

# **GUIDE FOR APPLICANTS**

## STRATEGIC AND STRUCTURAL DEVELOPMENT OF QUALITY ASSURANCE IN BIH HIGHER EDUCATION 2008-2010

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**Austrian**  
 **Development Cooperation**

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## FOREWORD

All applicants should read the **Guide for Applicants** carefully. It contains advice on completing the application form, assembling your supporting documentation, submitting your application, and the closing dates.

Failure to follow the advice given in the Guide will result in the application being disqualified from the selection process.

**All candidates should read the Guide thoroughly before compiling an application.**

Further enquiries should be addressed to:

WUS Austria Sarajevo Office  
Branilaca Sarajeva 51/1  
Sarajevo 71000

Tel: ++387 33 25 87 90

Fax: ++387 33 25 87 92

E-mail: [selma.emirhafizovic@wus-austria.org](mailto:selma.emirhafizovic@wus-austria.org)

Web address: [www.wus-austria.org](http://www.wus-austria.org)

**Deadlines and application procedure:** Please send the electronic version and one hard copy of the completed application to above stated e-mail and post addresses by **September 20, 2009**, the latest.

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## 1. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

WUS Austria's project "Strategic and Structural Development of Quality Assurance in Bosnian and Herzegovinian Higher Education 2008-2010", financed by Austrian Development Cooperation and Liechtenstein Government in the total amount of 445,000.00 EUR, aims at further development of quality assurance (QA) in Bosnian and Herzegovinian (BiH) higher education (HE). The project represents a follow up action to previously established QA structures at BiH universities and strengthening of BiH QA Agency.

In the last three years, WUS Austria, in cooperation with other organizations focused on higher education development in BiH (SUS BiH, Council of Europe), has been actively supporting QA development at BiH universities through a number of projects:

- Tempus project „Strengthening Quality Assurance at BiH Universities“ (JEP-19074- 2004)
- ADC/ Liechtenstein government project "Structural Development of Quality Assurance in Higher Education" (8099-00/2006)
- Tempus project "From Quality Assurance to Strategy Development" (JEP-41078-2006).

With the commencement of first Tempus project, all BiH universities were at the same starting point in terms of established QA systems and procedures, i.e. at the very beginning. All BiH universities first opened their QA offices and employed QA coordinators as part of foreseen project activities. In the beginning the focus was strongly pegged to project management and implementation of activities. However, over time, university institutions began to regard the offered projects as instruments for achieving wider university objectives. Gradually at some universities, project management shifted to process management as QA offices and management structures started to proactively design their QA policies and processes.

After more than three years of active and direct support to QA development, the BiH universities today display heterogeneous levels of development, needs and priorities. In other words, some universities have already adopted holistic quality strategies whereas other have still not placed full significance on QA development. For these reasons, during the project planning phase, WUS Austria conducted informative meetings with university management representatives and QA coordinators in order to identify the current university needs with regard to QA development. WUS Austria therefore recognized the need to shift its focus from "one-for-all" to specific QA measures aligned with particular university needs and priorities, which will be implemented at 4 BiH universities in accordance with trends and priorities in BiH and EU higher education.

Believing that standardized solutions will therefore no longer be as effective as specific measures adapted to university needs and priorities, WUS Austria launches **an open call for proposals** of specific projects and measures.

- **Eligibility:** public universities in BiH
- **Maximum amount granted per project:** 45,000.00 EUR<sup>1</sup>. If there is a cooperation between two universities, then the total maximum amount would be 70, 000.00 EUR. In case three universities are applying, the total amount is 90, 000.00 EUR, and if four are applying then the total amount is 100, 000.00 EUR.
- **Minimum co-financing:** 35% of total project value
- **Project timeframe:** September 2009 – November 2010
- **Project purpose:** further development of QA processes and structures at individual BiH universities in line with current institutional needs and priorities and trends in European Higher Education Area and South-East Europe (see document "Analysis of QA Trends in Higher Education in the EU, South-East Europe, and Bosnia and Herzegovina")

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<sup>1</sup> These grants will include staff costs of all internal and external human capacities required in implementation, such as the costs of external peers or experts.

