen cooperation with the rectors' Forum of Central-Southern Europe universities, as Platform's natural partner in acting jointly as a collective voice within EHEA and ERA;
- set-up a general framework for initiating new high quality doctoral programmes and continue with development of doctoral studies in the field of art and the field of sustainable energy and circular economy;
- initiate a comprehensive discussion on the quality of doctoral degree in art and issue "Quality Code of Doctoral Degree in ART" as a central document dealing with this issue;
- encourage development of research artistic community around a Digital Journal of Research in Art (peer reviewers) as a main instrument for ensuring quality of doctoral theses in art;
- create joint repository of research projects and of doctoral thesis and to act as an umbrella for research project activities.
- launch Circle of Trust in Doctoral Degree as a group of universities which agree to institutionally adopt high standards for mentorship of PhD thesis and research environment.
- negotiate with higher education authorities participating on the Platform to contribute to the Platform internal fund for supporting sustainable management of the Platform activities.

Ad 4. Ministerial Conference on Benchmarking and Cooperation in Higher Education in Ljubljana

Slovenian Ministry of Education, Science and Sport government kindly reaffirmed the intention to organise Regional Ministerial Conference in 2019 or 2020. First opportunity would be to collocate it to the 2019 Bled Strategic Forum at the beginning of September, if substantial number of ministers from the Region respond to the formal invitation issued by the Slovenian Ministry. Otherwise, the Regional Ministerial Conference would be organised at a later date.

Ad 5. Representation at Council meetings and Prior Communication

Representation at Council meetings

Members of the Regional Platform are *institutions* (universities and higher education authorities) and their *authorised representatives* are members of the Platform Council. As a *rule*, a Platform member is represented at a Council meeting by a person(s) holding senior position at the respective institution

(rector/vice rector of a university, deputy minister, state-secretary of a ministry, head/secretary of organisational unit within a ministry, director/deputy director of a higher education agency). In case when there are clashes in dates with other events, Platform member *can be* represented by any *fully authorised member of the staff*.

Communication prior to a Council Meeting

In order to improve efficiency of decision making processes at a meeting of Platform Council and transparency of contribution of Platform members, the Council decided to issue a *strong appeal to the Platform members to either provide confirmation of presence of its representative(s) or an excuse for absence in a prior e-mail communication, well before the Council meeting*.

Ad 6. Granting a status of an affiliate to a number of universities under the recommendation of the Platform Executive Board

According to the Article 3.3 of the Platform Statute (Articles of Association), Executive Board of the Platform may, at its discretion, grant the status of affiliate to an organisation, authority or institution. The status of an affiliate is formally confirmed after being approved by the Platform Council and after provision of formal signed letter of confirmation signed by the authorised person of the candidate institution.

At its meeting on 8 February 2019, the Platform Executive Board has agreed to invite the University of Graz, University of Maribor, University of Mostar, University of Rijeka, University of Sarajevo and University of Skopje (listed in order of appearance of respective cities), to join the Platform as affiliate members. All listed universities were formally invited to participate at the 5th meeting of Platform Council in Belgrade. Two out six invitees responded this invitation. Representative of the University of Graz attended meeting and the University of Rijeka provided formal letter confirming interest to join the Platform.

Members of the Platform Council, present at the 5th Meeting of the Platform Council with great pleasure formally granted the status of affiliate to the University of Graz and University of Rijeka.

Adopted on 15 July 2019, at the electronic session of the Platform Council, following the June 14, 2019 Belgrade Council Meeting.

Ladislav Novak

The coordinator of the Regional Platform