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Institutional Evaluation Programme:

Project "Ready to innovate, ready to better address the local needs. Quality and diversity of Romanian Universities"

Guidelines for the Evaluation Teams

September 2012

EUROPEAN SOCIAL FUND
Investing in PEOPLE

Quality and Diversity of the Romanian Universities

EUA European University Association

IEP EUA - Institutional Evaluation Programme

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These guidelines have been adapted from the EUA Institutional Evaluation Programme (IEP) guidelines for team members for the purposes of this particular project and should not be used in other contexts. This document should not be distributed without the permission of IEP.

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Introduction

These guidelines address the issues that are relevant to evaluation teams in the framework of this project. They should be read in conjunction with the Guidelines for Institutions.

The project

Detailed information about the project background, its key objective, main activities and expected results is **available in the Guidelines for Institutions that complement the present Guidelines**.

The IEP methodology and the evaluation cycle

The Institutional Evaluation Programme (IEP)[1] stresses the institutional responsibility in defining quality and the means to achieve it. IEP has carried out close to 300 evaluations worldwide since 1994, and has become a distinct European approach to quality enhancement and a versatile tool for strategic development. The idea of the IEP is to provide a flexible tool for assessing institutional goals and sharpening institutional missions. The evaluation report highlights the good practices identified by the team, but it also provides the university with recommendations for further improvement in order to achieve its mission and goals. The recommendations are specifically tailored to the context of each university.

The steps of the evaluation process in each round are presented in **Annex 1**.

The site visits

Once the institution's self-evaluation report is received, the evaluation team will undertake two site visits to the institution.

- The first visit aims to understand the specific situation of the institution and clarify the content of the self-evaluation report.
- The second visit aims to delve deeper into the institution and produce recommendations.

The teams must evaluate the strategic capacities and quality management of the institution and make recommendations in these two areas.

Preparing the evaluations: Roles and evaluation phases

As part of their overall preparation, members of the evaluation pool will be familiar with these guidelines as well as the Guidelines for Institutions and participate in the training workshop for experts at the beginning of each evaluation round. In addition, it is recommended that pool members keep up-to-date with European HE policies, and consult the recommended bibliography regarding Romanian Higher Education reform.

[1] EUA's Institutional Evaluation Programme (IEP) is an independent EUA service managed by its own Steering Committee to assure the independence of the evaluations. The management of its daily activities is the responsibility of IEP secretariat, which is an integral part of EUA's secretariat (see the organisation chart: http://www.eua.be/about/who-we-are/secretariat.aspx). In the context of this project the IEP secretariat will be responsible for most of activities carried out by EUA as project partner.

Travel arrangements

The booking of flights will be handled by the UEFISCDI project team, through the IEP Secretariat. All team members are requested to provide the IEP Secretariat with any relevant information requested – passport details, preferences for itineraries and travelling schedules in good time. The itineraries and travelling schedules are subject to review and approval, depending on the budgetary and operational restrictions of the project. On site, all the arrangements will be made by the UEFISCDI project team – booking of accommodation, meeting rooms, local transport (i.e. transfers from the airport to the hotel, from the hotel to the university etc.). No *per diem* will be paid, however all meals will be provided and arrangements in this respect will be handled by the UEFISCDI project team.

The **Annex 2** provides detailed information on the financial and practical aspects.

Roles of the evaluation team

The Institutional Evaluation Programme (IEP) is an external, supportive evaluation. Using the self-evaluation report and the two visits as main sources of information, the evaluation team acts as:

- Mirror, to facilitate self-reflection about current practices regarding quality and strategic management
- Evaluator, to examine these practices
- Adviser, to suggest alternatives and improvements
- Educator, to help the institution learn to adapt and to implement better practices

Each evaluation team must find the appropriate balance among these roles.

In addition, the team must feel collective ownership of the evaluation. All team members are responsible for taking notes during the meetings, discussing the main findings and contributing to the final report. The team members are expected to follow the instructions of the team chair.

While the evaluation team is collectively responsible for the evaluation, the chair takes the ultimate responsibility for the final report. In addition, the team chair and coordinator each have special duties as outlined below. The team coordinator should also always clarify with the chair what are the exact expectations toward him or her in each evaluation.

Specific responsibilities of the team chair

- Assign roles in the evaluation team (e.g., match each evaluation team member's special competences with different aspects of the evaluation; divide the chairing of specific meetings if desirable; structure the discussions and avoid conversational drifts)
- Keep the evaluation team focused on its task (different in the first and second visit) and roles
- Create and maintain a team spirit and encourage everyone to participate in all phases of the evaluation
- Take the lead in the preparation of the oral report at the end of the second visit
- Oversee the final report written by the team coordinator and validate the final version

Specific responsibilities of the team coordinator

- Communicates, on behalf of the team, with the IEP secretariat and the institution
- Supports the evaluation team by taking notes, collecting information and contributing to discussions.
- Drafts the interim report for the team's internal use after the first visit.
- Drafts the evaluation report, using the template provided by the IEP secretariat, after the second visit and circulates it within the team for comments.

