Green Paper

For Quality and Leadership in Romanian Higher Education in 2015

Foreword

The strategic project *Quality and Leadership in Romanian Higher Education* is an integral part of the second structural change cycle for Romanian university education, following a first cycle that started in 1990 and ended in the middle of the last decade with the alignment to European practices.

The project launched in 2009 led to the preparing of the Vision: *Romanian Higher Education in* 2025, developed through broad dialogue on the mission and future of universities in the knowledge economy and innovation society.

The Green Paper, which follows the European consultation procedure, puts forward a set of concrete measures for change, designed for the medium term (2011-2015) and for immediate implementation.

In the pages of the Green Paper you will find a synthesis of the experience gained during a systematic process of gathering information and consulting the key stakeholders of higher education about the future of the latter. The public policy proposals were drafted based on structured interaction with 60 experts in face-to-face dialogue and not fewer than 600 representatives of stakeholder environments – in online dialogue. The whole process enjoyed the support of the *High-Level Expert Group* made up of architects of Romanian university reforms over the past two decades and representatives of the business environment.

As an integrative document of the consultations, the Green Paper keeps open a series of key issues arising from the proposals put forward, on which you are welcome to comment. Your answers to the proposed questions, the general comments or even the position documents put forward will help us compile the White Paper of Romanian higher education to be launched at the end of 2011.

We invite you to join the dialogue!

Prof. Adrian CURAJ

Project Manager – *Quality and Leadership in Romanian Higher Education*

Executive Summary

The Vision for Romanian Higher Education in 2025 and its accompanying Green Paper detail the public policy proposals whose main goal is to promote quality in university education and research and, in order to reach that goal, to support genuine leadership both within universities and at the level of the higher education system.

This document, the Green Paper, puts forward a number of goals and directions for change and action (for the year 2015) meant to advance the more general goals of the Vision.

The Green Paper focuses on three directions for change and relevant recommendations plus an introductory section, an outline for the implementation plan, and a number of appendixes.

The overview of Romanian higher education as it looks today raises a few key issues that could be improved by taking immediate measures. Among them, the low graduation rate, the extremely low participation in lifelong learning programs, the underfunding of higher education, the fragmentation of university specializations and their low degree of relevance for the labour market, the lack of institutional diversity and, therefore, of attractive educational options, or the formal and conformist quality culture in most higher education institutions.

The three directions for change proposed are:

1. Enhancing personalisation and institutional diversity to expand educational options and customization of education to improve harmonization between the offer and the demand for educational services, as well as to ensure the necessary institutional flexibility. The main proposals are:

- Broadening study program types by increasing the number of short-term programs;
- Diversifying and customizing traditional programs (particularly those in the first Bologna cycle);
- New sources of funding for university research.

2. Institutions should take responsibility, particularly to increase transparency of higher education processes and results, to create the premises for the emergence of institutional reputation systems and to build bridges between higher education institutions and their multiple beneficiaries. Our proposals are the following:

- Supporting informed choices for beneficiaries by providing clear, easily accessible and easy to use information for all relevant stakeholders of higher education.
- Developing quality assurance procedures and strengthening the reputation of higher education institutions.

3. Universities should become fit for purpose particularly in the direction of improved university management, increasing institutional capacity and, more generally, diversifying higher education along relevant directions. The main directions for action are:

- ⚔ Supporting institutional efforts to obtain private funding and, finally, to decrease dependence on public funding.
- ⚔ Developing institutional capacity in universities
- ⚔ Developing institutional capacity in universities by professionalizing the management and introducing adequate administrative practices.
- ⚔ Reforming institutional governance arrangements, including the review of the legal and fiscal status of higher education institutions.

The detailed recommendations set forth in this document refer to both systemic measures (such as freedoms, constraints and support instruments) and institutional initiatives.

To reach the three general goals stated above, we put forth a possible implementation plan for the recommendations associated to each Green Paper proposal. This plan involves the identification of several institutions to take up an avant-garde role and participate in a "first wave" of institutional change.

All the issues in this document are meant as food for thought and debate within the academic community and other stakeholders. The solutions that will pass the test of the consultation process will be included in the White Paper, another well and carefully structured document to be published at the end of 2011.

Introduction

Romanian higher education is not lacking critical analyses which usually emphasize substantial systemic gaps. Underfunding, undersupply of human resources, low performances in certain fields and the slow development of the material infrastructure available for research and higher education have often been invoked. However, despite all that, there were universities which managed to develop, provide quality education to students and, every now and then, have scientific research achievements. On the other hand, there is the spectacular increase in the number of students in higher education, which was however not supported by a corresponding increase in system resources. There are, therefore, reasons to remain optimistic.

It is in this context that we put forward this 2025 Vision and its accompanying document, the Green Paper. They target all Romanian higher education institutions whatever their profiles. Both documents include a series of ideals, principles, values, and, last but not least, guidelines for action.

The main goal of the 2025 Vision and the Green Paper is to promote university education and research quality and, to this purpose, to support genuine leadership both within universities and, more broadly, the higher education system. Both documents are based on the reforms set forth in the National Education Law (NEL – briefly presented, from the perspective of our goals, at the end of this document.) The goals and documents discussed below are meant to define the future challenges, directions and solutions for change.

The Green Paper accompanies and complements the Vision and, as a result, needs to be read and interpreted in close connection with the latter. Unlike the Vision, the Green Paper addresses a shorter span of time, i.e. the year 2015, and introduces a series of proposals for intermediate goals and action meant to lead eventually to the desirable situation described in the Vision. Our recommendations target, on the one hand, systemic measures such as freedoms, constraints (limited mainly to transparency proposals) and support mechanisms. On the other hand, we put forward institutional initiative proposals along with the relevant incentive instruments.

The Green Paper is an invitation to analysis and debate. By the end of 2011, a White Paper will follow; this document will be broader and better structured integrating the results of the consultation process launched together with the Green Paper. To this end, this document identifies several "decision points" in the form of questions you are invited to answer.

Romanian Higher Education Today

This chapter is a summary description[1] of the actual situation of Romanian higher education in 2011 based on general statistical indicators. Its aim is to emphasize the key areas where prompt intervention can result in short and medium-term positive effects. Many of the topics mentioned in this chapter are discussed again throughout the document and accompanied by a more detailed description of specific challenges and our proposed solutions. Some challenges mentioned below are not to be found as such further in the document as they are deemed either implicit or subject to the public consultation process we are launching now .

The Current Situation

Over the past twenty years, Romanian education has gone through a series of reforms and more or less effective or consistent changes. As part of the national education system, Romanian higher education underwent a similar process. Compared to twenty years ago, when only 10% of young people with ages between 20 and 24 attended university, access to higher education has statistically increased significantly.[2] This increase occurred despite the generally unfavourable financial and human resources distribution policies. The increase in the number of students was the direct result of a higher education funding system based on per student budget allocations: this system perpetuated, among others, the

perception that the main duty of universities is to train students in conventional study programs (the three Bologna cycles) and that, as a consequence, non-budget funding resources – as well as budget funding – must come almost entirely from education services to students[3]. Global funding was, however, systematically low, with the entire education budget staying under 4% of the GDP and sometimes even significantly smaller. At the same time, the scientific research budget was constantly last on the list of budgetary priorities.

Concerning the funding for Romanian higher education, public expenditure has been on the increase since 2003 reaching the European average in 2007; Romania allocated to higher education 1.12% of its GDP (see chart below). According to the latest data however, the level of funding decreased over the last years reaching approximately 0.53% of the GDP in 2010[4].

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[1] The diagnosis analysis for Romanian higher education drafted prior to launching this process are available at http://www.edu2025.ro/750/section.aspx/676.

[2] Source: the National Institute for Statistics, *2009 Romanian Statistical Yearbook.* Time Series.

[3] One could argue that it was also due to this perception and the whole set of systemic regulations arising from it that private universities were also driven to focus almost exclussively on tuition fee funds.

[4] "The presentation note to the 2010 annual general execution account for the state budget, the annual execution account for the state social security budget and the annual general account of the public debt," Ministry of Public Finance.
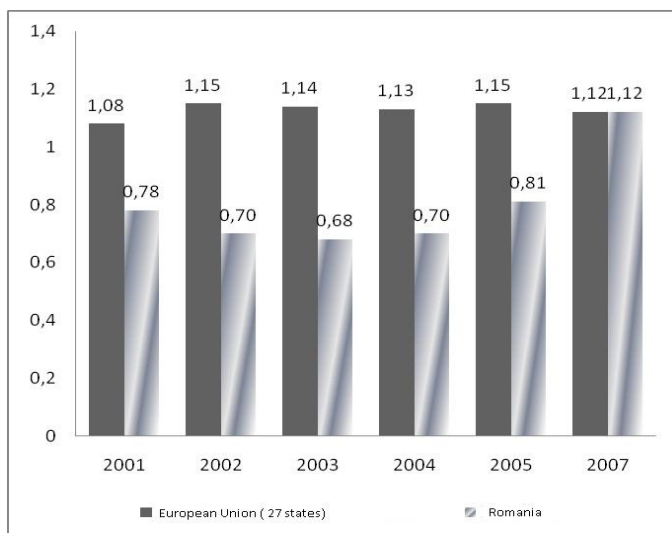
Chart 1 – Total public expenditure for tertiary education, level (ISCED 5-6), percentage of GDP, Source: Eurostat.

*Data for Romania for 2006 are not available.

Enrolment Rate in Higher Education

The Romanian rate of enrolment in higher education has increased significantly over the past few years. According to the Eurostat, in 2009 Romania scored above the European average (EU27)[5] in terms of the number of people aged 20 to 24 enrolled in a HE institution. This means that 29.5% of the people in this age group attended a HE institution in Romania compared to 29.2% - the EU27 average.

