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White Paper

For Quality and Leadership in Romanian Higher Education in 2015



Seeds for the future

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Bucharest

2011

White Paper

**For Quality and Leadership
in Romanian Higher
Education in 2015**



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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* document, *Romanian Higher Education in 2025*, developed through broad dialogue on the mission and future of universities in the knowledge economy and innovation society. This dialogue brought together over one thousand people both directly and indirectly connected to university education.

The *White Paper*, a document coming out of several rounds of consultation with both university stakeholders and beneficiaries, 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 *White Paper* you will find a synthesis of the experience gained through a systematic and structured process of collecting information and consulting the key stakeholders of higher education. The public policy proposals were drafted based on structured interaction with 60 experts in face-to-face dialogue, and no less than 600 representatives of stakeholder environments – in online dialogue, followed by a further 300 after the drafting of the *Green Paper*.

The whole process enjoyed the support of the *High-Level Expert Group* made up of 15 designers of Romanian university reforms over the past two decades.

Summary

2025 Vision

The *Romanian Higher Education in 2025* document (the *Vision*), which governs and is the driving force of this *White Paper*, puts forward a third-cycle education system led by three principles: personalization, diversity and transparency.

Personalization means more options for students in terms of flexible educational pathways which can fit their individual plans for the future.

Diversity means institutional structures and systemic configurations which allow for distinct trajectories for institutions with different missions and goals.

Transparency highlights the importance of comprehensive, relevant and easily accessible information about the education system while working towards a reputation system for universities.

The *White Paper* accompanies and complements the *Vision* and, consequently, the two must be read together. The *White Paper* operationalizes the *Vision* for the nearer future by setting a series of intermediary objectives and actions for 2015 but meant to eventually lead to the desirable situation described in the *Vision*.

The *White Paper* integrates the results of the consultation launched under the previous instrument, the *Green Paper*.

Over the last twenty years, Romanian higher education has undergone a series of more or less coherent and effective reforms and changes. Despite the remarkable expansion of the level of participation and the updating of specializations and some curricula, **higher education is facing a series of challenges** that led to the creation

of the *Vision* and of this document. Among these challenges, we list only the ones we deem the most significant:

- The remarkable homogeneity of higher education in terms of HEI organizational structures, the programs offered (quasi-identical in universities with profiles at least formally different), students' learning experiences, approaches to and assessment of performance, educational ideology and ethos.
- Very low participation in lifelong education, much lower than the EU27 average¹ and a gross higher education enrollment rate of only 7.4% for people aged between 25 and 29.
- The lack of relevance of university degrees – and, with them, of the higher education study programs and curricula – to the labour market. A recent study showed that for more than three quarters of employers it is irrelevant whether a job applicant has an MA degree on top of a BA one.
- Teaching students in traditional BA and MA programs as the major non-budget funding source.²
- Last but not least, the Romanian higher education as a whole having lost some important market niches such as international students or the capacity to attract talented students from second cycle education.

1 In 2010, Romania had the lowest rate of participation in lifelong learning in Europe, with a score of 17.31, lower than Bulgaria (20.07) or Hungary (27.11) and much lower than the Czech Republic (42.20), Germany (47.77), the Netherlands (66.13) or Sweden (71.23). See www.elli.org.

2 With the exception of a very short and long-gone period of time when research received a major infusion of funding.

In addition to an introduction and annexes, the *White Paper* is made up of **four main sections describing an action plan and a fifth section setting out expected outcomes.**

The first section (Chapter 1) gives a brief explanation of the purpose of the document and its connection to the *2025 Vision*.

The second section (Chapter 2) deals with personalization and diversity of education as set out in the *Vision*, and puts forward a series of proposals to increase customization of higher education by a radical expansion of university study programs. In short, the proposals fall under two broad categories:

- Diversifying and customizing traditional Bologna-type study programs (and particularly BA programs).
- Expanding the current offer of short cycle programs which would meet the needs of beneficiaries more directly and quickly, and would make it easier to access higher education.

The third section (Chapter 3) deals with the other principle of the *2025 Vision* – transparency. Two main proposals are put forward:

- Building a national Strategic Informational System which would provide wider access to information for a host of institutional and individual actors; ensure unified and harmonized data collection about HEIs and the system and thus ease the burden of repeated administrative reports; and, at the same time, it has various individual and institutional uses.

- Developing foresight practices in relation to the labour market through a systemic effort to scan relevant trends and changes.

The last main section of the document (Chapter 4) puts forward measures aimed at providing the necessary conditions for the actions in previous chapters to be actually carried through. These fall under two categories:

- Strengthening institutional freedoms by changing the status of higher education institutions as a result of systemic exploratory and consulting processes on the limits of their current status and the institutional needs for meeting the *2025 Vision* goals.

- Improving management of higher education institutions by developing administrative capabilities and creating support structures for university leadership.

In addition to these systemic proposals, Chapter 4 also includes a scenario for the actual implementation of the *White Paper* proposals called *The First Wave of Institutional Change*. This scenario calls for the voluntary participation of a number of institutions in a program meant to offer support, opportunities and follow-up to the organizations willing to place themselves at the vanguard of change.

Finally, Chapter 5 sets out the expected short/medium term outcomes of the actions in Chapters 1-4.

Chapter 1 – Introduction



The Vision 2025, the Green Paper 2015, and the White Paper 2015

Romanian higher education has experienced two decades of reform. While the outcomes of these changes are still controversial, some critical assessments – which usually emphasize systemic shortcomings in terms of funding, research results, professional conduct, quality of education and services to students – are often hard to disregard. It is just as true, however, that the changes achieved in Romanian higher education over these past twenty years are impressive and, sometimes, indicate some very good future developments. Therefore, there are good reasons to be optimistic about the future.

This is the rationale behind the *Romanian Higher Education in 2025 Vision*. The document concerns all national higher education institutions (HEIs) regardless of their features as well as other stakeholder categories of organizations or persons interested in third-cycle education. The *Vision* includes a series of ideals, principles and values for the reform of higher education before 2025, all of them coming out of several rounds of consultation and analysis, involving a few thousand university stakeholders.³

The *Vision* was accompanied by the *Towards Quality and Leadership in Romanian Higher Education in 2015 Green Paper* which was built on a number of concrete proposals for action towards the realization of the *Vision*; these proposals cover a shorter time span, 2011-2015.

Moreover, the *Green Paper* was the main tool for the national consultation process that involved the academic community, education experts, beneficiaries and other stakeholders in higher education. This process took place between June – October 2011 and used

³ Further information about the complex consultation system that the *Vision* was built on and the accompanying documents are available on the project website: www.edu2025.ro.

statement documents and a focused online questionnaire. The answers and comments sent by several hundred respondents were used to change, adapt or eliminate *Green Paper* proposals. The outcome of this consultation and consolidation process, see brief description in Annex 1⁴, is this document, the *White Paper*.

The main goal of both the *2025 Vision* and the *White Paper* is to promote quality in university education and research and, for this purpose, to support genuine leadership both in universities and at the level of the whole third-cycle education system. Both build on the reforms set out in the National Education Law (NEL).