To the aim of providing a comprehensive insight into current trends in quality assurance activities across Europe, WUS Austria published a document "Analysis of QA Trends in Higher Education in the EU, South-East Europe, and Bosnia and Herzegovina".

All applicants are strongly encouraged to carefully read the document and adapt their proposals to identified recommendations and priorities for further development of QA in BiH HE.

WUS Austria will engage the expertise of its Competence Team and its external peers during evaluation of application content. Apart from compliance with technical requirements, all applications will be evaluated with regard to project impact, sustainability prospects and alignment with current priorities across Europe.

## 2. APPLICATION DOCUMENTATION AND DEADLINES

The application documentation consists of a completed application form and supporting documentation.

The form for the application form can be downloaded from WUS Austria website [www.wus-austria.org](http://www.wus-austria.org) . The completed application form needs to be submitted to WUS Austria Sarajevo Office **BOTH** in electronic form ([selma.emirhafizovic@wus-austria.org](mailto:selma.emirhafizovic@wus-austria.org)) and in one hard copy version (Address: WUS Austria Sarajevo Office, Branilaca Sarajeva 51, 71000 Sarajevo) by September 20, 2009, the latest.

Supporting documentation is an integral part of the Application. Without it, the entire Application will be considered incomplete, and in certain cases invalid, and will not be taken into further consideration. Supporting documentation will be discussed in detail in Section 3/9 (page 10).

### 3. APPLICATION FORM

The application form itself consists of 9 sections, where the following series of questions need to be answered:

#### **Section 1: General information about the project**

- Please insert the contact information of the **applying institution**. In case more than one university applies within one project that information needs to be provided for all institutions. Please indicate which departments will be responsible for project implementation (e.g. quality assurance office/ center, office for international relations, rector's office, etc).
- Please insert the contact information of the **project coordinator**. The project coordinator will be the main addressee in WUS Austria project-related communication and the key source of information on implementation progress.
- The application must be signed by the Rector and verified with the institution's official stamp. In case more universities apply within one project, please copy-paste the middle section (place and date, rector's signature, and institutional stamp) in order to allow space for all applicant universities to verify their participation in the project.
- The title of the project needs to succinctly summarize the main purpose(s) of the proposed action.
- Please indicate the project starting and completion dates.
  - Please indicate the total amount of funds (in EUR) requested within the application. Please note that the maximum amount must not exceed the 45,000.00 EUR threshold (see Section 1, page 3). If there is a cooperation between two universities, then the total maximum amount would be 70,000.00 EUR. In case three universities are applying, the total amount is 90,000.00 EUR, and if four are applying then the total amount is 100,000.00 EUR.

- Please indicate the total amount of funds which will be co-financed (i.e. financed through own contribution) by the applicant. The minimum co-financing requested is 35% of total project value.

## **Section 2: Background/ Context**

- 2.1 - The applicant is requested to elaborate the main strategies and policies important for the proposed intervention. The strategies and policies, whether state, entity, cantonal and/or institutional, should justify and argument the need for proposed action.
- 2.2 - The applicant is asked to describe the problems and needs which the project addresses. It will be considered an asset if the addressed problems and needs pertain not only to the applicant institution, but higher education in BiH in general.
- 2.3 – The applicant is asked to describe in detail all the target and beneficiary groups who will directly/ indirectly benefit from the proposed project. In case of an applicant consortium, all project partners need to be presented including their individual roles which are to be assumed by individual institutions. Larger numbers of target groups/ beneficiaries and project partners will be considered an asset.

## **Section 3: Project Methodology and Strategy**

- 3.1 – Based on identified strategies and policies (see Section 2.1) and problems and needs (see Section 2.2) the applicant is asked to describe the selected project strategy for solving the challenges.
- 3.2 -3.3 – the applicant is required to elaborate the wider and specific objectives of proposed action.
- 3.4 – the applicant is required to enumerate and describe all the expected results and outcomes of the proposed action.