However, looking at the indicators measuring educational outcomes, we see that Romania scores below the EU27 average in terms of the number of people aged 25 to 34 holding a higher or post-secondary education degree (16% in Romania compared to 29.9% in EU27[6]). This means that there is a significant gap between enrolment in higher education and graduating from such HE programs.

The average period of time a student spends in a university program is only 1.3 years, less than half the necessary time

for getting a bachelor degree. At the same time, the net average rate of graduation form bachelor programs is approximately 60%. The gross average rate of enrolment in higher education knows a sharp decrease in population groups above ages 19 to 23 (from 45% for 19 to 23 year olds to 7.4% for 24 to 29 year olds)[7].

The data above point to a defining feature of the Romanian HE system: while access to HE at the appropriate schooling age (19 to 23 years old) seems to be similar to other European states, leaving the HE education occurs, statistically speaking, rather early. Moreover, as they grow old, people get more and more disconnected from the educational system, which might explain the extremely low rate of participation in lifelong education programs (briefly discussed below).

Internationalization

It is also worth mentioning here that internationalization – the opening of the HE system to international joint projects – can also be improved by strengthening HE institutional relations and encouraging teaching staff, researcher and student mobility. For example, in 2010, foreign students accounted for only 2.23% of students in Romania. What is more, 59% of them originated from the Republic of Moldova, a country with which Romania has very strong relationships, most of those students are financially supported by the Romanian state through a special grant system.[8]

Specializations and Qualifications

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[5] The EU27 average includes all 27 EU members and is used in this document.
[6] Source: Eurostat, 2011, databases available online on the official website of the institution.

[7] The data quoted in this section come from the *2010 Report on the Situation of the National Education System* prepared annually by the Institute for Education Sciences and the Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sports (MECTS).
[8] According to the Quality Barometer, 2010 edition, edited by ARACIS

Romanian higher education is characterized by excessively fragmented academic specializations (currently 58 different academic specializations are recognised, while at bachelor's degree level the number is even higher). The excessive fragmentation of specializations along with the lack of a qualifications framework these last four years lead to the deterioration of the relevance of degrees on the labour market. Moreover, the human, material, and financial resources available to the HE system are extremely poor, and inadequate to the needs and challenges it faces. Finally, the quality assurance system has been limited for a long period of time only to accreditation processes through compliance with low minimum standards.

Participation in Lifelong Learning

Given these enrolment rates it is perhaps not surprising that lifelong learning is even less developed in Romania than in other EU countries, for example further education and training participation rates for people aged 26 to 34 years is 2.6%, whereas the EU average is around 15%. According to the ELLI index (European Lifelong Learning Indicators), Romania ranks last in Europe as far as the lifelong learning is concerned with a 17. 23 score, while Bulgaria scores 20 points.[9]
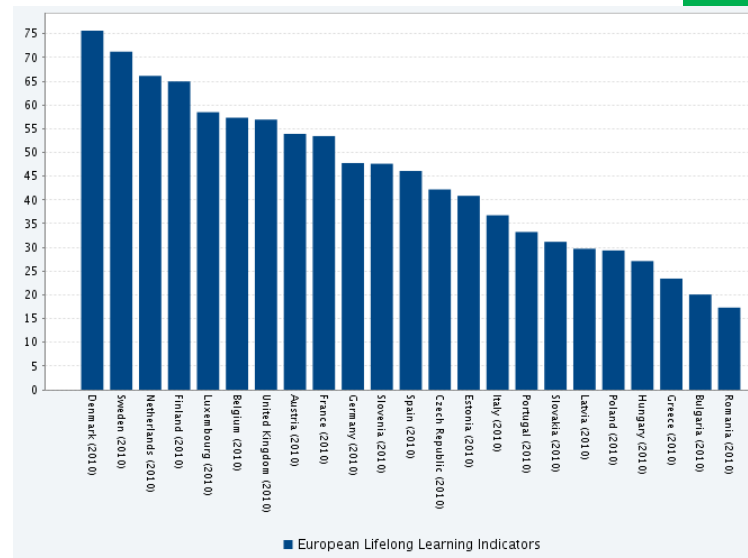

Chart 2 – European Lifelong Learning Index. Source: ELLI Index, 2010.

Clearly, improving participation in lifelong learning is a priority otherwise reflected in the National Education Law and the 2011 National Reform Program as well as in this Green Paper.

A Homogeneous System

The higher education institutional system in Romania is composed of 112 higher education institutions,[10] equally divided into public universities (56 institutions) and private institutions (56 institutions). However, only 35 of the private institutions are accredited and have a legal entitlement to issue degrees, while the other 21 are only authorised to organise study programs but do not have degree awarding powers. These institutions accommodate a total of just over 775,000 students and 31,000 academic staff.[11]

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[10] Depending on the sources, the number of Romanian HE institutions is different. The figure of 112 HEIs is available on the Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sports official website, under the *Higher Education* category. Five institutions were left out as they provide only MA or postgraduate programs and this is in contradiction with the legislation in force on the status of HEIs.

[11] Source: National Institute for Statistics, 2010 Statistical Yearbook.

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[9] For more details on the ELLI index you can check the database, methodology, and results for 2010 at http://www.elli.org

In terms of institutional age there are two extremes. At least half of them are quite young – less than 20 years old, while 18% are over 100 years old. What is unusual is not the division but that there is little diversity among them. Almost all declare within their institutional Charters and strategies that they have a national vocation and that they wish to primarily serve their local and regional community – rather than seeking to achieve excellence at a national level. Also almost all of them offer bachelor's degree study programs, the large majority also have master degree programs and almost two thirds also have doctoral (PhD) programs.[12]

This lack of institutional diversity has been widely debated recently. Despite their significant increase in numbers, research indicates that Romanian universities became very similar to one another, in a series of respects, over the past twenty years. A number of causes have been suggested for this institutional homogeneity, for example: the quality assurance and accreditation legislation in the field of higher education, and a rather narrow and standardizing implementation of Bologna recommendations or using a unitary funding system for public HE institutions which does not stimulate institutional differentiation in terms of quality and development of excellence.[13]

The characteristics of this lack of diversity are first, a three-level degree structure of university only studies (bachelor, master's and doctoral), with no alternative type of programs being officially recognised. The only exception is that for bachelor and

Master's level students may use "distance" learning as an alternative to traditional education, but even here curricula closely mimic full time ones. Secondly, study program curricula are generally the same for all, since a large number and type of courses are mandatory to receive accreditation. After 2004, when the Law enforcing "transferable study credits"[14] was passed, a few short cycle (two or three years usually) study programs (called colleges) still existed, as well as short cycle masters programs and "specialisation" courses but they have been phased out. Thirdly, according to the National Education Law, all 4-year bachelor programs organised before the implementation of "Bologna" provisions have automatically become equal to masters degrees obtained in Bologna-type study programs.

National Governance

National governance is provided by a number of advisory councils and one executive agency which are all accountable to the Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sports (MECTS), as well as an independent public agency with functions in quality assurance:

- **The National Council for Funding Higher Education (CNFIS)**. Its main roles are to formulate proposals on education and research for the Government Minister, forecast the future funding needs of higher education, and recommend the distribution of the annual public budgetary funds to higher education institutions. It is also responsible for setting up and maintaining a web site to provide information on lifelong learning.
- **The National Council for Titles, Diplomas and Certificates**

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[12] This paragraph is based on data provided in the Quality Barometer, 2010 edition, edited by ARACIS

[13] A few interesting works that enlarge upon this topis: *Quality* Barometer, 2009 and 2010 editions, edited by ARACIS; Adrian Miroiu, Liviu Andreescu, "Goals and Instruments of Diversification in Higher Education", in *Quality Assurance Review*, vol. 2, Issue 2, September 2010, pp 89-101.

[14] Law no. 288/2004 regarding the "organization of university study programs"

(CNATCDU). It is a National Advisory Body which gives technical advice on standards in Romania and also the relationship between degrees obtained in Romania and those in other countries.

- **The National Council for Scientific Research (CNCS)**. It is a national advisory board, subordinated to the Ministry of Education. It is responsible for supporting and improving scientific research. One of the institution's main aims is creating a framework for competitive research and European recognition and prestige of Romanian research and also attracting top-level researchers to Romania.

- **The National Council for Development and Innovation** is a national advisory body with responsibilities in professional training and research project assessment.

- **The Executive Agency for Higher Education, Research, Development and Innovation Funding (UEFISCDI).** It is a public institution subordinated to MECTS and providing support to other national bodies. Its main responsibilities are managing the activities of the national councils, coordinating national education and research programs or recommending and implementing institutional development projects designed to increase institutional capacity.

- **The National Authority for Scientific Research (ANCS)**. It is a public institution subordinated to the Ministry of Education through which the Ministry enforces its attributions in the field of scientific

research. It is mainly responsible for research policies in Romania, its aim being to enhance scientific research outcomes, support sustainable development, and national and international access to the research output.

In addition there is one independent public agency, the **Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ARACIS)**, subordinated to MECTS. Quality assurance is mainly achieved through an accreditation process. Each university and each study program undergoes an internal and then an external evaluation based on a predefined set of criteria, standards and indicators. Formally the decision to authorize or accredit the functioning of a study program or higher education institution rests with MECTS. In practice, the decision is usually based on a recommendation issued by ARACIS, following an external evaluation and a discussion within the Agency's Board. ARACIS is currently upgrading its quality assurance methodology aimed at collecting and using empirical data in the process of external quality evaluation.