The *White Paper* accompanies and complements the *Vision* and, consequently, the two must be read together. The *White Paper* operationalizes the *Vision* for the nearer future by setting a series of intermediary objectives and actions for 2015 but meant to eventually lead to the desirable situation described in the *Vision*. The *White Paper* integrates the results of the consultation launched under the previous instrument – the *Green Paper*.

The Vision

The *Romanian Higher Education in 2025 Vision* puts forward a system governed by three principles: personalization, diversity, and transparency.

Personalization means more options and flexibility for students (but also, indirectly, for other higher education stakeholders) who can access and build educational pathways that fit their personal plans and projects.

Diversity calls for institutional structures and systemic configurations that would allow for higher education institutions to develop in distinct directions, freed from the constraints that forced them to follow a standard organizational model in the past.

⁴ An extended analysis of the consultation results is available at www.edu2025.ro.



Transparency emphasizes the importance of comprehensive, relevant, and easily accessible information about the education system. This information must be consolidated in a strategic informational system, and those interacting with the system – students, academics, public and private employers, decision makers, and, not least, the universities themselves – must be able to make direct use of it. Finally, transparency is a means towards building a reputation system for universities that would enable them, the decision makers, the students, and other beneficiaries to make informed decisions and choices.

We are now a relatively long way from 2025 and from meeting the goals of the *Vision*. The recent legal reform includes a few important steps towards meeting these goals. Among them, the introduction of a university classification system and study program ranking, a more flexible quality assurance system and the reform of public funding instruments for third-cycle education. While these changes bring us a little closer to the objectives in the *White Paper*, they can also give rise to challenges. Some of them entail the need for near-future decision making as outlined in this paper.



Chapter 2 – Personalization and diversity

Personalization and diversity are at the core of the *Vision* and therefore form two of the main *White Paper* goals. This was confirmed by the consultation process mentioned previously.

Personalization is about putting the person first

The idea of personalized education is premised on the observation that, in many areas essential to their lives, people make more choices today than they used to. Some of these choices are forced on them by circumstances as the world becomes increasingly changing and unpredictable. Some other choices are deliberate as more and more people start defining their lives creatively, feeling less pressured by predefined social models. As a result, the average person changes his/her work place and profile several times throughout his/her life and, sometimes, even their profession. The latter stops being the absolute centre of one's life but rather a combination of personal development and spiritual quest. Personalized higher education is meant as a way to cope with a world where people opt for diverse and variable life paths.

Personalization rejects the idea of higher education built on one-size-fits-all fixed structures and formulas. Labour markets today are less and less stable and no longer supported by a universal educational model. Personalization encourages the acquisition of meta-competences (learning to learn) and generic skills that can be adapted according to a given situation. Learners need the freedom and responsibility to create their own combinations of knowledge and skills based on their short and long-term plans. They expect support and orientation from institutions rather than a strict and restrictive program of knowledge acquisition.

Personalization is a long-term goal consisting of an organically developed complex of skills, abilities and behaviours, where education supply and demand sides influence and gradually shape each other. At institutional level, personalization involves a differentiation process that will allow HEIs to provide the diverse options required by customized and flexible education.

The rigidity of Romanian higher education

Romanian higher education still knows little diversification and personalization. Learners have to deal with a selection of predefined courses, with little to no variation, provided by HEIs that all look alike. Generally, universities have very comprehensive mission statements, they claim national coverage and commit to provide services to the same categories of students. Quality assurance focused on accreditation reinforces homogenization while the internal quality assurance culture is still formal and ritualistic. Funding instruments did not encourage much needed differentiation and, moreover, created dependency on fee-paying students.

Romanian higher education is currently structured as an ineffective market where institutional stakeholders and their direct beneficiaries (students) or indirect beneficiaries (employers) are not engaged in meaningful dialogue. The lack of transparency of the academic environment where beneficiaries do not yet have the tools to make informed choices⁵ is caused by several systemic and

⁵ See *The Guardian University Guide* (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/universityguide>), *Die Zeit / CHE University Ranking* (<http://ranking.zeit.de/che2011/en/>), or *US News & World Report College Rankings* (<http://www.usnews.com/>), not to mention more carefully tuned tools to service the needs of particular social categories (such as *Young America's Foundation Conservative College List*, <http://www.yaf.org/topconservativecolleges.aspx>).

institutional rigidities. Similarly, this leads to the reproduction of a limited and rigid selection of educational offers. As a result, beneficiaries have passive behaviours, complacently declare themselves to be satisfied with higher education,⁶ and, generally, put less and less effort in their own education.⁷ The passivity of beneficiaries completes the vicious circle as universities lose motivation to change their practices and strategies and slip into a state of institutional apathy.

The need for foresight thinking

This vicious circle can only be broken if universities start thinking about their beneficiaries using foresight. Foresight thinking does not simply mean anticipating future needs – and even less an illusory “synching” with the current labour market – but working towards actively defining and shaping these needs. Engaging with “demand” can no longer be done solely in terms of reacting to it – i.e., always *post factum* – but should be forward looking.

This type of thinking calls for, first of all, pro-activity by HEIs and, secondly, better informed university stakeholders and education beneficiaries. In the best-case scenario, the outcome will be an educational environment where those serviced by the system have multiple options, make more choices better suited to their preferences, make informed decisions and, finally, feel fulfilled through learning. The following sections of this chapter give a more detailed description of this kind of richer and more personalized learning environment.

As stated above, however, this type of higher education system cannot exist without institutional pro-activity, on the one hand, and good quality, reliable and easily accessible information resources, on the other. To make informed choices in a diverse and personalized higher education system like the one we describe here, beneficiaries need certain “transparency tools” which will enable them

6 As shown by the ARACIS *Quality Barometers* from 2009 and 2010 (<http://www.aracis.ro/publicatii/publicatii-aracis/>).

7 As shown by *Quality Barometer* 2010, pp. 16-17.

to make informed choices. Chapter 3 includes a description of several transparency tools that can be used by both institutional and university decision makers and future learners.

To foster pro-activity and courage, universities need a system of institutional freedoms that will allow them to commit to and carry through specific missions. This is the only path to real institutional autonomy. Chapter 4 describes a system of such institutional freedoms.

Towards a personalized higher education system

Personalizing education is directly and concretely reflected in the contents of university activities and their supporting structures, i.e. in study programs.

2.1 Diversification and customization of “traditional” (Bologna) study programs

Most Romanian university study programs are not only very similar to each other within the same discipline, regardless of the institution (new or old, large or small, comprehensive or specialized, public or private) but they share the same educational vision, *with almost no differentiation among disciplines*. As a result, learning experiences are homogenous throughout the Romanian higher education system and programs fail to cope with the diversity of learners and the requirements of the labour market. Hence, the common perception that Romanian higher education is of little relevance for “real life.”

University study programs must become more flexible and adaptable. At least some of them – particularly BA programs – must:

- develop a “variable geometry” thus allowing different people to acquire comparable competences, knowledge and skills while following distinct educational paths, rather than imposing strong constraints on them and a predefined program of classes and activities;

- encourage students to experiment with alternative options and delivery methods, and, more generally, to take responsibility for their educational choices;
- encourage intra-institutional exploration while enhancing inter-institutional mobility;
- foster inter-institutional and multidisciplinary academic experiences.

