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**REACTION MEMORANDUM NR. 4 – UNIVERSITY OF PRISHTINA**

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**TO:** KOSOVO ASSEMBLY, PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE, MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, SCIENCE, AND TECHNOLOGY, STATE PROSECUTOR, UNIVERSITY OF PRISHTINA

**FROM:** DEMOCRACY FOR DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE (D4D)\*

**TOPIC:** UNIVERSITY OF PRISHTINA IN A VICIOUS CIRCLE

**DATE:** 23 JANUARY 2014

**CC:** EU OFFICE, QUINT REPRESENTATIVES, NGOS, THE MEDIA

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**RECOMMENDED ACTION**

1. The Assembly of Kosovo should initiate an open debate which would lead to necessary amendments to the Statutes of the University of Prishtina (UP). Individuals who have served in the Government or Assembly in the past 12 months should be banned from having leading positions at UP (similar to commercial banks). A parliamentary consensus should also be sought to keep political interferences away from the public university. UP's internal functioning, including recruitment practices as well as promotions should also be addressed in order to increase accountability.
2. Judicial bodies should probe the accusations in detail and suspicions of legal violations must be investigated without amnesty to any levels. Only two teaching assistants have been arrested thus far, despite the gross violations that have been well documented, including recent media articles. Violations range from student enrollment through bribes or contrary to advertised vacancies, selling of grades, forgery of grades or official documents, etc.). Without prejudice to the outcome of investigations, it now seems that adequate measures against those responsible have not been taken.
3. The Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology (MEST) should consider refreshing the Steering Council of UP, by appointing individuals of competence and integrity, and should look into enriching it with one or two international professors. The new UP Council should prepare the strategy for a management that would bring UP on the right path, in order to offer quality studies, equip students with knowledge, skills and experiences relevant for employment and for the progress of society. At the same time, UP should increase transparency, by treating each claim of transgression with utmost seriousness and should end the current culture of impunity for all violators of academic, ethical or legal norms.

**ISSUE**

UP has served as a key tool to promote individuals through the public sector as part of a well-oiled clientelist machinery. In December 2013, Kosovo media reported on the arrest of 11 individuals, including 2 teaching assistants at UP, which were suspected of belonging to a criminal network that profited from abuses with student enrollment at UP, selling grades and other illegal activities. In October 2013, media reported on other problems at UP, which argued that the Rector, Mr. Ibrahim Gashi, has obtained promotion to full professorship illegal based on publications in journals with dubious credentials. Freedom House has reported in 2013 that the current Rector of UP has secured that post as part of the governing deal between PDK and AKR, and recalled that he was Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs (AKR) until a few weeks before his formal election as Rector. Media also reported on other irregularities, e.g. forgery of dozens of grades by a UP student who ran as part of PDK and was elected to the Prishtina Municipal Assembly, decisions to accept students based on manipulated exam results, and enrollment of hundreds of students outside official quotas, even months into the start of the academic year. The examples above attest clearly to the existence of enormous problems at UP linked to political actors, which seriously damage the mission and reputation of Kosovo's main public university.

\* This memo was prepared in cooperation with Dr. Qëndrim R. Gashi, Associate Professor at the University of Prishtina.





As the oldest and the largest university, as well as a key part of institutional organization during the nineties, the importance of UP cannot be overstated for our culture, society and economy. It is hence an imperative that the current situation is analyzed within as well as by state institutions and civil society. Hiding wrongdoing does not preserve its image, au contraire, allowing this situation to fester causes irreparable damage to the society as a whole. The delay in addressing them will sacrifice the generations which this university should instead prepare to be productive in the next 40 years.

UP's problems have been highlighted in a considerable number of reports. They are linked mainly to political interference, oversight and management, internal organization and functioning, implementation of laws and the Statutes, transparency, physical infrastructure, links between study programs and economy, investments on scientific research, utilization of IT and mobility (not only outgoing, but also incoming). Except the Kosovo public, the EU has also expressed a benchmark for Kosovo to place greater efforts "to increase the quality of the undergraduate and post-graduate programs, and to ensure that education programs are better suited to the needs of the labor market." Hence our call for swift and concrete measures need to be taken to return competence and credibility to the UP, along with citizens and taxpayers, deserve, as described at the top of the memo.

### OPTIONS

As painful as they are, deep crises are the best situations for deep transformations. Well-thought changes should first introduce quick measures to introduce a long-term process that will enable the academic and administrative staff and students to do their work freely and with dedication, but also in a responsible manner, for the benefit of society.

Judicial bodies should continue their probes and not succumb to possible political pressure to shield well-connected persons. MEST must not look at the situation as a passive bystander, but should ask for accountability from the individuals appointed at the Steering Council. The Assembly should approve changes to UP's Statutes in order to increase transparency and punish political interference.

If tough measures are not taken, the current situation could worsen and an opportunity to help UP and our country would be lost, wasting the careers of generations to come. Concrete actions are needed now to expel crime from UP and to insulate the UP and other public institutions of higher education from the daily political interference. Considering the public acceptance to such phenomena, over time the society as a whole should contribute to see the values of truly independent institutions that serve the public interest. The future of our country depends on the quality education of our youth and we will all be paying a high the bill for their present poor-quality education.

### IMPLEMENTATION

Urgently	Well-informed discussion in a special session at the Assembly and start of changes to UP's Statutes, to guarantee to UP protection from daily political interferences and an effective and accountable organization. Full and unreserved support to the judicial bodies to continue investigating all individuals implicated in wrongdoings at UP. Reshuffle of UP's Steering Committee by appointing 1 or 2 international professors and a strategy to exit the vicious circle of scandals, which would be implemented by a new management.
6 months	Close monitoring by MEST and Kosovo Assembly of the implementation of the strategy of the Steering Committee and management at UP, which would contain standards to achieve transparency and accountability at UP.

See previous memos:

[Memo1: Police overreaction](#)

[Memo2: The two Germanies model](#)

[Memo 3: Set criteria for new municipalities](#)