The National Education Law (No. 1/2011) has provided the legal framework for the creation of several new advisory councils. However, so far these entities have not actually been created . Therefore we are only mentioning their names:

- The National Council for Statistics and Forecast for Higher Education
- The National Council of Education Libraries
- The National Council for Ethics and University Management
- The National Council for the Ethics of Scientific Research, Technological Development and Innovation
- The National Authority for Qualifications, public

institutions responsible for creating and managing the National Qualifications Framework

Conclusions

It was said about Romanian higher education that "it is ineffective, irrelevant, and low quality."[15] The higher education system is clearly at a crossroads, meaning that many future development opportunities open up for it. This Green Paper identifies the main policy directions meant to strengthen universities that would provide study and research programs relevant for all higher education stakeholders. Personalising and diversifying the educational offer, strengthening the institutions by building a national and international reputation, creating educational policies based on objective empirical data and foresight instruments, reforming university governance based on principles such as public responsibility, and promoting strong higher education leadership and quality – these are a few of the directions that we consider fundamental and, consequently, further develop in this document.

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[15] *Education and Research Romania. The Report of the Presidential Commission for the Analysis and Development of Education and Research Policies*, Bucharest, 2007 (available at http://edu.presidency.ro/upload/raport_edu.pdf).

Vision 2025

The Vision of Romanian higher education for 2025 sets out a system of tertiary education governed by three principles:

- Personalisation which brings more educational options and more flexibility for students who can then plan their educational trajectory based on their own requirements and their personal future plans and projects;

- Diversity which involves institutional structures and systemic change to allow the HE institutions to develop towards diverse directions, hence HE institutions should no longer be constrained to mimic one or a few standard organizational models;

- Transparency which emphasizes the importance of relevant, comprehensive, easy to access information on the HE system. This information should directly assist those who interact with the system – students, professors, public and private employers, decision makers, and, last but not least, universities.

The Vision principles are designed for a world:

- more complex and more difficult to manage where the national intellectual capital was acknowledged as a key factor of society prosperity;

- where the State invests in the resources associated with a creative society and supports permanent innovation and beacons of excellence which are based on the paradigm shift towards new knowledge based societies;

- where the organizations re-conceptualize their relations with their partners and employees overcoming the paradigm of competition without cooperation and of bureaucratic coordination;

- where people look for flexibility, dynamism, lifelong education and interpersonal communication and they come together in voluntary action and knowledge networks.

We are now a relatively long way from 2025 and from reaching the aims of the Vision. Hence this Green Paper which sets out a series of aims and objectives to be achieved by 2015 which will bring higher education in Romania significantly closer to reaching these aims. This document puts forward a series of recommendations for action with an eye on the intermediate goals to be met as well as a set of arrangements for the transition process to the Vision.

Directions for Change

I. Personalisation and Diversity

Background

Higher education personalization and diversity are the main goals of the Vision and, by extension, two of the main objectives of the Green Paper.

Personalization entails a focus on the individual. A personalized education is one which responds both to individual needs and plans as they arise, and enhances, through a larger variety of forms of interaction, individuals' capacity to shape and manage their life projects. Personalization is premised on a number of assumptions on the world as it is today and as we see it tomorrow:

- that more and more individuals approach their lives creatively and feel less bound to pursue predefined career and personal development paths imposed until recently by society,

- that, as a result, individuals will typically change jobs and sometimes even careers or professions several times in their lives; freelance work has become increasingly widespread,

- that the lines separating the private from the productive life, and work from leisure have changed, such that education or personal development intertwines with both situations, and

- that an increasing number of individuals behave as "prosumers" – both as consumers and producers of content.

Education for a life that is increasingly unpredictable more predisposed to and even embracing of change, and in which work, leisure and personal edification are increasingly mixed, cannot rely on standardized educational blueprints to the same extent as in the past. This problem is further amplified as the number of learners increases. Harmonizing education to a labour market that may change radically in a few years' time can no longer be done solely in terms of predefined, one-size-fits-all educational paths, but rather through the provision of meta-competences (learning how to learn) and generic, adaptable skills. As a result, learners need to be given the room as well as the responsibility to mix and match knowledge and skills, which suit both their immediate and temporary interests and their longer-term plans. Higher education institutions should deliver support and guidance, rather than represent a rigid and compelling regime.

Personalization is a long-term goal. It entails a process that develops organically, as education supply and demand progressively shape and adapt to each other. Institutionally, personalization relies on a process of differentiation which allows HE institutions to ensure the availability of a variety of options needed for a flexible and personalized education.

However, Romanian Higher Education today shows little diversity – in the fields relevant to personalisation. Universities have similar profiles and identities, promote the same purportedly comprehensive missions and national vocation, are addressed to all categories of prospective students, and offer undifferentiated study programs. Furthermore, accreditation and quality assurance tools have strengthened this lack of diversity, the same as funding streams which have allowed limited

differentiation, focused on the dependency on student fees.[16]

Overall the effect has been to create mass education at the expense of the quality of teaching, as a result of a dominant preference for teaching in universities. The internal quality culture is stuck in a stage of formalism and ritualism as reflected in the *2010 Quality Barometer* recently published by ARACIS. The overwhelming majority of quality assurance departments have limited their activity to providing the data requested by accreditation agencies.

In a global world of multiple values, higher education must serve the multiple interests of its direct beneficiaries. The Romanian higher education system has only one road to take: the one that leads to personalisation and institutional diversity. This will give students greater choice in meeting their educational needs. It will allow higher education institutions greater freedom and flexibility to respond to dynamic changes within the external environment, it will provide many opportunities for social mobility, and ensure the right conditions for innovation.

University diversity should be understood in several dimensions:

- At the systemic level, where universities have missions, dimensions and various control and regulatory conditions.

- At the structural level, depending on their historical aspects or legal status.

- At the study programs level, depending on their type and structure, the nature of the degree and certificate they provide.

- At the procedural level, depending on the different ways of providing teaching, research, and services.

- At the reputational level which represents the perception relevant actors have towards the "quality" of the services the institutions provide.

- At the constitutional level, depending on the different groups of institutional and extra-institutional actors taking part in the university life.

To be effective, diversification, as a process of building and developing diversity, depends on transparency – the existence of relevant and accessible information on services, processes and the conditions the HE system provides. Personalisation, diversity and transparency will need to be supported through a funding system which does not restrain the reconfiguration of the system to develop more diverse arrangements .

Until the recent adoption of the National Education Law, the financing system, more than a decade old, constituted at the time of its introduction in the late 1990s a radical change in outlook. By providing universities with lump sums to be spent according to their individual plans and needs, it dramatically enhanced institutional autonomy. By connecting financing with the size of enrolment, it increased transparency of allocations and public accountability. However, the limitations of the financing system have become obvious over time. 30 percent of the basic funding should have been allocated according to a set of quality indicators. On paper, almost all universities received this percent, while in practice the impact of the indicators on actual funds received was marginal.[17] In

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[16] Phenomenon spotted also for the small number of universities capable of attracting larger chunks of the research funding.

[17] Almost all universities were promised but not actually granted allocations for quality in the

addition "complementary funding", which was also allocated based on the number of full-time students enrolled, has strengthened the institutional dependency on enrolments and lead to the unwanted effects already discussed.

We have three proposals to trigger better personalisation and diversity within the Romanian higher education.

Proposal I.1 - A radical shift towards an expansion of study program types

Some simple statistics, such as the rate of enrolment in higher education, suggest that many Romanians are interested in acquiring some form of post-secondary education. However, the rate of retention in higher education is low. Graduation rates are about 60 percent with the average time spent in university at around half of what is required to obtain a degree, i.e., under 1.5 years. Those who leave university early – whether due to lack of money, time or the requisite skills, or because they lose interest – do so without the possibility of obtaining a formal recognition of the skills they may have acquired while they were there. They are "wastage" and their investment in months or years of education is not transparent to prospective employers and cannot be further put to use within the HE system.

All this suggests that other types of programs, besides the traditional "Bologna-type" bachelor's degree, may provide a better education solution for many prospective students, or other persons who lack the commitment or the resources to invest in a minimum of 3-year study program. Such programs may take a variety of forms, differ widely in length (from a few months to a couple of years), and target different ends. They

could be offered on a flexible basis so as to respond to the actual needs of those interested in them. They would also be more attractive to persons older than the age traditionally reserved for higher education, of whom only a small number engage in some form of lifelong learning today. Graduates of such programs would be able to return later on to complete a more typical three-year degree, if they wished.

Recommendations

Legislation and quality assurance

- Short-term programs are not mentioned in the new national law on higher education. As these programs do not need the level of standardization of their Bologna-type counterparts, and indeed would benefit greatly from more flexibility, the framework legislation may not need to be amended initially. But the programs would need to have a firm footing in the law at some point, for the sake of both predictability and the beneficiaries' sense of security. The legislative inclusion could be carried out through a general enabling provision rather than through a rigid definition.

- New program formats would need to be taken into account by higher education regulators, which are responsible for qualifications and quality assurance systems. This formal recognition would offer a strong incentive for HEIs to establish alternative programs, as the latter would be recognized and counted towards quality assurance and evaluation. Moreover, the methodology for professional training programs should encourage universities to initiate them themselves.

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maximum amount corresponding to the almost full realization of relevant indicators.

- In particular, the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education (CNCIS) is extremely important. Although one of the two key goals of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) is to foster lifelong learning, the 2009 CNCIS Methodology specifically defines the structure of the national framework in terms of Qualification Levels 6 through 8, i.e., the first, second, and third cycles of the Bologna system. Level 5 qualifications ("short cycle" programs) are ignored, and so are any other alternatives. The CNCIS Methodology should be reworked with an eye to accommodating the educational alternatives offered by short-term programs, including short-cycle ones, in all their potential variety. (a DOCIS project implemented by ACPART aims at redesigning/adapting CNCIS and related documents by the end of 2011.)

- Similarly, while the quality assurance system in Romania is undergoing important changes which will result in more flexibility and variety, this system too has been designed with the three Bologna cycles in mind. Quality assurance needs to be geared towards the creation of a diversity of short-term educational programs.