To this end, the following requirements must be met:

1. The configuration of university studies must allow for the expansion of the structure or typology of programs based on alternative educational principles beyond the current discipline- and vocation-based paradigm. Alternative solutions might include topic-based programs (with a topic as its focus point), problem-solving-oriented programs, general studies or “liberal arts”, major and minor combinations (which Romanian higher education has been already dealing with both formally and informally), etc. It is worth mentioning that current programs *do not* usually involve curricula *fully* based on topics, problems, etc.

2. Personalizing study programs means introducing modular curricula structures. In addition to a core of “basic” courses, determined proportionally based on the needs of each program, the university offer must be enriched with options that lead to the acquisition of similar, comparable or alternative competences by following more or less different educational pathways. Such pathways can work as bridges linking them to similar or related programs and allowing those interested to build an individualized educational experience.

3. Leaving formal higher education should no longer be a no-return decision. Similarly, re-entry should be made easier by a certification system that would recognize the completion of particular educational modules associated with clearly defined sets of competences. (For instance, when dropping out – temporarily or permanently – from a study program, the person who completed one or more preset

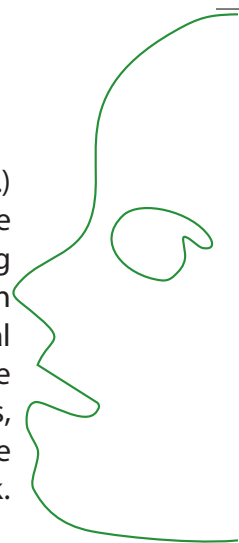
modules could receive one or more certificates.) In addition, there should be systems to recognise of skills acquired in formal and informal learning settings, whose validation should be based on procedures defined by HEIs according to general principles agreed at system level. To ensure competence mobility among study programs, it is essential to fully implement the transferable credit system and the qualifications framework.

4. The increase in the number of educational content options must be supported by access to more varied learning methods such as *e-learning*, *blended learning*, *learning x.0*, or open courses.

5. Regardless of the study program structure, personalized education will need the contribution of non-academic professionals and practitioners to curricular activities, with a view to sharing their practical skills and applied knowledge.

6. An increase in the options for customizing academic programs should be supported by widespread mentorship and career orientation practices, which are currently underdeveloped in the Romanian higher education as a whole. Such services should no longer be only “on paper” but accessible to any student and subject to quality assurance monitoring.

7. In close connection with the above, there is a need for information tools – such as tracer studies – to follow alumni professional careers and thus better assess the usefulness of competences acquired during study programs. Follow-up of alumni cohorts is required by the new National Education Law, with part of the information held by universities being collected and analyzed using the transparency instruments in Chapter 3. Such data could become an important tool for career advisers in universities. Consequently, the National Student Enrolment Registry (NSER), the “learning e-registry”, could become the informational core of third-cycle education. If connected to a “job e-registry”, the result would be a general picture of alumni joining the workforce, as well as the creation of increased alumni mobility eventually leading to a free market of people in Europe.



8. One way to reduce the practical obstacles preventing student inter-institutional mobility is to create HEI networks by putting together joint university programs and the recognition of competences acquired within programs with partner universities, or flexible conditions for participation in activities organized by the latter, university networks or consortia can make a great contribution to the personalization of higher education.

The measures above do not exclude a homogenization of university programs in some cases and they imply even less the discontinuation or marginalization of discipline- and vocation-based programs, which have the advantage of being tried and tested, i.e. they have a higher degree of predictability. It is also true that the policy proposals are better suited for particular areas or institutions and less suitable or unsuitable for others – a fact pointed out by many participants in the consultation.

The measures should be read as additional degrees of freedom granted to HEIs. There will be a discussion of the boundaries needed for these freedoms in Chapter 4, in addition to providing several incentives for relevant institutional initiatives as part of the *First Wave of Institutional Change*.

2.2 Expansion of study program types to include short-cycle programs

Some stark 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 an average time spent in the university at around half of what is required to obtain a degree, i.e. 1.3 years.⁸ 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

⁸ See MECTS, 2010 Report on the Situation of the National Education System, Bucharest.

to prospective employers and cannot be further put to use to continue their formal education.

This suggests that shorter types of programs, in addition to the traditional “Bologna-type” (BA, MA, PhD) may provide a better education solution for many prospective students, or other persons who lack the courage 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),
- can provide different levels of competences, servicing holders of secondary education degrees to holders of BA degrees, and
- target different ends, ranging from narrow vocational goals (which is probably the typical short-cycle program profile) to exploration goals or specific research or knowledge topics.

Short-term programs are more attractive to persons older than the traditional higher education schooling age, of whom only a small number engage in some form of lifelong learning today, compared to the European average.

To become widespread enough to meet individual and market needs, short-term programs have to:

- be directly and openly linked to clear qualifications and well-defined competences;
- come with a certificate of completion (and, for longer programs, even a degree);
- include activities rewarded with transferable credits and thus be the starting point for completing a Bologna-type program (if the learners wish so);
- be based on and meet actual demand;
- be backed by adequate fiscal mechanisms

accessible to employers but also individuals (e.g., tax deduction);

- overcome traditional scepticism towards non-traditional programs among prospective beneficiaries and the academic community (the more so as this scepticism comes from past failures as shown by the *Green Paper* consultation).

Consequently:

1. The choice to provide short-cycle programs should be up to the provider institution and, maybe, the partners that ask or benefit from them. No direct or indirect pressure should be put on HEIs to provide such programs or adopt a particular program structure. Short-term programs can be built of both classes, seminars, workshops, practical activities part of already existing programs and dedicated activities, provided jointly with other institutions or not, etc.

2. Granting transferable credits for short-term program activities is essential for the credibility of the programs as well as for creating a bridge between short-term program certificates and traditional BA or MA degrees (for short-term program graduates who wish to further their formal education). The ECTS would be a perfect match to that plus it would ensure portability of acquired competences from one program to another.

3. Granting transferable credits for short-cycle program activities is actually part of a broader system of recognizing learning outcomes, particularly non-formal and informal. The fact that this broader system is reflected in short-term programs and bridges to BA and MA degrees might make short-term programs significantly more attractive.

4. Short-term program funding should follow the logic of the market: these programs depend on the demand from beneficiaries, whether they are looking for competences or educational experiences, or they are companies looking for employees with a specific set of competences. Therefore, as many participants in

the consultation remarked, short-cycle program funding should be based on actual demand, more specifically school fees and sponsoring from companies in need of professional training for their current or future employees.

5. 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 their beneficiaries' sense of security. Legislative inclusion could be carried out through a general enabling *proVision* rather than through a rigid definition.

Short-cycle programs are essentially individual initiatives by HEIs. They cannot be imposed on them by public authorities but they can be encouraged. They largely depend on the universities' willingness to explore the demand of the labour market and prospective learners, and the institutional courage to launch programs that would meet such needs. Under university autonomy conditions, incentives will arise from the granting of additional freedoms to HEIs for this purpose. Our *White Paper* suggests several types of incentives for institutions willing to be part of *The First Wave of Change* discussed in Chapter 4.