- Sends the final draft report to the team chair. Once it is validated by the chair, forwards it to the IEP secretariat for editing and sending to the institution.
- Takes care of logistics during the visits with the help of the institution liaison person and the IEP secretariat (communicates the dates and the programme of the site visits, while ensuring that the team has time to meet privately every day).

Role of the IEP secretariat

The IEP secretariat – which is part of the EUA secretariat - is responsible for:

- Circulating the institution's registration form and the team members' CVs within the team, as well as communicating the team members' CVs and Guidelines for Institutions to the university
- Coordinating the organisation of the site visits, with UEFISCDI assisting in the logistics
- Editing and checking the language of the final evaluation reports
- Sending the final evaluation report to the universities.

Analysing the self-evaluation report

Each member of the evaluation team will be required to prepare for the site visits by analysing the self-evaluation report and the supporting materials provided by the institution, with the goal of identifying questions and issues that deserve more in-depth treatment during the visits.

At the start of each site visit, the evaluation team will meet to identify general themes and working hypotheses, key problem areas and areas needing further clarification. This discussion should result in a common list of questions that will function as a frame of reference for the team during the site visits. A good framework is one that is precise, comprehensive and, as far as possible, references the self-evaluation report and the aims and objectives of the institution. At this point, the team should remember not to jump to conclusions too quickly.

In order to prepare this first internal meeting, each team member should analyse the self-evaluation report and prepare a list of comments and questions for discussion, using the following list as a guide:

- Are all four questions that are central to the evaluation addressed? (Cf. Guidelines for Institutions): What is the institution trying to do? How is the institution trying to do it? How does the institution know it works? How does the institution change in order to improve?
- Does the self-evaluation report contain the descriptive elements and the information (evidence) needed to come to a valid judgement? If not, what information is lacking, or needs development or clarification? Are there any additional written statements that will be required?
- Is the self-evaluation report sufficiently self-reflective and analytical? Is the self-evaluation report clear and honest? Are there inconsistencies in the self-evaluation report (e.g., with the available data)?
- How rigorous is the SWOT analysis? How robust is the contextual analysis provided by the self-evaluation report?
- To what extent does the self-evaluation report propose actions that are realistic and operational?
- Which areas, operations or functions deserve special attention during the first or the second visit?
- Who are the key people to meet during the first and second visits?
- To what extent was the institutional community involved in the self-evaluation process?

At this preliminary phase of the work, the evaluation team is not tied to a final judgement. This is only a first impression, based on written information. This impression will become more considered and precise during the site visits and the discussion within the team.

Where possible, the project consortium will provide the team with references to supplementary national data or analyses in order to facilitate the understanding of the national and institutional context. The self-evaluation report should therefore be studied together with, and taking into account of the additional material explaining the national higher education system (see annex 4), so to gain understanding on how the institution is positioned nationally. In this context, the teams may wish to bear in mind that the universities being evaluated in this project have been identified as mainly teaching universities, with the Ministry financing only bachelor's degrees in those of them that are public, by contrast to universities in other categories (see Law of Education n°1/2011, art. 193 (10), available under annex 4 below). It is important to keep in mind, however, that the evaluation is focused on the institution not its national/regional system.

The programme of the site visits

The evaluation will be conducted in English. Professional translation will be provided on site by the project consortium if the university in question deems this to be necessary. Hence an interpreter may accompany the team during the site visits, except during the meetings and dinners dedicated to the team's private discussions and deliberations. The primary objective of the site visits is to discuss the self-evaluation report and the analysis of the institution with a large number of external stakeholders and institutional members: e.g., institutional leadership, administrative staff, academic staff, students, the self-evaluation group and external partners.

The purpose of these meetings is, first and foremost, to allow the evaluation team to collect additional information from all participants and to come to a collective view about the institution. The site visits should not be used as an opportunity to present personal views on the institution or its context.

Good practices during a site visit can be summarised as follows:

- Each meeting should be opened with a brief introduction of the evaluation team and the evaluation process in order to set the context for the participants. In addition, at the beginning of each meeting the participants should be asked to participate in an active manner, answer to the point and avoid long (introductory) statements.
- It is important to ask open rather than leading questions in order to avoid influencing the answers.
- It is important to listen carefully to the answers and to follow up with other questions if the first answers were insufficient. In this context, it is important to be sensitive to the need of teammates in letting them pursue to the end their line of questioning.
- It is critical to avoid getting into a debate with the participants or to speak of one's own experience.
- All team members should respect the principles presented in the Charter of Conduct for Pool Members, presented in the **Annex 3** of these guidelines.
- Accepting additional hospitality or communicating with the representatives of the institution outside the official visit programmes is not permitted in order to ensure the impartiality of the evaluation.

The meetings of a typical visit are presented below.