Funding

- The public funding system for higher education should offer incentives for the development of short-term programs. Assuming there are no fundamental changes to the funding methodology as defined under NEL, we suggest slightly altering the basic funding

scheme to also cover students enrolled in alternative programs not only those in Bologna-type programs. However, as the programs will take time to develop, transitional arrangements will be needed to avoid disincentives and to protect existing funding for universities.

- Financial support could be extended to adult students who wish to engage in LLL activities. Bank loans or any other type of loans could prove particularly useful in enhancing accessibility, as adults are typically less loan-averse than students in their teens and early twenties. It could be that loans apply to all student types.

- Indirect funding could include fiscal incentives for companies which involve their employees in lifelong learning.

Education providers

- New types of higher education providers, some operating outside the traditional university paradigm, could be accepted as legitimate players in the tertiary education market. Some of these may be for-profit, but partnerships between non-profit HEIs and for-profit organizations should be encouraged to share learning in order to capitalize on the experience each of these organisations brings to the table.

- Large-enrolment institutions and/or academic units could be encouraged through the quality assurance system and negotiations with accreditation or quality assurance agencies to explore short-term or short-cycle alternatives.

Proposal I.2 - The diversification and customization of traditional Bologna programs

While new program formats would constitute an important addition to the current higher education offer and to personalisation more generally, current programs, particularly bachelor ones, need to change as well. Currently, not only are such "traditional" academic programs in a particular discipline quite similar irrespective of the institution which offers them (old or new, small or large, specialized or comprehensive, public or private), but they also share largely the same educational philosophy across disciplines. Consequently, educational experiences vary little throughout the system. Academic programs are relatively ill-equipped to respond both to the increasing variety of those whom they purport to train, and to quickly shifting patterns of demand in the labour market. Hence the common perception that Romanian higher education is largely irrelevant.

University programs must become more flexible and responsive to both individual needs and to the needs of potential employers. An academic program should enable different persons to acquire equivalent or similar competences, knowledge, and skills by travelling a variety of educational paths, rather than through relatively rigorous adherence to a mostly prescribed menu of courses and other activities.

Students should be encouraged to experiment with program options and delivery methods and, more generally, to assume responsibility and exercise choice in the mixing and matching of alternatives. To this end, intra-institutional exploration should be expected of many or most students, while inter-institutional mobility should be enhanced.

Recommendations

To diversify bachelor's programs

- The creation of both formal and informal organization frameworks friendly to diverse educational philosophies, such as programs based on thematic issues or problem-solving rather than on traditional academic disciplines. These would dramatically enhance the range of educational and disciplinary experiences available to students. Such philosophies should be reflected in a more flexible university study organization than the current specialization fields and disciplines structure.

- Similarly, the establishment of "liberal arts" or "general studies" programs, offering an array of generic skills and meta-competences which are particularly useful for a constantly changing, unpredictable labour market.

- Along the same lines, the introduction of major/minor combinations, which are already informally recognized or practised in the Romanian higher education system.

- The de-regulation of organizational structures in academia, so as to make it possible for the HEIs to harmonize their internal structure to the variety of programs and services provided to students. HEIs should be free to explore, besides traditional faculty-based structures, other organizational blueprints.

- Bringing non-academic professionals and practitioners in to teach practical skills and impart applicative knowledge. The quality

assurance systems and the regulations governing professional standards should accommodate and, indeed, promote through relevant indicators practitioner involvement in teaching.

- Involving professional communities and employers in curricular design, without thereby undermining the authority of academic professionals. The quality assurance system should support ever more than it currently does the academic programs designed with direct input from relevant non-academic communities.

- Opening up university programs to international input by inviting international professors to deliver lectures – and perform other activities – in foreign languages. Regulations governing professional standards should encourage the access of international teaching staff to the national education system while capitalizing on the new options provided for this purpose in the National Education Law.

- Expanding delivery methods, particularly towards alternatives such as e-learning, blended learning, or open courseware. These methods should be recognized for quality evaluation purposes and, in light of their current poor reputation, should be provided with an adequate quality control mechanism.

Increasing the customization of educational experiences

- The validation and recognition of prior experience obtained outside formal educational contexts. This would enable students to seek knowledge and skills outside the traditional program format and to combine formal education and work experience towards a degree (or other type of certificate). Individual institutions should be free to design their own validation systems on the basis of a set of system-wide guidelines.

- Easy leaving and re-entry into programs: students should be able to leave formal education to pursue other personal plans without forfeiting their learning to date and without having to start all over again in order to complete a degree. A system of certificates and diplomas offered to early leavers should be set in place. In this direction, both the spirit and letter of the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System should be adopted.

- Generalizing program modularization. Besides a "core curriculum" there should be a much richer offering of university courses associated with relevant qualifications, many of which could be stepping stones for higher-level courses, therefore allowing dynamic educational paths for students. This would mean a student could reach such a higher-level course through various, flexible combinations of lower-level courses.

- Spreading academic mentorship practices which are currently underdeveloped in the Romanian higher education system as a whole. The professional standards and quality assurance system could encourage mentorship and, consequently, students' integration into broader knowledge communities.

- Buttressing the increase in educational choice with a

corresponding increase in career counselling and professional orientation. This type of service should: (a) be accessible to any BA student; (b) be monitored through the quality assurance systems; and (c) be more than a "formal" service as it currently is and become fully functional .

- Generalizing instruments and practices of professional path follow-up for alumni, which would reveal the usefulness of competences acquired during the study program.

It is important to emphasize that these proposals advocate neither a dismantling of traditionally organized academic programs, nor unification across the system. Traditionally organized programs have the advantage of being tried and tested. Furthermore, the standardization that they provide brings with it increased predictability for academics, students, as well as employers. Their somewhat rigid design might be convenient for many students who do not have the time or inclination to exercise many educational options. A diversity of programs implies the continued existence and maybe even a predominance of traditional arrangements.

Proposal I.3 – New funding streams for academic research

Currently, there is no funding mechanism for academic research as such. The chief research funding schemes are usually addressed to all public research institutions. Public expenditure for research is quite low (0.31% GDP in 2009)[18], and has fluctuated dramatically over the past decade. Despite the optimist description of one class of institutions as "teaching-and-advanced-research institutions", HEIs lack organizational frameworks capable of supporting sustained research activities over the long term and covering a critical mass of research fields. Specifically, very few academics are hired to do only or mostly research - and this is true of academics at all levels, from juniors to seniors. We do not have an institutionalized practice of funding research and development – few businesses are directly paying universities to do research for them.

We have identified a range of options for addressing these problems. Funding of university research frameworks should come from other sources than the main budget. Organizational frameworks should be affiliated to existing registered research entities. The drawback would be that superfluous practices would be transmitted to new organisational frameworks .

Recommendations

- Stimulating the set-up of distinct university research by allowing departments and faculties to set up commercial/private entities that can sell research products on the market freely,[19] building also on the provisions of the National Education Law.

- Directly funding new research structures for department/faculties with long-standing achievements and practice. The further development of research initiatives could be project based within a competitive scheme.

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[18] Investments in Research, Development&Innovation with public funding streams according to the *2010 Romanian Statistical Yearbook,* National Institute for Statistics (INSSE).

[19] One such type of incentive is currently operating in the form of non-repayable loans for innovation start-ups and spin-offs under Axis 2 Research – POS CCE.

Conclusions to Part I

Part I – *Personalisation and Diversity* – was meant to put forward possible lines of action to lead Romanian higher education towards increased personalisation. Our suggestions touched first on the diversification of study programs beyond the three traditional types (bachelor's, master's, and PhD) through to the introduction of short-cycle educational programs, adaptable, customized, and up-to-date, which would better meet the training needs of people and organisations. Then we focused on the personalisation of existing programs suggesting flexible school leaving and entry solutions such as modularization of curricula, diversification of teaching methods, etc. Last but not least, we addressed academic research personalisation by suggesting a few incentives that could support the development of the research capacity of HEIs.

If so far we dealt with the services provided by HEIs, i.e. study programs and research, in Part 2 we turn to issues related to HEIs transparency and the system's openness to society in general. Therefore, we suggest actions to increase university accountability, to encourage development of services provided through transparency policies.

Question 1. Do you agree that shorter more tailored study programs should be much more widely available in the higher education system? If so, should they be eligible for basic funding?

Question 2. Should the State fund a preferential student loan system for students choosing short-cycle programs?

Question 3. Should companies contracting professional training services for their employees be granted fiscal incentives?

Question 4. Do you agree that the higher education system could be extended to include other forms or types of educational institutions (such as for-profit institutions)?

Question 5. Do you agree that "traditional" university study programs should be diversified to meet the needs and expectations of their direct beneficiaries (e.g. students)?

Question 6. Do you agree that regulations governing professional standards and study program organization should be changed to allow easy access to teaching and associated activities to non-academic practitioners and professionals?

Question 7. Do you agree that there should be institutional funding to stimulate research capacity?

II. Institutions take responsibility for quality of services

Background

Diversity and personalisation have no real meaning unless there is transparent information empowering students to make real life choices and other stakeholders to be able to acquire relevant information on higher education. Transparency instruments include a variety of public and private, general and specialized databases, allowing institutions as well as individuals to make their own classifications, rankings and, generally, informing their own decisions.

Though transparency in itself should not be an aim but a tool towards enhancing the capacity for decision of the actors and the quality of their decisions, transparency has some more general purposes in a higher education system. On the one hand, it supports the creation of an institutional reputation system leading to improved harmonization between beneficiaries' interests and the educational offer. On the other hand, it encourages the development of an institutional environment based on cooperation – between HEIs and their beneficiaries, between institutions and governing bodies of higher education and, equally important, between different universities. Last but not least, transparency is a set of practices which strengthen in time a culture of institutional accountability.