Finally, it should be pointed out that the proposals above do not concern only learning - they are likely to have a significant impact on university research. They encourage paying more attention to applicative research including the involvement of practitioners in curricular design and in teaching. For instance, problem-solving-oriented programs need to structure their educational content around research problems suitable for inter- or multidisciplinary approaches. Last but not least, increased mobility within higher education will directly benefit the Romanian research community.



Chapter 3 – Transparency

The “Towards Quality and Leadership in Romanian Higher Education in 2015” Green Paper put up for public debate the issue of institutional accountability for universities, among others, in terms of committing to the principle of public transparency in dealing with higher education providers and beneficiaries. We believe transparency to be a principle essential to any modern higher education system that wishes to be competitive and adapted to the needs of the environment in which it operates.

Following the public consultation, the principle of transparency seems to be widely accepted by the members of academia. Their answers showed that, on the one hand, the amount of information concerning universities is insufficient while, on the other, the need to provide students, employers, academics, university management and system decision makers with clear, easily assessable and accessible information is a priority that the above-mentioned stakeholders themselves acknowledge.

To meet these requirements, we suggest implementing a strategic informational system (SIS) that would cater for the various stakeholders’ need for information, and developing a foresight approach to the labour market as an addition to past information and in support of foresight thinking about this market in universities.

The main goal is to develop a transparent institutional environment that would allow universities to define their own strategic development plans and to build, in time, institutional reputation. In the longer run, such reputation-building strategies could allow certain institutions to enter the global competitive market for supplying higher education and research services.

3.1 Building an SIS to collect, store, process, and analyze relevant higher education data and information.

The strategic informational system is intended to broaden access for several

categories of both institutional and individual stakeholders, with diverse needs and interests, to information about Romanian higher education. SIS involves unified collecting of data about HEIs and the system, and interoperability with current education and research IT platforms.

The creation of such a strategic informational system will be achieved in several steps.

1. Creating a coordination mechanism for central higher education agencies and advisory councils.

We suggest creating an institutional framework to ensure cooperation between the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ARACIS), the National Council for Titles, Diplomas and Certificates (CNATCDU), the National Council for Funding Higher Education (CNFIS), the National Council for Scientific Research (CNCS), the National Authority for Qualifications (ANC), and the Executive Agency for Higher Education, Research, Development and Innovation Funding (UEFISCDI).

Since these organizations have been and will be conducting assessments of universities, this coordination mechanism will be implemented to make sure that primary data collecting methodologies are unified, compatible and relevant. Our aim is to build a unified national database, working as an informational hub for higher education and containing primary data about the way universities operate and their achievements. This way, universities will no longer have to send countless reports that use different instruments but often contain similar if not identical data. Such reports are often perceived as useless bureaucratic tasks, both time and resource consuming.

Unified collecting methodologies are needed only for primary data collection as each of the organizations above will hold additional secondary data relevant to its own processing and analysis methodologies to fulfil its organization’s mission (e.g., ARACIS will use the data for external quality assessments; CNFIS



– for policies on public funding for universities, etc.). Last but not least, the data will be used for creating evidence-based public policies.

2. Appointing one of the organisations as the SIS manager.

This is an essential step but one easy to accomplish since the current legislation supports it: National Education Law 1/2011 stipulates the creation of a National Council for Statistics and Forecasting for Higher Education (CNSPIS). As provided by Art. 218 par. 1 of the Law, the duties of the CNSPIS are to prepare and update a set of indicators for higher education.

3. The launch of a broad public consultation process among the advisory and decision-making central organizations and organizational stakeholders, particularly universities.

This is one of the most delicate steps given the large number of organizational stakeholders to take part in the consultation. Apart from the difficulty of reaching solutions acceptable to a large number of participants, it is essential that the primary data collection be done comprehensively. Should this requirement fail to be met, the database would not be fit for purpose as it would not support specific data processing and related research, analysis or information ends.

Furthermore, it is very important that the outcome of this process is a clearly defined procedure able to support an appropriate flow of information, from the generation point up to the effects of the information. Universities must get clear decisions from central institutions to allow them to develop their future action strategies.

4. The creation of support mechanisms for knowledge management in universities.

The consultation process must be accompanied by support for HEIs that take part in the strategic informational system and will use its data. The support must not be limited to reporting instruments for primary data requested by the central agencies mentioned

above but should enable universities to integrate the data and related technologies into their own decision-making systems.

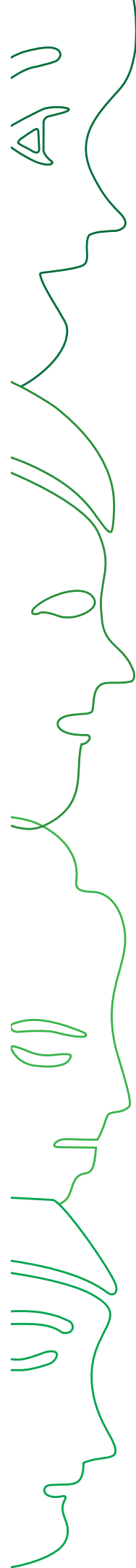
The knowledge management support can cover a wide range of tools and processes, from technical support in data reporting to foresight or institutional benchmarking exercises.

5. Designing and using specific data analysis tools to ensure that the output is comprised of relevant information for the various categories of stakeholders.

The mere creation of a data collecting system is not enough to increase transparency substantially. A raw database does not necessarily mean there will be public access to information or accountability. Without a coherent means to consolidate the information, the large amount of data could lead to unwanted effects such as informational overload or the supply of false information.

Given that higher education includes several categories of organizational stakeholders, with their own goals and preferences, the list of suggested transparency tools cannot be exhaustive. Here are a few such tools that we deem essential:

- An online portal to allow open access to basic – and, possibly in time, detailed and comprehensive – information about Romanian universities, their study programs and the way higher education works. This portal must provide information about:
 - human and material resources about the functioning of the system;
 - student admission and selection procedures;
 - study programs and their goals, including lifelong learning;
 - research and its output;
 - support services to students throughout their training.

- 
- Both systemic and individual studies of the current state of universities and their evolution – regular barometers or institutional benchmarking reports.

3.2 Developing foresight practices which relate to the labour market

The SIS transparency tools create the bedrock for responsible institutional behaviour. It is in the nature of education to be future oriented, and institutional responsibility is connected to the usefulness of education for future life contexts. Given the increasingly fast dynamics of professions, education must take into consideration – and do it openly – the assumptions about the future of the fields for which it trains people.

As stated above, foresight thinking does not simply mean getting “in synch” with current labour market needs but anticipating and shaping these needs. For this purpose, several specific practices must be developed such as:

1. A systemic effort to scan labour market trends and changes. Identifying emerging professions and expected changes in the professions already supported by the higher education system could, to the extent it is based on an in-depth analysis of determining factors (social, technological, economic, ecological, political, or values), contribute greatly to the development of study programs by universities as well as to the optimization of funding allocation.