Meetings at central level

- *Meeting with the institution's leader:* It is important to start with a private introductory meeting with the rector of the institution. This is an opportunity to present the philosophy, mandate and objectives of the evaluation (particularly important in case of coordinated evaluations), to raise questions related to the institutional mission and priorities and to find out how typical or atypical the units that will be visited are. In addition, one key question is to find out to what extent the institutional leader agrees with the self-evaluation report.
- *Meeting with the institution's leadership:* After this introductory meeting, a meeting with the full leadership (e.g., including vice-rectors) will address – with a wider group – issues related to the institutional mission and priorities as well as institutional autonomy in respect of strategically important issues, quality enhancement (including ESG), and the relationships of units across the institution.
- *Meeting with the self-evaluation group:* The evaluation team will ask the self-evaluation group to clarify how the self-evaluation **process** was carried out and how widely the report has been discussed in the institution. Also, clarifications will be sought on any matter that was not completely clear in the self-evaluation **report.** This is also a good opportunity to discuss any issues that the team thinks should be dealt with in greater detail.
- *Meeting with senior administrators:* During this meeting administrative aspects of strategic and quality management will be addressed, such as national funding formulas, internal reallocation of funds, staff appointment and staff development policy, quality management, compliance with the ESG and external quality assurance requirements at national / regional level etc.
- *Meeting with representatives of relevant committees/bodies:* Depending on the country, the composition and mandate of the institutional committees and governance bodies will vary. A senate or council may have a role in mission formulation, priority setting, budget reallocation, quality assurance, etc. Research or curriculum committees may set institution-wide policies with respect to internal quality or staff policy, etc. The team will meet with student representatives from the central student union and faculty level to discuss their role in different bodies and university governance. The team will ask how decisions are made and implemented and the reporting lines with the leadership level.
- *Meeting with external stakeholders (representatives of society):* In this interview, the evaluation team meets the institution's most relevant stakeholders in society. These stakeholders are chosen by the institution. They can be representatives of local, regional or national governments, or representatives of society (e.g., local industry and authorities, NGOs). Questions to address include the relationships between the institution and its stakeholders, the external functioning of the institution and its adaptation to changing needs and requirements of society.

Meetings with specific units (faculty or administrative units)

To investigate the reality of central level policies regarding quality and strategic change, the evaluation team will look at how policies are implemented in one or several units in the institution (e.g., faculties, research centres and administrative units).

In order to cover more ground, in large (multi-faculty- or geographically-dispersed) institutions, the team may choose to split up into two groups to visit specific units. It is useful to ensure that the chair and team coordinator are in different groups in order to ensure that those who will most closely cooperate on the finalisation of the report have been present in each sub-group.

Visits to these units are not used to find fault with the institution, but to understand, through specific examples, how central level and basic units are connected. These meetings generally take place in each of these units.

- *Meeting with the unit's leadership (e.g., dean and vice-deans):* The relationships between the unit and the central decision-making level are the main topic in this meeting, as well as the actual quality management of teaching (taking into account ESG) and research within the unit.
- *Meeting with academic staff in the unit:* Academic staff members who are not part of the unit's leadership can be asked about their experience of staff appointment and staff development frameworks, quality management in teaching (taking into account ESG) and research.
- *Meeting with students in the unit:* Students are a very important source of information because of their role in evaluating the teaching and staff and can be asked about their experience of internal quality in the unit. The composition of student panels demands special attention:
    - It is important for the team to check that the group is as representative as possible of the whole student body, with a mix of years of study, and that the most gifted or politically active students are not the only ones represented.
    - It is essential that the unit staff members do not select the students for this meeting but that students are invited randomly.
    - In addition, the meeting must be held in the absence of staff members to ensure that students speak freely.
- *Looking at the learning environment:* A small portion of the visit will be dedicated to the tour of the learning environment: lecture halls, laboratories, seminar rooms, libraries, learning support services, etc. For this part of the visit, the evaluation team could be split up.

  (Note: this can be done either during the visit to the units or the central level e.g., the institution's library and computing centre, a unit's laboratories and lecture rooms etc.)

The first visit

The first visit lasts 2 days. The specific goals of this visit are:

- to get acquainted with the general context and operations of the institution: e.g. division of power and responsibilities between the rector and the deans regarding the institution's core activities
- to contribute to the institution's critical thinking of its self-evaluation process and self-evaluation report
- to identify and request any missing information or supplementary analysis to the self-evaluation report.

The first visit should start with a two-hour internal meeting of the evaluation team. The team coordinator will make sure that the institution's liaison person has reserved a room to that effect. The team will discuss the self-evaluation report, any special issues that they have identified, and the programme for the visit, etc.

The session will focus on the following:

- *Framework of questions:* Each evaluator has implicit or explicit ideas about institutional management about strategy and quality. The first step in the session will be to make these ideas clear to the other group members and to arrive at a consensus as to what constitutes sound quality management and strategic change mechanisms for this specific institution. In other words, each evaluation will set specific terms of reference adapted to the mission and aims of the institution.
- *Discussion of the self-evaluation report:* This phase of the discussion will focus on the working hypotheses, comments and questions that arose from the individual readings of the self-evaluation

report. The goal here is to set an agenda for the visit and to agree on which issues to pursue and with which group.

- *Discussion of the site visit:* The team coordinator will describe the practical aspects of the site visit (local transportation arrangement, visit schedule, etc.).

At the end of the visit, the team coordinator will send a letter via e-mail to the institution, on behalf of the team, to thank them for their hospitality and confirm in writing the date and programme of the main visit as well as any additional information that the team has requested.