Transparency must be regarded in the widest of senses, since it should not only refer to quantitative data regarding resources, or inputs in the system, but also to outputs and outcomes and also qualitative data regarding the quality of those outcomes. Last, but not least, transparency is essential for supporting university autonomy.

Universities operate within an interdependent relationship with other institutional actors whose main mission and interest is to increase knowledge and the quality of human resources in the economic and cultural area. Transparency does not apply only to the governing bodies of the HE system and its components. Transparent information should reflect the views of the many stakeholders, be they private or public, who stand to benefit from a well-educated population. Only in this way will transparency ultimately lead to a reputation system, in which informed educational choices signal to both education providers and direct and indirect beneficiaries of educational services what is supplied by and what is demanded of the various niches of the education system.

Today, little information is available about the higher education system in Romania. This hinders a quasi-comprehensive evaluation of the system, setting clear assumptions for institutional development (not even HE institutions hold their own important data), strengthening institutional cooperation outside the country, and accessing alternative sources of funding.

Finally, if the condition of transparency is met, in order to support universities to become responsible they should enjoy broader legal freedoms under the principle of university autonomy. Currently, the legal framework is rather restrictive on certain operational and technical activities and this hinders academic freedom and institutional flexibility. Therefore, we suggest that those institutions who exhibit responsibility in the form of fulfilling transparency requirements as well as the goals discussed in these sections of the Green Paper should be allowed a

different legal status granting them more autonomy and operational freedom.

The following have been identified as proposals for transforming the principle of institutional responsibility into an operational and useful tool.

Proposal II.1 – Clear and easily accessible information for all relevant stakeholders

Today, even though information on higher education exists it may be described as being rather general, largely irrelevant for some stakeholders (especially employers) and out-dated in relation to current international trends. The vision put forward for 2025 relies on clear, comparable and objective data, which enable universities, primarily, but also all other stakeholders in higher education to have a clear picture of the way the system works. However, for the time being, law-making and administrative processes are politically driven rather than evidence and analysis based.

There are a few options to enhance transparency of the education system. The first option is to increase the level of empirical data and information on HE institutions and to make them available to direct and indirect beneficiaries. This requires strong government intervention and requirements upon universities to declare publicly data based upon a predetermined set of criteria and standards. Even if we might expect resistance on the part of universities and even adverse effects such as false data being declared, it could prove beneficial on the short term. This option has already been considered in the National Education Law, through the exercises of classifying higher education institutions and study programs. The exercises are currently in the data collection process and its outcomes could be evaluated in

order for this option to be established as an effective one or not.

The second option is to foster cooperation between central level institutions managing the system, universities and other stakeholders (such as professional associations, students associations, unions, NGO's and so on) in order to create a common pool of data on the higher education system. Strong incentives would have to be provided for such a partnership to be operational. Therefore, this option will imply a medium- to long-term time frame and requires a larger quantity of resources (financial and human) to be spent. The outcomes however might be more sustainable than those of the first option.

The third option is to allow universities to open up and provide data as they see fit, according to their own institutional missions and aims and thus to become transparent as a condition of accessing the educational and research global community. This option involves a medium-term time frame and also could contribute to the diversification aim, by providing a strong differentiation between "transparent" institutions and "opaque ones." However the outcomes of this option may be hard to foresee and control, since each institution providing data according to their own need might make data impossible to compare and therefore make the picture fuzzy when it comes to system level policies.

The recommendations below are a mix of measures reflecting the three options mentioned. To ensure useful transparency tools we first need to determine: the balance between quantitative and qualitative data collected and analysed; the level of access to raw data by different categories of stakeholders; the responsibility for collecting and processing raw data; the sets of variables and indicators which should be comparable to international statistical data but also adapted to

practices in Romanian higher education; and the correlation and interdependency of sets of data in order to produce relevant information.

In order for transparency to work information has to be relevant and its use should be clear. Since higher education institutions are the source of raw data it should be clear to them that such data is used by different types of stakeholders in order to foster institutional cooperation, rather than just for control and coercion.

Recommendations

To promote transparency at system level

- Higher education institutions should be supported to develop an internal process of structured and periodic raw data collection.

- Concerning resource allocation from central level to the level of each HE institution, for example: budget funding allocations, enrolment figures per institution and field of study, competitions for teaching and research staff positions, etc.

- Incentives and constraints should be put in place to ensure systematic reporting of data and information from higher education institutions to central level institutions as well as other categories of stakeholders. This process should be carefully tuned to ensure that relevant information is delivered directly to those who are directly interested and avoid overlapping and overcrowding informational content.

- Central level institutions should promote evidence based policies and decisions as well as periodic analyses and reports at system level.

- Relevant agencies of the Ministry or independent agencies should systematically base decisions regarding funding of higher education and research, institutional or study program level external evaluations and other specific activities on available data.

Regarding key areas of information, we suggest collecting data on:

- staffing strategies and other human resource processes of higher education institutions, including staff training and development;

- study programs organised in terms of outcomes and educational processes as well as admission and student selection requirements;

- research projects and their outputs and outcomes;

- widening access to higher education and also to lifelong learning study programs;

- service to society of the higher education system as a whole, such as access for disadvantaged groups, provision of student services, and diversification of institutional practices to support the development of universities.

Regarding **tools for delivering information to relevant stakeholder groups**, we suggest:

- web-based databases,
- periodic themed reports both at national level and at sector level,
- periodic system level analyses,
- periodic consultations with stakeholders to determine the relevance of existing data and to

propose changes to the transparency system,
- research on higher education specific issues.

Proposal II.2 – Strengthening the reputation mechanism

Romanians' trust – individuals and institutions equally – in the HE system is relatively low, especially when it comes to the relevance of university studies to adult life or employers and the economy's requirements.[20] The institutional reputation relies on poorly documented impressions of the system, rather than on actors' informed choices. The low funding of the HE and the precarious status of human resources, aggravated by the emigration of qualified staff, have led to a trust crisis in education, teamed up with an institutional accountability crisis.

Quality assurance methods are best suited for developing accountability and building public trust in higher education institutions, through specific methods and tools. Combining quantitative data and qualitative evaluations and quality assurance in higher education may provide a number of useful outcomes for:

- Higher education institutions which can be supported to constantly adapt to a changing educational, political, economic and social environment;
- Public policy makers who receive information that then can be used for developing public policies in a variety of fields from public financing to steering public higher education from a distance;
- Students, irrespective of their profiles, can receive essential

information to help them plan their individual educational careers;
- Employers who receive information certifying the viability, efficiency and relevancy of a particular institution or study program.

Changing the perception of HE institutions on the role and attributions of ARACIS is another goal. According to the 2009 and 2010 Quality Barometers, HEIs believe that the role of ARACIS is to check and control quality, which goes against the agency's institutional profile.

Developing systems to publish raw data on the working of higher education institutions as well as the methods to turn the data into relevant information are the premises for strengthening institutional accountability. Institutions that choose to be transparent and discover the advantages of strategic planning based on systematic analyses of relevant data are consciously taking responsibility for their beneficiaries. In time, they will be able to become reflexive and better adapt to the educational, knowledge and research needs of the communities they cater to. This process needs to focus on at least two key issues. On the one hand, developing an organizational culture which values and takes responsibility for its beneficiaries requires a longer time frame. On the other hand, the institutional development process described requires significant resources. For example, analysis and the use of data collected on relevant aspects of higher education institution activity involves, in practice, developing specialized institutional structures and adequate human and material resources both quantitatively and qualitatively. It would be unrealistic to assume that these structures will create themselves in the current institutional context characterized, as previously stated, by a scarcity of resources.

Recommendations

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[20] The *2010 Quality Barometer* edited by ARACIS provides relevant information on this topic.

- A quality assurance philosophy based on support for and negotiation with institutions would entail a change in their perception of the functions of quality insurance in general and the role of ARACIS in particular.

- Widespread implementation of benchmarking will pave the way for alternative and independent evaluations in higher education, which can be customized according to their institutional profile. Using benchmarking techniques could have a strong impact both on building institutional diversity and, more generally, institutional responsibility.

- Developing a preferential resource allocation system for those institutions showing their intention to develop data analysis which is responsive to the social and economic environment.

- Promoting higher education public policies focusing on institutional accountability and creating a system of benefits associated with their implementation in institutions. Here are a few examples: creating a system of institutional contracts for funding based on transparent, public and objective performance criteria in education and research, with an evaluation of the achievement of goals undertaken at the end of the contracts; developing a set of quality evaluation practices and tools meant to produce relevant information on universities, to make it possible to assess these institutions based on the mission undertaken and to distinguish among several levels of quality as opposed to YES/NO accreditation; a system of benefits (financial or otherwise) to support institutions which show their capacity to develop and implement medium and long-term strategic plans including clear goals and progress evaluations, and others.

- Organising national and regional events (forums, fairs, etc.) to present the main outcomes of efforts to contribute to the development of the community catered to. This approach will increase society's trust in universities and will strengthen their reputation.

- Universities should be supported and encouraged to develop programs and activities directly targeting society. Civic action, active involvement and direct application of theoretical principles, and of basic knowledge, should be supported by universities and rewarded by financing institutional actors.

Conclusions to Part II

Responsibility is a core value of the entire process put forward by our Vision. It is also one of the hardest to achieve, since it not only requires a longer time frame, but also the development of various internal procedures and practices within universities and, simultaneously rather radical changes in the external environment in which those institutions function. The proposals put forward here relate to just a number of essential steps

which should be taken in order to achieve institutional responsibility.

Given the importance of this specific aim, we emphasise the fact that a significant prize must be awarded to those universities who choose and maintain the long and difficult path towards accountability. Universities which decide to properly implement transparent practices, for example, should be granted a different status differentiating them from others and should be freed from legal constraints, allowing them more flexibility and freedom to operate. However, some control should be maintained, thus this prize should be dependent on those institutions behaving responsibly on an on-going basis. The next direction for action (*Institutions Become Fit for Purpose*) will deal with this proposal and others.