2. Turning data collection about alumni into an institutional practice in HEIs. The data, whether reported to central agencies or collected for institutional purposes (a larger amount), must be used in tracer studies. Collecting information about general labour market trends with data on alumni trends is the basis for curricular structure building and increasing the credibility of universities in their dealings with educational service beneficiaries.

3. Turning a marketing approach focused on employability prospects based on social dynamics into an institutional practice. This is the only way to create actual dialogue between supply and demand, because opting for one or another study program has an impact on one’s entire life.

Institutional practices and reputation mechanisms

The two sets of measures put forward in this chapter are meant to change the practices of Romanian higher education institutional and individual stakeholders. These are the new types of institutional practices and behaviours that we expect:

- At **system level**: public policy development and decision-making practices based on studies and realities identified at system level (evidence-based policies). Informed decisions, followed by the periodic assessment of decision outcomes, is essential but still lacking at the moment.

- At **institutional level**, particularly at university level: the development of practices of consistent, regular, internal evaluation of activities with a view to improving outcomes and adapting to the needs of beneficiaries.

Also, we expect to see growing desire for institutional reputation building, increased emphasis on institutional identity, and more effort towards attracting existing and prospective beneficiaries.

- At **the level of other individual or institutional higher education stakeholders**: the development of informed choice behaviours towards education and research services provided by universities. Also, by direct involvement and cooperation, by correlating their expectations to the educational and research offer, these organizational stakeholders will make a direct contribution to the development and diversification of university institutions.

Transparency is a fundamental principle for the functioning of the higher education system of 2025. The organizational measures, instruments and practices briefly described above are the first steps to ensure compliance with said principle. Transparency should not be reduced to mere access to information but translated into institutional desire for university reputation and, eventually, the creation of system-wide reputation mechanisms.

Chapter 4 – A New Institutional Freedom and Accountability Framework

The *Green Paper* put forward a set of proposals to make HEIs fit for purpose. They concerned mainly the redefinition of internal governance arrangements, strengthening institutional freedoms, the legal status of HEIs, diversification of funding sources and the professionalization of institutional management.

The consultations on the topics above showed that respondents are generally in favour of institutional change pointed at strengthening institutional freedoms and internal governance arrangements. Particularly popular was the proposal to change the legal status of state universities with a view to increasing their human resource management autonomy, including wages and work relations.

Last but not least, the respondents supported the proposals to develop institutional capacity in universities by promoting the concept of professional leaders and managers who can deal effectively with institutional and systemic challenges.

The following proposals take into account: first, the change in the legal status of public universities; second, the strengthening of administrative processes in universities; and, third, organizing a first wave of institutional change to kick start the implementation of *White Paper* policies.

The first proposal concerns the creation of a framework of institutional freedoms, at system level, essential to the policies in the *White Paper*. The second proposal concerns narrower action to increase institutional administrative capacity to implement the policies in question. And the third proposal puts forward an actual framework

to kick start the *White Paper* change processes.

4.1 Changing the status of HEIs to strengthen institutional freedoms

Romanian higher education is currently perceived as an administrative service. This status gives central authorities the rationale to intervene directly in universities' internal affairs thus weakening and sometimes breaching the principle of university autonomy.

As a result, central authorities have perpetuated an interventionist approach to HEIs' internal management, strictly regulating their administrative, fiscal, finance and asset management reporting. Hiring and wages constraints have proved even more restrictive over time, as clearly shown by the recent centralist measures to freeze hiring and cut salaries in higher education.

Romanian HIEs cannot enhance their capacity to respond promptly to social needs and to provide customized and transparent higher education services, unless they have increased institutional independence. Consequently, there is a need for updating legislative, normative and fiscal provisions regulating HEI activity similar to decentralization processes launched in other public sectors in the last few years.

Our proposal is to change universities' status away from an administrative public service. It is premised on the idea that, in the current social and economic context, higher education can no longer be a traditional administrative service.



State universities must maintain their public institution status but at the same time enjoy economic and fiscal freedoms specific to educational and research services. HEI internal self-regulation must be reconceptualized in the spirit of public usefulness, thus freeing institutions from direct governmental intervention in institutional management (e.g., financial resource allocation, hiring, wages, asset management, etc.).

To achieve the new HEI status, the following steps are to be taken:

1. First, a comprehensive analysis of the legal and normative provisions regulating HEI operations must be conducted; legal, administrative and fiscal aspects are to be considered. Based on the results of the survey and international good practices, a few statute models (ideal types) will be prepared, possibly according to HEI category (the type of mission), organizational and study program specificities.

2. The resulting statute models will be subjected to public debate and a process of improvement and adaptation according to suggestions from the stakeholders.

3. As a result of this process, the entire legislative and normative framework regulating the status of state higher education will be revised. This revision will include the modification of higher education public agencies status so as to allow for the decentralization of the competences currently held by MECS to fit the new freedoms of HEIs.

4. Finally, each university must adopt the new institutional arrangements and freedoms framework, according to the statute models prepared during the two previous stages. (For instance, education-centred universities could choose to what authority to report administratively and fiscally: either to go on reporting to central authorities, or switch to

county or, in the future, to regional ones).

4.2 Improving HEI management by developing their administrative capacity

Romanian university organizational cultures poorly integrate academic governance values and principles. University charters and bylaws are often mere translations or copies of other national or international similar HEI documents; this practice cannot lead to internal governance strengthening or appropriate development of institutional missions.

Successful or effective development of bespoke institutional models is, therefore, the exception in Romanian universities. Most of them prefer to use standard approaches to study programs or performance evaluation, practices which actually maintain or even reinforce higher education homogeneity.

This is largely due to the lack of a cohort of successful and dedicated university managers. The *Green Paper* consultations showed that managers are rather overworked and under-professionalized as their administrative duties overlap with their teaching or research jobs.

A new professional status for university managers, including evaluation processes for administrators, could change this. Romanian universities need a contingent of qualified and successful – and possibly younger – university managers who would undergo periodical peer review evaluations and would have access to training opportunities.

For the years to come, we propose the following:

1. Developing a support structure for university leadership following the example of international good practices.

2. Designing and accrediting MA or lifelong education programs in higher education

management with a view to developing the necessary competences to become a university manager. Despite the implementation of a few EU co-funded projects to develop university management training programs in the last three years, there is an indisputable need for a more systemic approach. The new MA or LL programs should be designed jointly with internationally renowned universities offering these types of program. The target audience will consist of current administrators as well as prospective leaders and managers.

3. Developing assessment processes for university managers. They should have, in addition to professional management skills, cross-disciplinary skills required in their field. The new promotion grids must take into account that university managers also impact on the image of the institution as well as on teaching and research internally. For this purpose, by 2015, Romanian universities must develop a set of internal assessment procedures for operational management, based on relevant criteria established internally by the whole of their academic community.

4. Revising managerial staff recruitment and promotion internal policies according to the new institutional arrangements and freedoms and towards the new positioning of universities and study programs. The new institutional policies must take into account the weight of constitutive elements in the general make-up of the institution's mission.