The team coordinator will also write an interim report for the team regarding the main findings of the first visit.

The second visit

The second visit will take place about two months after the first one. The **usual length** of the second site visit **is 3 days**. The team may suggest, where appropriate, to shorten the visit to **2 days** for very small institutions (less than 2000 students) or to extend it to a maximum of **4 days** for very big institutions. Taking into account the budgetary and operational restrictions applicable in the context of this project, the project partners will make decisions on whether the second visit can be shortened or extended. The goal of the second visit is to reach a conclusion about the issues being evaluated and to probe issues that were identified as requiring some follow-up during the first visit. The second visit will include:

- *Debriefing meetings:* During the visit, the evaluation team must find time to meet privately, every day, in order to discuss their impressions.
- On the last evening and in preparation for the oral report, a few hours will be allocated to the formulation of the findings. The whole team needs to be involved in this process. For this considerable task, one method is for each team member to complete a separate section of the report to avoid unequal treatment of any important issue. The organisation of this work, however, is left to the discretion of the team chair. The goal is to produce a summary version of the final report (4 - 5 pages) or a power point presentation on which to base the oral report.
- *Final meeting with the institution's leader:* This penultimate meeting will be a discussion between the evaluation team and the rector alone.

  This meeting has two purposes: to seek further clarification on some of the issues and to create receptivity for the final report by presenting their preliminary findings. Therefore, the evaluation team needs to keep in mind the final report: i.e., their comments and questions should reflect the broad lines of the oral report. Furthermore, any comment should be presented as a preliminary assessment, a first impression rather than a final judgement.

  Should the team need to convey personal criticism of the rector's leadership style, this final meeting with the rector alone can be useful as a private counselling session. Needless to say, this type of advice should be handled very carefully and given in a supportive and tactful manner.
- The *oral report* by the team chair will conclude the second visit; it should be:
  - To the point: avoid vague wording and keep in mind that most of the time those attending the meeting are not native English speakers
  - Detailed, comprehensive and consistent in tone and content with what will be written in the final report. The final report should not come as a surprise to the institution.

  The team chair will set an open and friendly tone. This occasion can be used to give detailed praise, criticisms or recommendations that cannot be put in the final report. If comments are made, the team should take note of factual errors and not enter into a debate.

It is beneficial for the evaluation team to meet again after the oral report for about an hour to discuss the written report.

If asked by the institution leadership, the team can leave the slides used for presenting the oral report with the institution, but in this case, the team chair should emphasise that in no way does this document constitute an official statement.

The evaluation report

After the second site visit, the team coordinator writes a first draft of the evaluation report, drawing on the oral report and minutes of discussions during the site visits. Anything substantial that has not been mentioned in the oral report should not be included in the final written report.

The draft will be distributed to the evaluation team members for input.

When the draft is validated by the team chair, it will be sent to the IEP secretariat for editing and for a first reading and back to the team if necessary. The IEP secretariat is responsible for sending it to the institution for comments regarding factual mistakes and misunderstandings. If necessary, the IEP secretariat will consult with the team on any changes suggested by the institution. Once the report has been finalised, the IEP secretariat will officially send it to the institution. Section 5.3 lists a timetable for the report writing stage.

The structure of the report

Some good practices in formulating the report:

- The report should not describe but critically review and interpret – in light of international experiences – the institution's background and constraints, stated mission, vision and strategic objectives.
- The report should not contain an explicit implementation plan for the institution, but it should be concrete enough to show the steps for such a plan.

The following is a basic structure for the evaluation report. The structure of the evaluation reports may be slightly tailored for each institution, but the following sections should be easily recognisable in the report.

The reports should reflect the supportive nature of the Programme while taking account of the primary aims defined for the institutional evaluations in the context of this project (see beginning of the Guidelines for Institutions) and particular focuses of interest as defined in the section 2.3 of the Guidelines for the institutions.

The structure of the reports:

1. Introduction

   Background on the project and IEP, presentation of the evaluation team, comments on both the self-evaluation process and report, and general and synthetic statement on the institutional position, strategy and philosophy, also taking into consideration the extent of its autonomy.

2. Governance and institutional decision-making
3. Teaching and Learning
4. Research
5. Service to society

6. Quality culture
7. Internationalisation

   In the sections 2-7, the findings should ideally be presented following the ideology of the Programme:

   - *Norms, values, mission, goals: What is the institution trying to do?*
   - *Governance or activities: How is the institution trying to do it?*
   - *Monitoring: How does the institution know it works?*
   - *Strategic management and capacity for change*: *How does the institution change in order to improve?*

8. Conclusion

   The conclusion summarises the findings and offers specific recommendations to remedy weaknesses and to develop strengths further. At the end of the conclusions, the key recommendations presented in the previous chapters should be summarised in order to allow the reader to identify them easily.

Note on the conclusion

The conclusion will analyse the strengths and weaknesses and will offer recommendations to remedy weaknesses and to develop strengths further.