Question 8. Do you agree that higher education governance bodies should intervene to make information clear and easily accessible for all relevant higher education stakeholders?

Question 9. Do you agree that an integrated database system providing widely accessible data on institutions and study programs would lead to a significant improvement of the capacity for informed choices of future students and employers?

Question 10. Do you agree with large-scale benchmarking exercises in Romanian universities?

III. Institutions become fit for purpose

Background

Inevitably the move towards diversity, personalisation and institutional responsibility will require new governance arrangements. In the light of the current structure of the system such new arrangements will involve:

- A framework of coherent regulatory values, principles, and bodies;
- Collaborative, participative and responsible leadership, improved by joint training, twinning and peer review activities;
- Strategic, efficient and performance-orientated management, overseen by a strong quality assurance system;
- Clearly set out goals, policies and strategies in the medium and long term, offering predictability and foresight and guided by a high evaluation culture;
- External stakeholders participating in setting institutional goals, policies and strategies;
- Sharing resources, expertise and educational practices through partnerships and consortia (clustering) arrangements.

Having a robust framework of internal governance will contribute to a more active presence of universities in the overall development of society. Through their new organizational arrangements, universities will transfer best practice to other organizations, for example local public administration services, businesses, etc. Being an emergent process, it must be supported by sound and appropriate financial allocations together with strengthened administrative

capacity and new models of learning and mutual assessment.

To facilitate this process we suggest that by 2015 universities should have a new fiscal framework and increased legal autonomy, which would allow them, for instance, to have control of their own terms of employment, wages and human resources. Regardless of the concrete legal solutions which will make these goals possible, public universities should have a different status from public administration services, namely something resembling the status of private entities of public utilities. Such a status represents a prerequisite for real university autonomy and actual and consolidated academic freedom.

We have identified three main proposals to enable institutions to become fit for purpose:

Proposal III.1 – A shift towards private funding

The Higher Education system in Romania has always been underfunded. Nevertheless, universities could not ensure access to considerable non-state sources of income except though tuition fees. The current system is strikingly uniform and focused on traditional teaching practices.

The diversification of study programs and learning practices will be possible if universities can create the premises for an enhanced capacity to attract more private funding.

Recommendations

- **Investment loans supported by a state guarantee fund**: Some universities in Romania have started to seek additional sources of income such as bank loans or donations. Nevertheless, these still

amount to an insignificant percentage of the total funding available or needed, partly because of the banks' reluctance to lend to HEIs. This reluctance could be overcome by government bearing some of the risk of late payments or default through a state guarantee fund. The government could minimise the risk to itself by requiring its regulator to enforce robust financial probity in university institutions, for example by ensuring that current and projected income levels are sufficient to maintain repayment of loans and to continue to provide quality education services. Universities would get easier access to bank loans and would start investments in research and infrastructure.

- **Increasing income coming from endowments and donations.** These could be a more important source of funds than they are at present. Fundraising departments could be set up in every university, or fundraising services could be outsourced. A strong incentive could be the creation of a special public fund to reward institutions proportionally to the amounts gathered by them from private donations. Ultimately, the fund could be dissolved when this practice becomes widespread enough among HEIs. Alternatively, such income could be administered by separate charitable trusts with a Board of Trustees who would champion fundraising and oversee investments and spending.

- **NEL refers to student loans for disadvantaged students as an alternative funding source**. There is no reason why this practice should not be gradually extended to other types of students. Student loan schemes, which are in place in Europe, increase access to higher education. This means loans to cover tuition fees and living expenses which are reimbursed once the graduate becomes an employee. The potential debt aversion of Romanian students could be eased by setting income ceilings (to be obtained after graduation) where debts will not be recovered.

- **Partnerships and consortia can be an alternative private source of funding - being encouraged in NEL.** The new Public Private Partnership law amendments can also be an opportunity for Romanian state universities. Along the same lines, university consortia can access different funding sources in addition to their existing budgets to develop large-scale projects.

- **Last but not least, universities with sound financial management should be rewarded in terms of QA criteria** and their capacity for good management of their income.

Proposal III.2 - Developing institutional capacity in Romanian universities

Due to tradition and the existing legal and institutional framework, there is currently considerable confusion caused by overlapping academic and administrative positions. This leads to the inefficient management of institutions and faculties/departments and limits the freedom of professors and researchers to choose topics for lectures/research/projects and the methods of approaching them. This may develop into conflicts of interest, and at worst corruption. The poor performance

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and quality of administrative staff has also contributed to the lack of a sufficient degree of institutional autonomy.

In order for universities to function according to a medium and long term vision and to the strategic objectives linked to it, they need leaders and qualified and skilled managers capable of tackling institutional and systemic challenges.

Recommendations

- **Better strategic planning.** Universities should design their near future, mid- and long-term strategies in a professional manner. This may involve foresight techniques, risk analysis, and impact studies as fundamental tools in administrative processes. These processes should be evaluated and peer reviewed and tightly connected to quality assurance processes.

- **Professionalizing university management.** This involves developing leader and university manager vocations. Some of the current administrators may rise to the challenge but new blood will be needed. Solutions may include:
  - Separating the positions of management and research/teaching, hence the prerogatives, competences and limits of each role should be more explicit and easier to accomplish.
  - Creating a special national fast stream program to provide administrative training for HE; initially, this program could be financed by ESF (POSDRU) focused on developing training platforms for university managers. This would involve recruiting young leaders, potential leaders and managers who would receive lifelong training.

- **Developing appraisal processes for university managers.** The managers and leaders of the future must not only hold professional skills but also sound social skills. The new model of promotion in the management ranks must be based on the fact that promoted persons represent the image and reputation of their higher education institution. In this context universities are encouraged to develop clear and coherent procedures of professional assessment for the positions specific to operational management taking into account relevant criteria agreed upon within the entire academic community.

Proposal III.3 – Reforming the existing institutional governance arrangements.

Currently, Romanian universities do not have a clear internal culture based on the principles and values of university governance. Rather, they are geared towards sets of rules and hierarchies which tend to copy as much as possible from each other or international institutions without this leading to the strengthening of internal governance. This has resulted from a culture of obedience and control in institutional management and the failure of regulatory arrangements to generate flexible relations, accountability, public trust and responsibility. Concerning the relations with central governance bodies, the dominant perception at university level was that of rigid control instead of coordination and guidance.

As a result, regardless of their visions and missions and strategic objectives, Romanian universities are poorly prepared in terms of an effective and efficient administrative capacity. They

would rather use standard approaches when it comes to their curricula offer and performance assessment. Universities have not yet created and developed inter-institutional cooperation platforms and opportunities for creating consortia, including thematic ones, for the purpose of diversifying and personalizing their programs and education, research and development offers.

The current status could be reformed through rethinking institutional governance partly determined by the more general goals of institutional personalization, diversification, and transparency. In addition to the previous proposal regarding the development of administrative capacities, universities can reform their organizational structure so as to enhance academic freedom and increase the relevance of the public services, while simultaneously cultivating organizational learning processes and community outreach.

Recommendations

- **Setting up a new legal and fiscal status for higher education institutions:** to guarantee greater autonomy in terms of control of their human and financial resources. The confusion generated by the central harmonization of wages and other decisions relating to terms of employment demonstrates how very important is to have explicit, clear and transparent institutional freedoms and limits, familiar to the whole academic community. A new legal status for universities could require amendments to the framework legislation on both education and public administration.

- **Redefine the functions of the internal responsible bodies in universities and elabore a new internal regulation framework** based on the provisions in the new University Charters. Eventually, each institution will have to examine and evaluate the way inherited institutional structures cope with the actual needs of academic and external communities. The new internal regulation framework must specify more clearly the way in which institutional arrangements and processes are formed and carried out. The guiding principles of the new internal regulatory framework must be based on the principles of efficiency, efficacy and evaluation in the context of educational service management.

- **Creation of consultative bodies** to develop and establish operational and strategic plans. These bodies may be composed of the representatives of the main employers, the main public institutions in the geographical area, non-governmental organizations and voluntary associations**.** At the same time, higher education institutions must adopt a communication style and mutual consultation with professional associations which would bring together both teachers and researchers and professionals. This would make it easier for universities to become involved in the process of development, debate and evaluation of social and economic strategies for local and regional communities.

- **Diversifying and improving the suitability of instruments for monitoring and evaluating** the quality of services, research and education offered; and the updating of monitoring and evaluation practices. This should involve cost-benefit and cost-efficiency analysis methods and

draw on the expertise of consultative bodies. The evaluation can be even conducted prospectively by developing training needs analysis types of research and clearly identifying preferences and objectives of different social groups in the demographic pool from which a university draws its students. Moreover, the results of the monitoring and assessment exercises should be publicly accessible – an essential precondition of transparency and accountability.

- Adapting internal staff recruitment and promotion to the new legal and fiscal status of universities as well as to the new positioning of universities and study programs. The new internal policies must take into account the weight of elements defining the academic mission – the teaching and the research components. This would enable clarity and predictability of teaching and research, staff mobility and payment of adequate wages.

Implementing these recommendations will result in the transformation of universities from structures that react belatedly and incrementally to economic and social changes into flexible, forward-looking institutions , directly involved in change and assuming social and civic roles within the communities for which they cater. As a result, the public perception of the relevance of institutions will change in time. The implementation of these recommendations will also lead to the creation of a comfortable communication environment among academics, students, alumni, employers and the community at large.

Conclusions to Part III

The application of this set of recommendations will have a considerable impact on the entire system of higher education. Universities will be able to coordinate their own organizational strategies. Universities will be able to relate to key players and representatives of their communities and they will improve their reputations. Relevant extra-university actors will gain trust in these institutions, they will be able to communicate and receive professional feedback. Any attempt to create consortia, thematic ones included (for instance, consortia on the purchase of electronic and IT resources) as well as mergers through union or absorption will be professionally assessed and evaluated according to both administrative feasibility and from the perspective of aggregating resources directed at continually improving teaching and research processes.