4.3 The first wave of institutional change

The *Green Paper* solution to the implementation of both *Green Paper* and *White Paper* policies is "a first wave of institutional change." The prerequisite for this first wave of change is the identification of universities willing to place themselves at the vanguard of the institutional change process. Depending on the results, there could be subsequent waves of institutions joining the reform. Eventually, the majority of Romanian HEIs would undergo the *White Paper* changes and thus bring the whole of the higher education system closer to fulfilling the *2025 Vision*.

The first wave of institutional change will be based on the voluntary participation of a number of institutions that will first undergo a selection process. This process will take into account the quality of policy proposals received from interested institutions, the equal representation of various types of participant universities as well as the constraints imposed by the management of the first wave implementation process. Moreover, in addition to the higher management of the HEI committing to their statements of purpose (a prerequisite for participation), it will be a plus if the local academic community commits to the *White Paper* institutional change program.

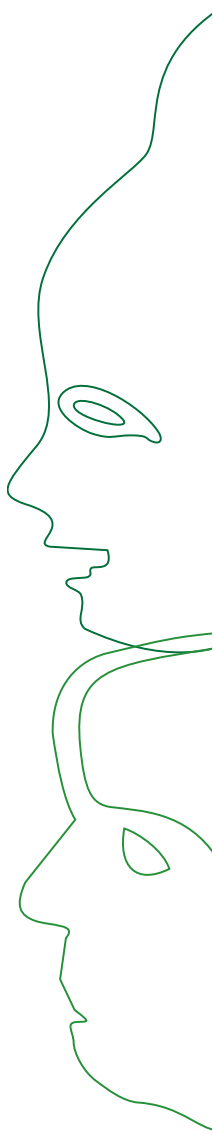
The primary goal of the first wave is to make Romanian HEIs fit for purpose, following the *White Paper* change framework. Having successfully negotiated their admission to the first wave, participant universities will go through three stages of institutional transformation:

1. An exploratory and *Vision*-building phase involving a wide participation process both by the academic community (faculty, administrators, students) but also other stakeholders (particularly employers, relevant local communities, etc.). The aim is to reach consensus, to the extent possible, about what the institution's long-term future will look like in terms of implementing *White Paper* policies and the underlying values and principles, and the institution's general goals.

To this end, foresight methods or any other exploratory and *Vision*-building techniques can be used by the HEI.

2. After the exploratory and *Vision*-building phase naturally comes the designing of a strategic plan. This plan should cover a shorter term and operationalize – in terms of specific and relatively easy to quantify goals – the institution's *Vision* values, principles, and general goals.

The strategic plan is to be developed through consultation with the academic and extra-academic communities and reflect the institution's position relative to a critical mass of the *White Paper* public policies.





Participation in this process will give each organization the opportunity to define its positioning internally using similar methods to those used for an external assessment of the institution's position, e.g., rankings and classifications.

3. The third stage will be dedicated to leadership and management capacity building and will involve bringing together internal and external governance processes to ensure the successful implementation of the strategic plan. Once again, the first wave participants are expected to comply with the policy proposals in the *White Paper* and, in particular, proposals 3.2 and 3.4 above.

The main goals of the first wave of institutional change are:

- to support participant universities to design an institutional transformation process that will meet the expectations of relevant academic and extra-academic communities;
- to provide institutional reform success stories to encourage other institutions to undertake similar reforms or processes;
- to reach a critical mass of at least 15 participants in favour of the systemic transformation described in the *White Paper*.

The first wave of institutional change will be based on voluntary participation, spanning several years and completed at the end of the first strategic planning cycle. The aim is to provide institutions with know-how and financial support to complete all the steps described above. The support can come from relevant programs of the European Social Fund, 2014-2020.

Chapter 5 – Outcomes

As stated above, the *White Paper* measures are meant as a shorter-term operationalization of the *2025 Vision* principles. But, the outcomes of these measures do reflect the *Vision* terminology.

In terms of personalization, the measures are expected to result in:

- *A significant increase in the number of learning options available to students.* To put it simply, students will get to choose from more (types of) university programs and similarly titled programs but with different contents. Choosing a shorter program means less effort but also better chances for the choosers to see their goals met.

- *Pluralization of educational paths which will reflect individual personality features and life choices.* Opting for a study program will no longer be a perfectly predictable action in terms of outcome, trajectory and achievements, while students in the same program will have access to partially different educational menus. In the end, graduates of the same study program will have different educational experiences, often spiked with multidisciplinary moments. Conversely, the pressure on universities to diversify their program offer will increase.

- *Increased diversification of delivery methods to reflect their diversity.* The use of new communication tools in higher education will increase significantly and, in the longer term, it could even boom and overtake the traditional third-cycle education *modus operandi*.

- *Increased attention on the part of the learners to adjusting their training to their envisaged career (and to other individual goals).* Personal involvement in education would thus become, for most people (but not necessarily so), more utilitarian, taking the form of building portfolios that they can sell

on the market. Consequently, the choices of applicants and students will reflect indirectly the (perceived) needs of the labour market. The non-vocational approach – where students are not looking for answers through learning or not following set goals – will be less represented, but still available.

- *More active involvement of non-university stakeholders (practitioners and other professionals) in academic life.* HEIs will call on their services more often, in search of their applied knowledge and interested to garnish their educational offers with pragmatic options which are sought for by the labour market.

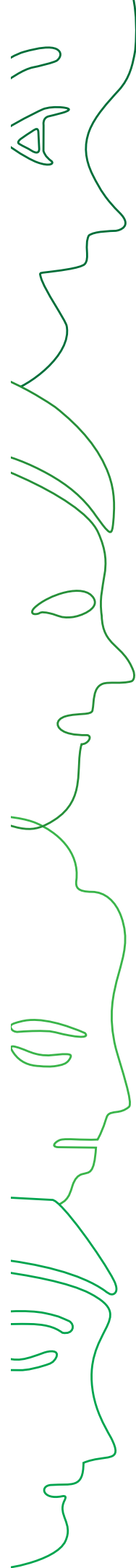
In terms of **transparency**, the measures are expected to result in:

- *Increased individual and institutional interest in general or niche transparency tools (rankings, classifications).* In addition to official instruments, an increasing number of rankings and surveys will be conducted by semi-official or private organisation, covering more and more sub-fields of third-cycle education.

- *Increased desire by system-level decision makers to back their decisions with empirical evidence.* The greater amount of information on the academic market will provide institutions with the arguments necessary to back their organizational interests and, consequently, will force public authorities to support their options with evidence based data to the extent possible.

- *Better documented, more energy-intensive and, generally, less fixed individual higher education choices.* Another direct consequence of the above is that knowledge about the higher education system and the options it provides will improve.





- *Increased concern from HEIs about their public image.* Institutions will invest more in reputation, they will carefully build an image, a brand, and loyalty-building strategies, they will associate their name to better defined market niches.

- *Increased interest from universities in having a foresight approach to the labour market.* As beneficiaries will grow increasingly knowledgeable about the higher education area they will act pragmatically with regard to learning, HEIs will have to become more directly involved in the analysis of the labour market and to rely more on the collaboration with prospective employers.