A useful conclusion has the following characteristics:

- Strengths and weaknesses that are not discussed in the body of the report should not suddenly appear in the conclusion.
- It should contain specific recommendations to remedy weaknesses.
- It should comment on the readiness of the institution to address new challenges, threats and opportunities.

Practical considerations

- The maximum length of the evaluation report is 25 pages.
- The draft report must be sent to the IEP secretariat who is responsible for all liaison with the institution with regard to the report.
- The report will be published on the project website (www.forhe.ro).

Please see below for a detailed timeframe and division of tasks during the report-writing stage

Timeframe and division of labour		
Task	**Responsibility**	**Time Frame**
Write draft report	Team coordinator and chair	4 weeks after second visit
Comment on draft	Evaluation team	Within 2 weeks
Send draft approved by the team chair to IEP secretariat	Team coordinator	Within 2 weeks
Edit	EUA editor	Within 1 week
Team comment on new draft	Team coordinator (if necessary, in consultation with the team chair)	Within 2 weeks
Send report to institution	IEP secretariat	ASAP
Institution corrects factual errors	Rector	Within 2 weeks
Any change + sending final report to institution + publishing it on the project website (www.forhe.ro)	IEP secretariat (if necessary, in consultation with the team chair and coordinator)	Within 2 weeks

Annex 1

The steps of the evaluation cycle

- All experts attend the **training workshop for experts**. This workshop will introduce the experts to the IEP methodology and to the country background and specific features of the Romanian higher education system. Teams agree on the dates of a first site visit. For the first round of evaluations the dates will have already been discussed and agreed upon before the training workshop. The EUA Secretariat will act as the contact point for experts and universities and will confirm the dates for the first site visit to the universities. The workshop for the first round of evaluations will take place in Bucharest on 21 – 22 February 2012. The dates for the training workshops carried out during the next two rounds of evaluations will be communicated in due time by the IEP Secretariat.
- All travel arrangements will be made through the IEP Secretariat and UEFISDI. The experts will be asked to send their preferences for itineraries in good time. All local arrangements for accommodation and transport will be handled by the project consortium.
- A **self-evaluation process** is conducted by the university, with a self-evaluation **report** sent to the evaluation team at least 4 weeks before the first visit.
- Each team member reads **and analyses the self-evaluation report from his/her assigned institution, and prepares for** th**e site visits.**
- **The first site visit** takes place (2 days).
- At the end of this **first visit**, the team requests any additional information that may be useful and agrees on the dates of the second visit with the university. The team coordinator communicates these dates to the IEP secretariat.
- The university provides additional information as agreed with the team, at least 3 weeks before the second visit.
- The **second site visit** takes place (3 days), with an oral report issued to the Rector (and any other invited staff) on the last day of the visit.
- The team coordinator drafts the **final report** and sends it to the other team members. The whole team exchanges views on the final report. The report as agreed among team members and approved by the chair is sent to the IEP secretariat for editing.
- The final report is sent to the university for a factual check. If necessary, the team is consulted before finalising the report.
- The IEP secretariat wraps up the process by officially sending the report to the university. The team members also receive a printed copy. All final reports will be published on the project website.
- After the evaluations of all universities in a specific class are finalised, a class or cluster report will be produced, analysing the findings of all the respective evaluation reports. After the last evaluation round, a final report will be produced, integrating the class (cluster)-reports and the higher education system final conclusions and recommendations.
- Similarly, after each round of evaluation a post-evaluation workshop will be organised. This will serve as an opportunity for the experts and the universities undertaking evaluations during the respective round to meet and share their experiences, the challenges met and the lessons learnt during the process. The conclusions and recommendations that emerge during the post-evaluation workshops will be integrated in the cluster-reports.

Annex 2

Financial and practical information for pool members

Logistical information

According to the project's financial rules, the Consortium Leader and the Beneficiary of the grant – UEFISCDI – will be in charge of all arrangements for air travel, subsistence and accommodation during the whole implementation of the project, as follows:

1. The travel preferences will be communicated to the IEP Secretariat. The necessary initial input is: date and location of departure, date and location of return, if feasible – flight details for preferred routes and time slots and a copy of the identity card or passport. The location for departure must be the pool member's place of residence or EUA's headquarters location (Brussels).
2. UEFISCDI will purchase the tickets for the IEP pool members and the electronic tickets will be sent to the experts through the IEP Secretariat. The flight tickets will be booked for economy class only and for the routes that are the most convenient for the experts, taking into account the project ceilings for intra-European flights.
3. The local transfers in Romania (from the airport to the hotel and from the hotel to the various venues where the evaluation site visits, conferences and workshops will take place) will be provided and paid for by UEFISCDI.
4. For transport to the airport in the experts' country only public transport expenses are eligible for reimbursement under the project. UEFISCDI will collect the original travel documents (and any additional expense claims related to travel in the experts home countries) directly from the experts
5. Accommodation will be booked in 3-star hotels or similar, close to the university. All meals will be provided and paid for by UEFISCDI.
6. Given that UEFISCDI will cover all subsistence costs related to the expert's stay in Romania, *per diems* will not be paid.
7. The evaluation team members will sign a short-term expert contract with UEFISCDI and will receive an expert fee the amount of which will depend on their role in the team.