This section of the Green Paper puts forward system-wide solutions such as a review of the legal and fiscal status of universities, their orientation towards private funding, professional educational management and strategic planning in universities.

It goes without saying that institutions will be differently prepared and willing to implement the proposals in the Green and White Papers. Based on the experience from development programs in other European countries, we suggest that the different degrees of preparedness and willingness is acknowledged in the form of transitional arrangements that would eventually lead to the adoption of the reforms recommended in this document.

As a result, the next section, *from recommendations to action*, is meant as a list of first steps to be taken towards adopting the solutions we offered.

Question 11. Do you agree that Romanian universities need new legal, administrative, and fiscal statuses? If so, what are the main directions for change?

Question 12. Do you agree that a state guarantee fund for loans contracted by universities is feasible?

Question 13. Do you agree that those HE institutions developing organizational structures meant to increase the share of donations in the total income should be rewarded with public funds?

Question 14. Do you agree that loan systems should expand in the future from disadvantaged students to all the students?

Question 15. Do you agree that universities can increase their chances to access more private funding by creating consortia and partnerships?

Question 16. Do you agree that organizing foresight exercises involving external actors could lead to the improvement of the universities' capacity for strategic planning?

Question 17. Do you agree that Romanian universities need to clearly distinguish between management functions and academic ones?

From Recommendations to Action: A Possible Scenario

The following is a possible scenario for the implementation of some of the Green Paper recommendations. It is not however meant to cover all the options described previously . This outline for an implementation plan would be a good starting point for the later full realization of all the recommendations put forward.

Our implementation scenario includes a **first wave** of institutions willing to become the avant-garde of change. Based on the outcomes of the first wave, there will be subsequent waves of institutions joining the reform. Eventually, the majority of Romanian higher education institutions will take part in the changes set out in the Green Paper – bringing the whole higher education system closer to achieving the 2025 Vision goals.

The selection of first-wave institutions must be based on two criteria of institutional diversity. First, the public or private nature of the university; given that the first wave requires special institutional public funding arrangements, only state universities are eligible. This decision could be changed later on as we gather intelligence on the actual response of HEIs to the program. A parallel arrangement designed for private universities could be taken into consideration later on.

The second diversity criterion is the classification of HEIs according to the National Education Law. All three classes are eligible in the first wave particularly in the light of our recommendation to drive education towards lifelong learning.

An Outline of the Implementation Scenario

Letters of intention

Initially, all public higher education institutions will be invited to apply to be part of the first wave of change. In addition to the formal letter of intention, each interested HEI will submit a plan for change which should include goals correlated to the Green Paper recommendations and tailored to the class the institution belongs to. (Should the first classification exercise not be completed by the date of letter of intention submissions, universities will be invited to anticipate the class they belong to.)

Consulting interested institutions

After submitting the letters of intention, members of our team will visit the institutions interested in participating in the first wave. They will discuss the institution's expectations from this process as well as the details of the implementation strategies set forth by the universities.

Selection

Following discussions with interested institutions (but also the process of consultation on the Green Paper Recommendations), the project team will prepare a set of criteria for selection.

The selection process will take into account the quality of the applications, the equal representation of all university classes as well as the constraints entailed by the administration of the first wave of change implementation program. Moreover, in addition to the university senior management taking responsibility for the letter of intention (a prerequisite for participation), the local university community should also take responsibility for the institutional change program.

In addition to the evaluation of applications according to the criteria above, interviews might be conducted with the management team of each university.

By the end of this process, we expect to identify several public institutions able to take part in the first wave.

First wave of change

The institutions and the project team will establish together the legal conditions – the institutional freedoms and prerogatives system – necessary to implement the Green Paper recommendations included in the institutional change proposal. The participant institutions will be granted these conditions provided that they accept monitoring of the way they use the conditions granted.

Budget funding for change and support during the transition period

We deem it essential to support first-wave institutions financially. Funding can be granted in instalments associated to different stages of the process of institutional change undertaken by the participants. The granting of each instalment would depend on the successful completion of the previous stage.

Moreover, given that the change process could generate funding problems – e.g., due to the increase of the ratio of lifelong learning programs compared to programs receiving basic budget funding – it is essential that participant institutions should be granted temporarily funding at least equal to what they would have received had they not participated in the first wave.

Encouraging mutual learning

It is essential that, throughout the institutional change process, but also later on, members of the senior management of participant HEIs should share expertise. As they will be perceived as leaders of the Vision changes, such expertise sharing can be conducted publicly.

As a result, we deem it important to set up an association to enable mutual learning and sharing of experience throughout the transition period. The association would publish material on the lessons learnt and organize conferences and presentations by institutional leaders. Participation in subsequent change waves would automatically grant the institution in question membership in this association.

Acknowledging the new legal status and related autonomy (if applicable)

Once the first wave is completed, the institutions would receive formally and permanently the fiscal and/or fiscal status described above (freedoms and prerogatives that brought about the change). These conditions could be eventually extended to cover all higher

education institutions or only some of them.

Regulations

Throughout the implementation of the institutional change program, at least the following three issues must be addressed satisfactorily:

Current regulations. The reducing of the administrative burden on first-wave HEIs would be welcome. Once these institutions prove that they are fit for the purpose they set for themselves, they could be granted some degree of freedom from cumbersome bureaucratic tasks.

Quality assurance. The new institutions would still be subject to quality assessment processes. However, changes to reflect their new institutional status might be considered through consultations with relevant institutions and agencies.

Finance regulations. As independent organizations, first-wave participants might become subject to new finance regulations. These will be designed to ensure financial probity and maintenance of the service to society dimension.

Consultation

We value greatly your views and possible suggestions to the Green Paper. We have identified different decision points in this document. You find them in the form of questions. The Green Paper is the basis for a consultation process carried out between July and September 2011.

You are invited to voice your opinions and remarks by filling out the survey available   at http://carteaverde.edu2025.ro/.

Appendix 1

Overview of the Changes Brought by the National Education Law No. 1/ 2011

The National Education Law (NEL) provides a powerful springboard for some of the reforms we suggest in this document. In this section we summarise the main changes that it will introduce over the next few years. They are:

- **Finance:** changes to financial resource allocation;
- **University Classification:** a new classification system which stimulates differentiation in Romanian higher education;
- **Enhancing access to higher education:** for socially disadvantaged groups;
- **Teaching staff:** new selection criteria;
- **Lifelong Learning:** enhancing the participation of the adults in LLL university programs and, more generally, raising the number of university LLL programs;
- **Quality assurance:** changed methodologies;
- **University Management**: including an enhanced leadership role for University rectors.

The new funding system

The new funding methodology is still under construction. However, the NEL sets out clearly the main budget financing streams for higher education, they are :

- basic funding (study grant based);
- complementary funding;
- supplementary funding;
- institutional development funding (competition-based);
- social inclusion funding (competition-based).

The methodologies for university funding and university classification are partly intertwined. For instance, the financing streams are correlated with the university program rankings and university categories and will take quality and performance into account when concentrating resources and prioritizing investments. Funds may be allocated preferentially to university consortia.

For instance, competitive funding and the encouragement of academic excellence, including university rankings, will be complemented by an assessment of institutional performance and the quality of educational services. A minimum of 30 percent of basic funding will be allocated to universities on the basis of new quality criteria drafted by CNFIS and approved by MECTS.

A new methodology for university classification

The classification of universities will be carried out by an **Evaluation Consortium** composed of ARACIS,CNATDCU and CNCS. The first national evaluation exercise will have input from a foreign agency which must have expertise in the area of higher education rankings and classification. The name of this agency is yet to be determined.

According to NEL, universities are to be classified into three categories:

- teaching centred universities,
- teaching and scientific research universities or teaching and artistic/creative universities,

- advanced research and teaching universities.

In addition university programs are to be ranked into 5 classes: A, B, C, D, and E. This basically means that for each discipline in the ranking (for instance, sociology) the best programs will be class A programs and the ones that still need improvement – class D or E programs. The ranking is built based on raw data reported by universities and some ranking indicators (to be created after data collecting is completed).

Ultimately each institution will be officially recognised as being of one of the three types and will have classifications available showing the level of excellence for each program they offer.

Enhanced access to higher education for socially disadvantage groups

According to the NEL, the state undertakes to support financially and by other means access to higher education for young people (not older than 35) and adults from economically and socially disadvantaged communities. The law also provides a special loan system for the members of these groups.

New selection criteria for academic personnel

Academic titles are currently awarded by CNATDCU, but these will be based on new sets of criteria. One of the major changes will be the introduction of portable qualifications. These will enable teachers and researchers to work anywhere within Romanian Higher Education system. This should increase flexibility and professional mobility for academic and research staff. In addition, the criteria underpinning portable qualifications will connect better to similar portable qualifications in operation in the EU and other international professional communities.

Better provision of Lifelong Learning (LLL)

The NEL will enhance the participation of the adults within LLL university programs and raise the number of university LLL programs. It provides an integrated and coherent definition of lifelong education and professional training and establishes the recognition and certification of competences gained in formal, informal and non-formal educational contexts. In addition local authorities will be able to establish Lifelong Learning Community Centres to implement, at community level, the policies and strategies in this field.

New quality assurance methodologies

The new quality assurance methodology will be built on a different vision and philosophy. The accreditation process will be centred primarily on output and outcome indicators, while the authorization of Higher Education Institutions will remain linked to input indicators.

For the first time, ARACIS is going to use benchmarking as a key element in its evaluation procedure. ARACIS is currently piloting a database benchmarking methodology in order to test its new sets of institutional and university program indicators. After the piloting period is complete, and after analysis of the results, future evaluations will be based on validated benchmarking indicators.