- *Improved credibility of education among employers, who*

- will be able to distinguish quality based on the level of access and performance and even direct participation in the reputation systems of the field;

- will be more interested in getting involved in lifelong training for their own employees and the value for money principle will encourage them to negotiate with education suppliers, while the latter's flexibility will ensure better harmonization with the employees' work activity.

Finally, in terms of **diversity**, the *White Paper* measures are expected to result in:

- *Institutional concern for positioning on the higher education market.* The new freedoms will create the premises for the development of diverse market strategies and, eventually, increased diversity in Romanian higher education.

- *Less interventionism from the centre in higher education matters.* This will reposition central bodies to reward outcomes and allow HEIs to behave competitively in the market areas or niches that they deem relevant.

- *Emergence of a contingent of professional university managers.* They will promote the organizational behaviours anticipated

by the *White Paper* (study program offer diversification, foresight approach to the market, strengthening institutional reputation, etc.).

- *Moving the emphasis from short to long and medium-term costs harnessing the requirements of beneficiaries in the supply and demand dynamics of the education market.* This change of perspective will cause:

- increased competition among universities;

- groupings of universities (mergers, networks - maximizing institutional resources, etc.);

- increased interest in research and innovation from institutions which, for example, wish to make it on the PhD program market or to work together with the business environment;

- increased presence of foreign universities due to changes in the attitudes of beneficiaries;

- enhanced mobility of the university staff given the repositioning of universities with its emphasis on the key role of teaching staff training.

- *Diversification of student cohorts* mainly due to:

- increased level of inclusion for currently underrepresented categories (people coming from rural areas, low-income people, people older than the usual schooling age) due to increased motivation for employability reasons;

- increase in the number of international students due to the designing of special programs for this category;

- enhanced capacity to retain young people endowed with outstanding aptitudes and skills who are currently more often than not absorbed by foreign universities (given the relatively poor offer in Romania).

Annex 1 – Summary of Responses in the July – October 2011 Online Survey

The main goal of the *Quality and Leadership for Romanian Higher Education* strategic project was to build a long-term *Vision* of Romanian third-cycle education, a *Vision* that key system and business stakeholders and society at large would commit to, and that would provide the basis for university policies and, at the same time, work as a reference point for university strategic positioning.

The *Romanian Higher Education in 2025 Vision* is the outcome of a broad foresight exercise that generated a picture of higher education based on personalization, diversity and transparency. The *Green Paper*, consisting of policy proposals and a consultation instrument, plus a set of concrete reform measures designed for the medium term (2011-2015) and for immediate implementation, was the basis for the *Vision*.

Following European standards, the set of public policy proposals put forward in the *Green Paper* was subject to a broad consultation process involving key opinion formers, experts, and higher education experts, and other private stakeholders. It consisted of statement declarations and filling out a survey with focused questions. Around 10,000 people took part in the debate and dialogue on the <http://carteaverde.edu2025.ro> website.

The results of the July – October 2011 survey are the following:

Total number of users:	578
Number of people who replied to at least one question:	343
Number of people who completed their answers:	06
Statement declarations uploaded:	17



Table on the survey questions

Questions/Answers	Responses		Total
	Yes	No	
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?	276 (83.4%)	55 (16.6%)	331
Question 2. Should the state fund a preferential student loan system for students choosing short-cycle programs?	275 (87.3%)	40 (12.7%)	315
Question 3. Should companies contracting professional training services for their employees be granted fiscal incentives?	274 (88.4%)	36 (11.6%)	310
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)?	269 (91.5%)	25 (8.5%)	294
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)?	270 (91.5%)	25 (8.5%)	295
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)?	272 (92.8%)	21 (7.2%)	293
Question 7. Do you agree that there should be institutional funding to stimulate research capacity?	273 (93.2%)	20 (6.8%)	293
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?	267 (93.7%)	18 (6.3%)	285
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?	270 (93.8%)	18 (6.2%)	288
Question 10. Do you agree with large-scale benchmarking exercises in Romanian universities?	270 (95.1%)	14 (4.9%)	284
Question 11. Do you agree that Romanian universities need new legal, administrative, and fiscal statuses? If so, what are the main directions for change?	269 (97.1%)	8 (2.9%)	277
Question 12. Do you agree that a state guarantee fund for loans contracted by universities is feasible?	269 (96.8%)	9 (3.2%)	278
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?	269 (97.1%)	8 (2.9%)	277
Question 14. Do you agree that loan systems should expand in the future from disadvantaged students to all the students?	27 (96.4%)	10 (3.6%)	281



Question 15. Do you agree that universities can increase their chances to access more private funding by creating consortia and partnerships?	274 (95.8%)	12 (4.2%)	286
Question 16. Do you agree that organizing foresight exercises involving external actors could lead to the improvement of the universities' capacity for strategic planning?	273 (96.8%)	9 (3.2%)	282
Question 17. Do you agree that Romanian universities need to clearly distinguish between management functions and academic ones?	274 (92.3%)	23 (7.7%)	297

Arguments concerning the White Paper policies

Based on the answers to the survey, a report on the main categories of pros and cons for each policy proposal was drafted. We further put together a systematic list of higher education public policies to be included in the *White Paper*. Here are the main arguments as they resulted from the online survey (questionnaire and statement declarations).

The answers to Question 1 (short-cycle programs) revealed pretty strong support for a policy that would promote and encourage the development of such study programs. The main pro is that they have the potential to strengthen the universities' capacity to meet the needs of the labour market. One of our aims in the *White Paper* was to clarify the relation between the qualifications acquired in these programs as compared to the traditional BA programs.

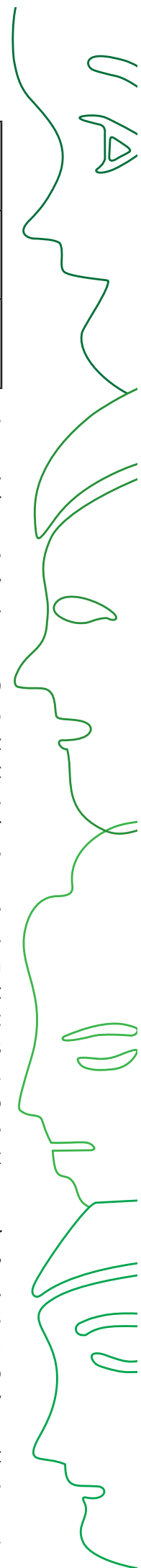
Two additional issues came out of the survey (Questions 2 and 3) in relation to the proposal to encourage short-cycle programs with a view to diversifying the university educational offer. On the one hand, public funding for such programs was perceived as problematic, i.e. possibly discriminating and not realistic in the current economic context. On the other, the idea of incentives for private businesses to have them contract such educational services was rather widely accepted and perceived as a valid solution by most respondents.

The proposal to diversify the university educational offer and institutional profiles (Questions 4 and 5) was less well received by the respondents. On the one hand, the creation of universities by private companies, for instance, was met with a lot of reserve. Also,

the introduction of new study programs was often criticized. The main con was that it would entail costs that the system could not cover. As a result, our proposals should focus rather on reshaping the existing system and not on introducing new organizational forms. On the other hand, diversification itself was widely supported particularly when framed as public-private partnerships in higher education.