All the financial expenditures in the framework of this project are compliant with the Eligibility Expenditure Order 1117/2010 issued by the Romanian Labour Ministry and the Romanian Public Finance Ministry.

Further information regarding the payments and the signing of the contracts will be provided in due course.

Annex 3

Charter of Conduct for IEP Pool Members

The following outlines the responsibilities of pool members who participate in the Institutional Evaluation Programme. Pool members agree:

- To follow the **Guidelines** provided by the Steering Committee and to adhere to the formative **philosophy** of the Programme, namely to analyse an institution within its institutional and national context and constraints, to promote its capacity for change and to uphold a fitness for purpose approach.
- To **identify themselves as IEP pool members**: all pool members potentially serve as representatives of the Programme when they discuss it with 'potential clients'. In this situation, pool members are required to keep the Steering Committee chair informed of their activities through the IEP secretariat, in order to ensure congruence with the Programme's philosophy especially when the requests for an evaluation depart from the usual format.
- To avoid **conflicts of interest** and appearance of conflict of interest: in this respect, pool members are required to disclose to the Programme's Steering Committee, through the IEP secretariat, all current, past or foreseeable future associations with an institution to which they have been assigned, whenever any such association may give rise to an infringement on their neutrality or impartiality, either objectively or subjectively. Such associations include, but are not limited to, current, past, or potential:
    - employment, e.g., as consultant by the institution
    - professional relationship with senior members of the institution
    - attendance as student at the institution
    - recipient of an honorary degree from the institution
    - an unpaid official relationship with an institution, e.g., membership on the institution's board

  Such associations will not automatically bar their participation in a specific evaluation: the Steering Committee will assess each case according to its merits.
- To be committed to **working as members of a team**, i.e., work cooperatively, under the direction of the team chairs who are responsible for making final decisions regarding the site visits and the evaluation reports and to refrain from having bilateral discussions with any staff members or students of an institution that is being evaluated during all phases of the evaluation process.
- While an evaluation is ongoing, to keep **confidential** all matters related to that evaluation. When the evaluation is completed, to avoid mentioning any institution by name in public, orally or in writing. The evaluation reports are the intellectual property of IEP: once published they are in the public domain. Pool members are invited to use their judgement in applying this confidentiality clause while promoting appropriate use of the knowledge accumulated in the programme.

Pool members, who are engaged in their individual capacity in institutional development activities **following an evaluation**, will do so as representatives of IEP and will publish any special follow-up report under the aegis of IEP unless the Programme Steering Committee authorises acting independently. They will inform the Steering Committee Chair through the IEP Secretariat before accepting this individual assignment. The principle underlying such activities is to support institutional development while avoiding doing so for personal gain. Therefore, pool members are invited not to use any information related to the evaluations as a means of making **monetary profit** (e.g., doing consultancy or similar work for an institution that they have evaluated) without notifying the IEP Secretariat.

Annex 4

Background paper – Overview of the higher education system in Romania

Aim of this paper

This background paper aims to provide a brief overview of the higher education system in Romania. For additional information please feel free to request it from UEFISCDI[2], 21-25 Mendeleev Street, Sector 1, Code 010362, Bucharest.

Country background

Romania is located in South-eastern Europe, in the north of the Balkan Peninsula, midway between the Atlantic Coast and the Ural Mountains, with its natural borders consisting mostly of the Black Sea and the Danube River. Its capital city is Bucharest. The country's population is almost 22 million inhabitants.

Romania has been a member of the European Union since 1 January 2007 and is also a member of various international organisations, such as the United Nations, and other Western and European institutions / organisations such as NATO, OSCE and the Council of Europe.

Romania has the GDP per capita of approximately 11,500 $, with a yearly average unemployment rate of 7.3 %[3] in 2010 with a similar percentage in 2011.

At present, the Romanian Higher Education system includes 56 public higher education institutions, 35 private accredited higher education institutions and 21 provisionally authorised private universities. A geographical distribution overview of the Romanian higher education centres is provided below.