#### **Section 4: Detailed Overview of Proposed Activities and Outcomes**

In Section 4 of the application, the template for Activity and Outcome Table has been given. Depending on the number of expected outcomes and activities foreseen, the same template needs to be copy-pasted. Please note that for some outcomes there can be more activities proposed (i.e. more than one activity can contribute to the outcome achievement).

An example of a correctly completed outcome and activity table is given below:

<i>Outcome title:</i>	<b>Internal Quality Assurance at BiH Universities</b>		<i>Ref. N°:</i>	<b>2</b>
<i>Starting date:</i>	March (M7) 2008	<i>End date:</i>	September (M1) 2008	
<i>Related Assumptions and risks:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Universities in BiH will recognize the significance and advantage of conducting realistic, thorough self-assessments. On the other hand, there might be obstructions to such an approach.</li> <li>○ The wider academic community of each BiH University will receive a comprehensive picture of the overall situation at its University.</li> <li>○ Lack of university integration might hinder system-wide analyses. Distribution channels might be obstructed either on purpose, or due to unprofessional approaches.</li> </ul>			

<i>Activity title:</i>	<b>Implementation of Self-assessments at BiH University</b>		<i>Sub Ref. N°:</i>	<b>2.1</b>
<i>Starting date:</i>	March (M7) 2008	<i>End date:</i>	August (M12) 2008	
<i>Description of the activity:</i>	<p>Based on EU examples and student/academic feedback, each BiH University will develop its own self-assessment procedures. This will involve the preparation of questionnaires, specific to each University, which will be distributed to all faculties and university institutions. Specifically each University will design its own mechanisms of scanning the current situation in its academic community.</p> <p>In order to allow each University to plan, organize and implement its own QA procedures, BiH Universities have six months at their disposal to prepare, develop and implement their own, specific internal quality assessments. Sufficient time is necessary for the purpose of intensive reflection and data collection and management. The aim of this activity is to allow each BiH University to extract a very comprehensive, objective diagnosis of its overall system.</p>			
<i>Inputs:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Staff costs of QA coordinators at BiH Universities</li> <li>❖ Knowledge and experience of the BiH QA coordinators and university management</li> <li>❖ Active participation of all University members (administration, teaching staff, students, management)</li> </ul>			

**Important:** When defining staff costs as inputs for different activities, please calculate the number of hours required for activity implementation.

### **Section 5: Management of the Project**

The management structure and processes need to be presented and elaborated in Section 5, paying particular attention to information about responsible individuals/groups/offices and their roles. In case more universities are applying jointly within one project, distribution of tasks and responsibilities needs to be elaborated in detail. It is important to describe communication channels and plans during project implementation (meetings between different internal and external stakeholders, electronic communication and notifications, etc).

### **Section 6: Project Timetable**

Activities enumerated in the Timetable need to correspond to activities described in Section 4, i.e. their numbering, ordering and implementation deadlines need to be identical. Applicants are advised to observe the 12-month deadline for their proposed action, since WUS Austria's project "Strategic and Structural Development of Quality Assurance in BiH Higher Education in 2008-2010" ends with November 30, 2010. The implementation timeframe of individual activities needs to be marked with an "X" in corresponding boxes referring to specific project month(s).

### **Section 7: Budget**

The maximum amount granted per application is 45,000.00 EUR (see Section 1, page 3). If there is a cooperation between two universities, then the total maximum amount would be 70, 000.00 EUR. In case three universities are applying, the total amount is 90, 000.00 EUR, and if four are applying then the total amount is 100, 000.00 EUR. These grants will include staff costs of all internal and external human capacities required in implementation, such as the costs of external peers or experts. These costs need to be aligned with defined staff hours (section 4). Additionally, only

those applications which confirm co financing (minimum 35% of total project value) will be considered valid and will be taken into consideration.

Depending on the project purpose, expected results and proposed activities, the applicant is requested to propose a budget breakdown, specifying amounts required for implementation of individual activities. The applicants are advised to avoid stating lump sums but rather to calculate realistic unit costs for single activities.