The transparency proposals (Question 8, 9 and 10) were embraced. The need for access to objective, clear and simple information about higher education is, we believe, acutely present at the level of system stakeholders. However, data collection and interpretation can never be conducted carefully enough. As a result, the *White Paper* sets forth the creation of a unified data collection system first, which would solve the issue of heavy, repeated reporting and, consequently, mean less effort for system stakeholders. At the same time, we believe that the designing and implementing of a strategic informational system meets best the various needs of system stakeholders. Also, we decided, given the common informational content, to group the three questions together under one single policy proposal despite its rather complex nature and implications for several fields.

The recommendations under the *Green Paper Proposal III.3, Reform of institutional governance arrangements*, stirred the interest of respondents. The reform of the HEI status (Question 11) was approved by some respondents on condition that the changes should be minor and go in the direction of strengthening university autonomy, while others pleaded for substantial changes in the university status. The latter went further to emphasize that if Romanian HEIs wish to become effective, entrepreneurial and competitive nationally, in Europe and globally,



they should enjoy a high degree of institutional independence.

Approximately a third of participants were against the ideas above but only 40% gave plausible reasons for their disagreement while the remainder only said “no.” So, the conclusion is that the *Green Paper* proposal needs developing in the *White Paper*, and the solution must focus on gradual change, comprehensive ex-ante studies, both in terms of legislation and systemic design.

Further, the respondents believe it necessary to have foresight exercises conducted in universities, involving stakeholders outside the institution (Question 16). In their opinion, this would lead to improved capacity for strategic planning in universities and provide the needed connection to the labour market needs. As a result, for the *White Paper*, we chose a sequential approach to this recommendation, i.e. we discussed it both under the proposal on developing administrative capacity and the one on improving transparency.

The respondents agree that there is a need for distinguishing between management and academic functions in Romanian universities (Question 17). However, as for results from the analysis of survey responses, we are currently lacking a contingent of university managers properly trained and specializing in the reference areas. So, for the *White Paper*, we decided to deal with this recommendation under the proposal on improving HEI management by developing administrative capacities.

The proposal on the universities’ need to look for private funding (Questions 12, 13, 14 and 15), participants in the survey agreed that universities should look for alternative resources particularly private funding. Concerning the creation of a public fund to guarantee loans contracted by universities, some respondents believe that this would allow for conditionalities on institutional effectiveness while others believe the approach inappropriate/ irrelevant to Romanian universities since, for lack of funding, the state could not support such a policy. Although many respondents accepted the *Green Paper* tactic proposal, the analysis prior to the drafting of the *White Paper* showed that the proposal is not

feasible. The same applies to the proposal on the appropriateness of public money rewards for HEIs whose organizational structures lead to an increase of the share of endowments out of their total income. Most respondents focused on the ensuing constraints on universities to develop such structures in order to be competitive on the higher education market.

The respondents showed that expansion of the student loan system from disadvantaged students to the entire student population can be beneficial to the development of higher education and improve access to higher education. Given the results of the consultation, we chose to elaborate on this issue in the *White Paper* proposals about diversification and customization of traditional programs and the expansion of study programs.

The arguments in favour of the proposal to increase private funding opportunities by developing consortia and partnerships focused on the benefits of increased financial and logistic resources. Some respondents argued that this would ensure more effective and diverse use of funding resources. Very few respondents said that this is an unreliable tactic as partnerships and associations are not safe and would lead to losing university assets. As the new NEL provides that universities will be encouraged to associate to form consortia and other kinds of partnerships, the *White Paper* has a sequence approach to this issue in the proposals on a new framework of institutional freedoms and responsibilities.

Using the online survey arguments as a starting point, the management team organized a two-day workshop with members of the High-Level Expert Group to validate the processes associated to the project in its key points. During the workshop, facilitated by international expert Richard Walsh, both the correlation of policy proposals and the *2025 Vision*, and the general goals, feasibility and public support were analyzed. Later, a polarity management exercise⁹ was conducted to select and put forward for inclusion in the *White Paper* a set of policies anticipating the 2025 Vision goals.

⁹ *Polarity management* is an organizational development and decision-making technique described by Barry Johnson in his book, *Polarity Management: Identifying and Managing Unsolvable Problems* (1992).

Annex 2 – Glossary

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.

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: National Education Law)

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: National Education Law)

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>)

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*. (Source: http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/glossary/green_paper_en.htm)

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.

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: National Education Law)





Qualifications Framework. European Qualifications Framework or EQF is an instrument enabling the relating of the different European states' qualifications systems to a common European reference framework for 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. **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: National Education Law and http://ec.europa.eu/education/lifelong-learning-policy/doc44_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).

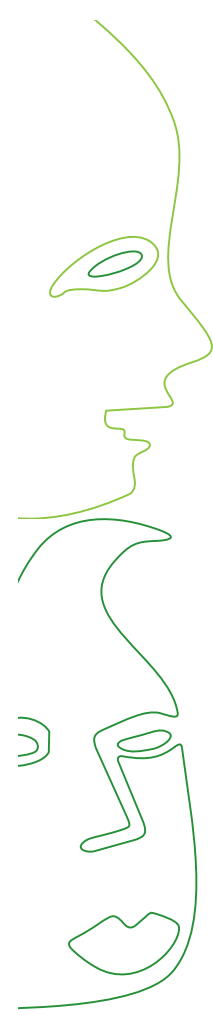
University is a type of higher education institution legally accredited to issue academic/university study diplomas both for undergraduate and postgraduate cycles, in a multitude of areas or domains of science and which hosts and carries out scientific research activities. The Romanian higher education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

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*. Open University Press. p.1)

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

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))

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 program for the Union in the area concerned. (Source: http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/glossary/white_paper_en.htm)





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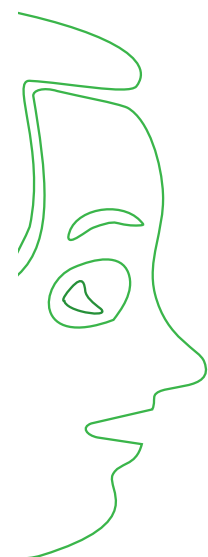
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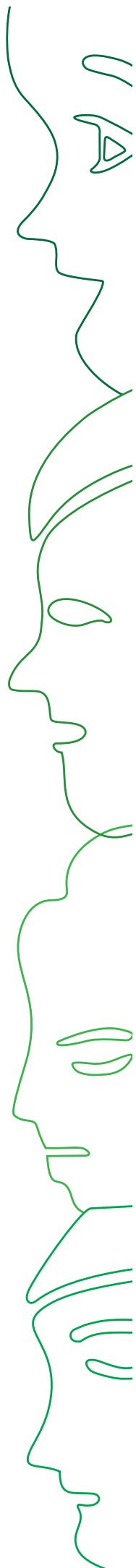
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Project co-financed from the European Social Fund through the Sectoral
Operational Programme Human Resources Development 2007-2013
Quality and Leadership for Romanian Higher Education
Executive Agency for Higher Education, Research, Development and Innovation
Funding
November 29, 2011

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European Union or Romanian Government.