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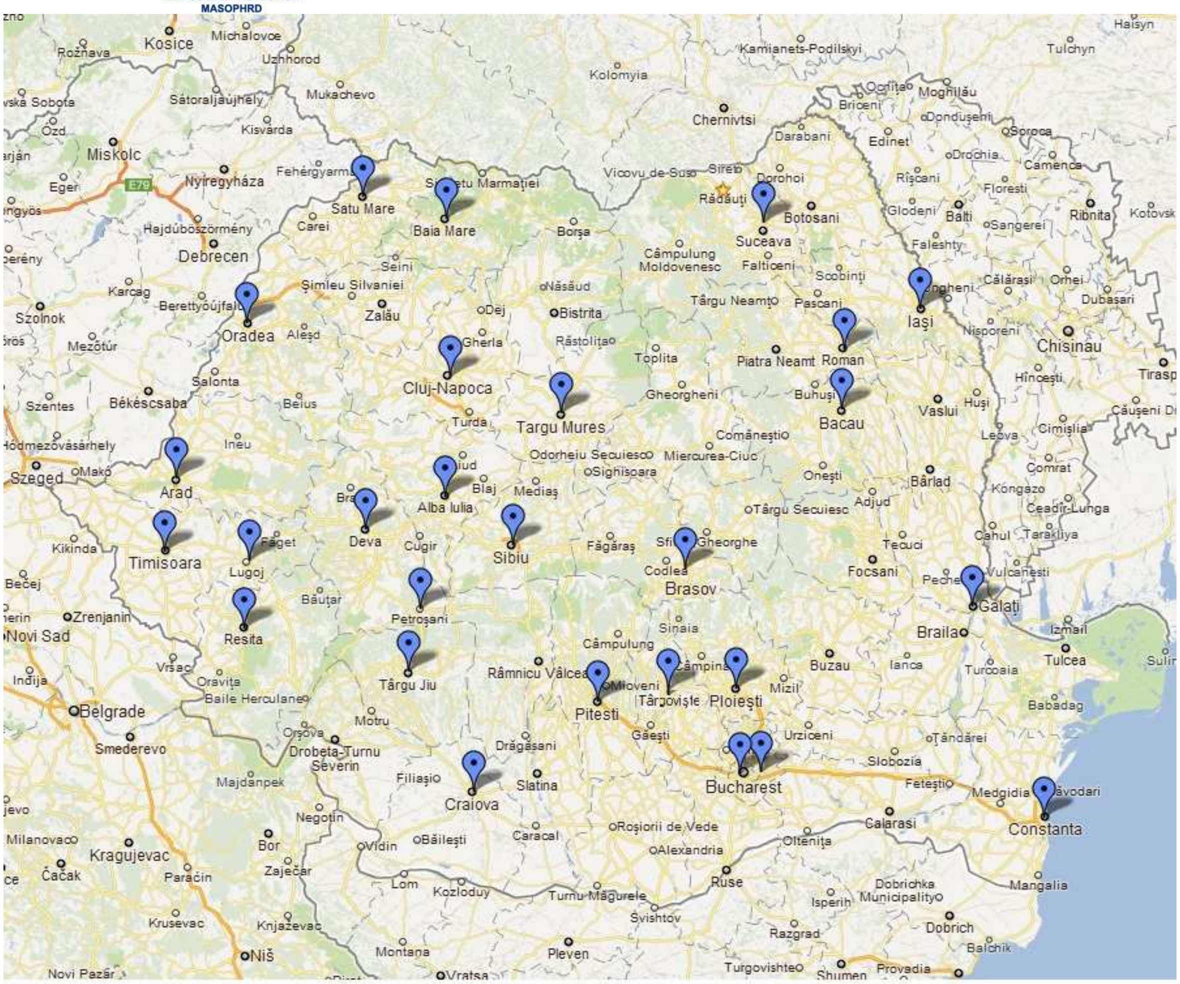
[2] http://uefiscdi.gov.ro/Public/Contact.html
[3] Eurostat, Newsrelease Euroindicators, February 2011

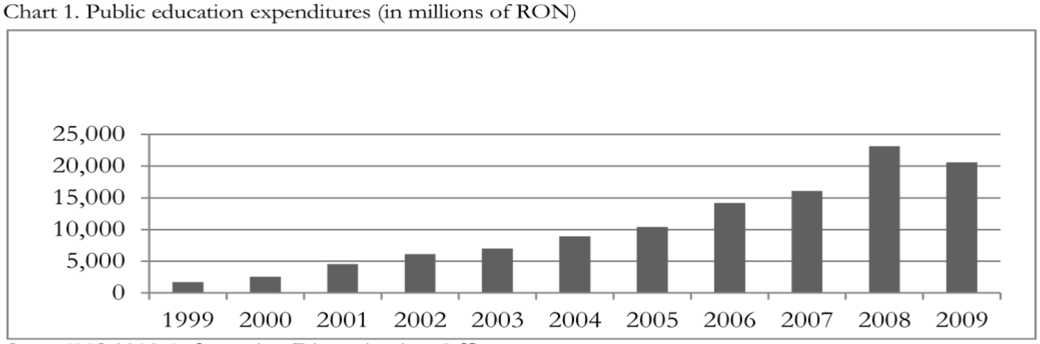


Map 1 – Distribution of the Romanian higher education centres across the national territory

In the academic year 2009/2010, 944 198 students were registered in the Romanian higher education system. More specifically, 322 337 students were registered in private higher education institutions and 621 861 in public higher education institutions.

Public spending on higher education has increased sharply over the past three years, driven mainly by rising capital expenditure, reaching its peak before the financial crisis.

Chart 1. Public education expenditures (in millions of RON)



Source: INS 2010, Information Dissemination Office.

Fig. 1 – Public education expenditures for 1999-2009 (in millions of lei)

Higher Education within the National Context

Short Historical Overview

After 1990 the number of higher education institutions (mainly private ones) and the higher education participation rates increased rapidly, together with a large diversification of the specialised courses and study programmes offered by different institutions. The wide post-1990 expansion followed on the dramatic constrictions imposed on higher education by the former communist regime (Fig. 2).