If applying for purchase of equipment, the applicants are required to procure at least three different offers for the provision of equipment, which need to be submitted as part of the application supporting documentation. The cost of the equipment purchased abroad must include all the accompanying costs (CIP and freight cost). WUS Austria reserves the right to procure additional offers. The provision of equipment will be carried out according to agreement between WUS Austria and the applicant.

Ineligible costs: construction work, furniture, and study trips longer than 5 working days.

### **Section 8: Summary of the Project**

Please summarize the project proposal in line with the posed questions.

### **Section 9: Supporting documentation:**

Please make sure that all the accompanying documentation (except equipment offers) needs to be in English!

- o **Letter of commitment by the university** – each applying institutions must submit an official Letter of Commitment (in English) confirming its readiness to implement the proposed project to the best of its abilities and in good conscious.
- o **Letter of commitment by the project coordinator**, whereby the coordinator will commit him/herself to strictly upholding the proposed plan of

- implementation and submitting all the foreseen reports, evaluations, invoices and receipts within the set deadlines.
- o **CV of the project coordinator** – CVs delivered on the EU template ([www.europass.cedefop.europa.eu](http://www.europass.cedefop.europa.eu)) are highly preferable.
  - o **Letter(s) of endorsement by project partners** – in case the project proposes cooperation with other EU, regional and/ or local institutions (e.g. university institutions, QA agencies, accreditation bodies, etc), the applicants are strongly encouraged to submit their Letters of endorsement in the application phase.
  - o **3 offers for equipment procurement** - delivered in bond (for applications which include the purchase of equipment). If applicants are unable to provide three offers (perhaps there are no other suppliers), this needs to be justified in writing.
  - o **Co-financing statement** (statement of co-financing including specified amounts and purposes)

#### 4. SELECTION PROCEDURE

**Description:** The Selection Process consists of the following distinct parts:

- Pre-selection (based on the MUST criteria)
- Peer review (content-based)
- Technical assessment (based on formal requirements and capabilities)
- Pre-selection monitoring
- Final decision taken by the selection committee (consisting of members from the universities, from the Austrian coordination office, and WUS Austria)

The pre-selection procedure will be conducted by WUS Austria Sarajevo staff that will check carefully whether the must-criteria are fulfilled. If they are not fulfilled, the application will be rejected. If, however, the criteria are fulfilled, the application will be sent to the content-based peer review by WUS Austria Competence Team. In addition, the formal requirements and capabilities (including assets) have to be

reviewed. After analyzing the results of the peer review and the technical assessment, the applications are ranked and then passed over to the selection committee. The final decision is taken by the selection committee. As in previous years and various WUS Austria projects, the selection committee will consist of Secretary Generals from all public BiH universities, donor representatives and WUS Austria.

In the following section, the main criteria of each evaluation step are outlined.

## **CRITERIA:**

### **Pre-selection based on MUST-Criteria**

(If these criteria are not fulfilled, the application will not be processed further)

1. Formally valid application (i.e. completed in English, computer processed, all relevant boxes have been filled in, etc)
2. Confirmations by university and project coordinator
3. Proof of co financing (a minimum of 35% co financing of total project value needs to be demonstrated)
4. Well argued need and justified relevance of the proposed action

### **Assets**

1. Cooperation with BiH and EU university/ HE institutions
2. Synergy with current QA projects and activities (Tempus project QASD, CoE's project, etc)
3. Linkage between educational system and economic environment
4. Multiplier effect
5. WUS Austria, as an equal opportunity organization, strongly encourages female candidates to participate in its programs

### **Peer review**

1. Quality of content
2. Relevance of proposed action
3. Alignment with identified priorities in higher education across Europe
4. European standards

### Technical assessment based on formal requirements and capabilities of the applicant

1. Quality of application
2. Institution profile
3. CV of the project coordinator
4. Impressions during monitoring
5. Previous cooperation history (timely fulfillment of project tasks, achievement of wider impacts, responsiveness and punctuality of the applicant, etc.)

#### SELECTION PROCESS