Changes to university management

The NEL will strengthen the orientation of higher education institutions towards performance and the competitiveness through better local management. There will be:

- An enhanced leadership role for Rectors;

- Entrepreneurial activity will be encouraged as part of academic governance;
- Students will remain key players in representation structures, academic senates and faculty councils - thus confirming students' status as partners in the academic process.

By and large, the structure of academic leadership/ management remains the same in the new law, with the more radical transformations concerning the rector and dean positions who are no longer necessarily elected democratically by the teaching staff. As a result, rectors can either be elected by direct vote of the teaching staff and student representatives or selected in public search, based on a methodology approved by the senate, by a recruiting committee. The deans are appointed by the rectors on a competitive basis from among the academics of any national or international institution.

The National Reform Program 2011 - 2013

The Government has recently published its 2011 - 2013 National Reform Program. This strategic document examines the need for reform across a wide expanse of policy areas. Not surprisingly it addresses higher education and refers to the changes that the NEL will bring about.

It also notes that the "Report on the state of national education - -2010" draws attention to a series of relevant data:

- After a spectacular increase, the gross participation rate in HE decreased over the past two years, reaching 45 percent in 2009-2010 (compared to 51.7 percent in the previous year).
- The fact that almost one in every four college graduates in Romania does not have a job.

The Government identifies the following blockages in the higher education system:

- Weak correlation of academic specializations with the demands of the labour market;
- Insufficient transfer of the results of academic research to the economy;
- The theoretical bias of academic curricula, which does not provide graduates with practical skills and competences.

The main thrust of the Government's actions aimed at reaching their targets, and at overcoming blockages, are as follows:[21]

- Developing a National Qualifications Framework (NQF) appropriate for the current level of economic development and the assimilation of the NQF by the labour market;
  - o Estimated impact: creation of sustainable, durable jobs; better integration of graduates on the job market; increased potential to attract foreign capital to the Romanian economy given the adequate job opportunities; increased labour mobility.
- Creating an objective selection framework, which ensures that able young people are attracted towards obtaining qualifications which link to National economic development plans (ITC, engineering, natural sciences, services, agriculture);
  - o Estimated impact: higher professional performance of graduates and higher employment rate.

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[21] Excerpts from the *2011 – 2013 National Reform Program.*

- Creating mechanisms for the recognition of competences acquired through formal and non-formal education for tertiary educational paths, for all intellectually able young persons;
    - Estimated impact: stimulating participation in higher education through recognition of post-secondary studies.
- Stimulating lifelong learning, among others through the finalization and adoption of the National Strategy for Lifelong Learning;
    - Estimated Impact: increased number of higher education graduates; increased interest in learning in informal and non-formal contexts and the recognition of results acquired through this process.

Challenges

The NEL promises to bring major changes to the Romanian higher education system but at the same time provides major challenges including:

- The capacity of national bodies and agencies to implement the changes;
- The capacity of universities to fit in the new higher education institutional landscape;
- Achieving a common understanding of the foreseen changes;
- The impact on the current homogeneity of institutions and particularly on:
    - Diversity – Portable qualifications will help though, as they will enable universities with changed aspirations to identify and

recruit appropriate personnel. The division of universities into three types will break the existing paradigm of uniformity – but there is a risk that it will institutionalise three forms or uniformity – rather than encouraging movement of institutions between the three classes over time, a change in aspirations and the search for their own niche.

- Personalisation – The NEL envisages greater access to greater lifelong learning opportunities and more flexible educational options. Changes should not be limited to alternative programs and the incentives for change should come from students and other public and private stakeholders not only from the central administration.

Transparency - Over time the new quality assurance processes, including benchmarking, should generate greater transparency in the standards and content of the programs offered by universities. However, it is still essential that these tools are able to break the conformity culture, to encourage reputation-building mechanisms and the participation of external actors in the evaluation of services provided by HEIs.

Appendix 2
Glossary of Terms

Education quality assurance – is an institutional provider's capacity to supply educational programs that meet the standards announced. Quality assurance is carried out by a set of institutional capacity development measures, of preparing, planning and implementing study programs meant to increase the trust of beneficiaries in the quality of services provided by the institutional provider. (Source: the National Education Law)

European Qualifications Framework, EQF – is an instrument enabling the relating of the different European states' qualifications systems to a common European reference framework to the purpose of making easier the mobility of employees and persons enrolled in different levels of the education systems, and of increasing access to lifelong learning. (Source: http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc44_en.htm)

National Qualifications Framework – is an instrument that sets out the Qualifications according to a set of criteria relevant for specific learning levels. The National Qualifications Framework aims at integrating and coordinating national Qualifications subsystems and increasing transparency, access, progress and quality of Qualifications in relation to the labour market and the civil society. (Source: the National Education Law)

National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education (CNCIS) – is the design instrument for the structure of higher education Qualifications. CNCIS is aimed at assuring the consistency of higher education Qualifications and titles acquired. CNCIS assures national recognition as well as international compatibility and comparability of Romanian higher education Qualifications. CNCIS is part of the National Qualifications Framework.

Qualification – is the formal result of an evaluation and validation process which occurs when a competent entity determines that a person has obtained learning outcomes that meet certain pre-established standards. (Source: the National Education Law)

Education quality – is the set of characteristics of a study program or professional qualification and their provider, which ensures that both the quality standards and the beneficiaries' expectations are met. (Source: the National Education Law)

White Paper – is a document usually published by the European Commission, containing proposals for Community action in a specific area. In some cases they follow a Green Paper published to launch a consultation process at European level. When a White Paper is favourably received by the European Council, it can lead to an action programme for the Union in the area concerned. In practice, most EU countries also produce White Papers to recommend changes in Nation State policy. (Source: http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/glossary/white_paper_en.htm).

Green Paper – is a document published by the European Commission to stimulate discussion on given topics at European level. They invite the relevant parties (bodies or individuals) to participate in a consultation process and debate on the basis of the proposals they put forward. Green Papers may give rise to legislative developments that are then outlined in

White Papers. In practice, most EU countries also produce Green Papers to consult on potential changes to Nation State policy. (Source: http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/glossary/green_paper_en.htm)

Transferable credits – are a formal type of recognition of the amount of effort/work carried out by a person in order to successfully graduate a curriculum unit (class, laboratory, seminar, etc.) in a study/learning program. The most well-known is the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS).

University study area – is an administrative form of organizing study programs according to the scientific area they belong to.

Foresight – a systematic, participatory, future-intelligence-gathering and medium-to-long-term vision-building process aimed at present-day decisions and mobilising joint actions. (Source: http://forlearn.jrc.ec.europa.eu/index.htm)

University governance – is the whole of structural and functional arrangements and related processes at institutional level that enable universities to operate. (Source: adapted from Michael Shattock. 2006. *Managing Good Governance in Higher Education.* Open University Press. P. 1)

Higher education institutions (HEIs) – are those institutions or organizations providing higher education study programs. The Romanian higher education system does not distinguish between HEIs and universities in terms of legal status or name. In other countries, Ireland and UK for example, the name of 'university' is protected by law and limited to a group of institutions with a long tradition in higher education and university research.

Lifelong learning (LLL) – includes all formal, non-formal and informal learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competences within a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective. (Source: http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2001:0678:FIN:EN:PDF)

Public policy – is a network of interconnected decisions concerning the goals, means and resources allocated to reach the goals in specific situations.

Bologna Process – is the conventional name for the higher education reform process – based on voluntary participation and cooperation – of the wider European geographic area, process launched with the signing in 1999 of the "Bologna Declaration" by Education Ministers from 29 countries. Every two years after its signing, ministerial meetings were held to agree on and adopt Recommendations specific to the six main reform directions initially agreed on. These are: the adoption of a system of degrees easily understandable and comparable; the adoption of a higher education system in two cycles (undergraduate and postgraduate); the implementation of a transferable credit system (following the ECTS model); promoting mobility by removing obstacles in the way of the free circulation of persons; promoting European cooperation in quality assurance; promoting the European dimension of higher education.

University study program – is a group of teaching, learning, research, applicative curriculum units aimed at providing the student a university qualification certified by a diploma and diploma supplement. (Source: the National Education Law, Art. 137 (1))

University – is a type of higher education institution legally accredited to issue academic/university study diplomas both for undergraduate and postgraduate cycles, in a multitude of areas or domains of science and which hosts and carries out scientific research activities.

The Romanian higher education system does not distinguish between HEIs and universities in terms of legal status or name. In other countries, Ireland and UK for example, the name of 'university' is protected by law and limited to a group of institutions with a long tradition in higher education and university research.

Appendix 3
List of Acronyms

ACPART – National Agency for Qualifications in Higher Education and Partnership wit the Social and Economic Environment

ANCS – National Authority for Scientific Research

ARACIS – Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education

CNATCDU – National Council for Titles, Diplomas and Certificates

CNCS – National Council for Scientific Research

CNDI – National Council for Development and Innovation

CNFIS – National Council for Funding Higher Education

DOCIS – "Developing an Operational System of Qualifications in Romanian Higher Education", strategic project co-financed by the European Social Fund through the Sectoral Operational Program

Human Resources Development 2007-2013 and Romanian Government

ELLI – European Lifelong Learning Indicators

EQF – European Qualifications Framework

ESF – European Social Fund

HEIs – Higher Education Institutions

LLL – Lifelong Learning

LEN – National Education Law

MECTS – Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sports

GDP – Gross Domestic Product

POS CCE – Sectoral Operational Program "Increase of Economic Competitiveness"

POS DRU – Sectoral Operational Program "Human Resources Development"

ICT – Information and Communications Technology

UEFISCDI – Executive Agency for Higher Education, Research, Development and Innovation   Funding

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