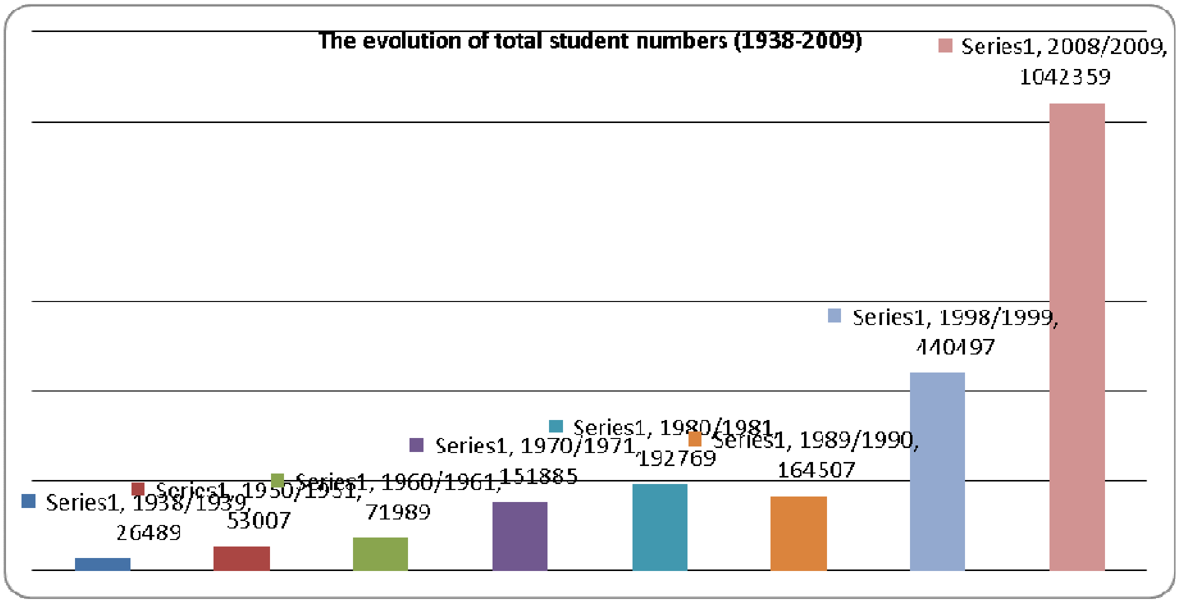


Fig. 2 – The evolution of total student numbers in Romania (1938-2009)

The key axis of institutional diversification in the 1990s was the public/private one. Private HEIs mushroomed and provided study programmes mostly in social sciences and humanities. Public HEIs also diversified their study programmes. The fee-paying students made their appearance, primarily in private HEIs. Apart from the number of state-subsidised grants, public higher education institutions were also allowed to deliver higher education programmes while charging tuition fees of an amount the Senate deemed appropriate, provided that they were fulfilling the quality conditions to do so. Following these developments, in 1993 the legal framework for accrediting higher education institutions and the procedure for diplomas recognition were established (Law 88/1993 amended through Law 144/1999). These legal provisions, which created the National Council on Academic Evaluation and Accreditation (CNEAA), also set national accreditation standards for higher education providers.

The autonomy of university was guaranteed after 1990, particularly by the first comprehensive law on education adopted in 1995. Higher education institutions have been granted the right to establish and implement their own development policies, within the general provisions of the legislation and under the coordination of the Ministry of Education. However, for certain aspects (such as personnel policy and financial policies), the autonomy of universities was still limited.

Since then the legal status of the academic staff has remained similar to that of civil servants, so that the level of salaries, recruitment and professional advancement procedures were (and still are) governed by the more or less strict provisions of the laws for public servants. The Rector had to be elected by the university governing body which was democratically elected by the academic community, usually the Senate (the body deciding on academic issues). The election of the Rector had to be confirmed by the Minister of Education.

In 1997 the Romanian Government launched the *Higher Education and University Research Project* that led to the improvement of the management capacity within higher education institutions, defining new curricula for higher education and lifelong learning, as well as development of post-graduate studies and research programmes. Also a new financing mechanism for higher education was implemented, based on block grants and bilateral contracts between the Ministry of Education and the higher education institutions and with a component calculated on a cost-differentiated per student capita formula. Thus, the two pillars of the public funding formula were:

- Block grants allotted according to a per capita cost-differentiation formula, as the main part of the overall universities' public funding
- Differential financing of universities, based on a qualitative component (calculated on qualitative indicators – see above – which were updated regularly).

Introduced in 2002, the qualitative component (based on process and input indicators) of the financing formula has been in constant development. Since then, the percentage of the overall university financing allotted according to some qualitative criteria has increased every year, reaching up to 30% in 2010. However, the relevance of such criteria proved to be very low when considering the need for institutional differentiation.

Romania signed the Bologna Declaration in 1999. Various steps towards implementing the principles and objectives of the Bologna Process have been taken by individual universities. In 2004, specific legislation was passed and national-wide measures towards the implementation of Bologna Process were taken by all HEIs in Romania. Since 2005, higher education study programmes have been organised into three cycles: first cycle (Licence/ Bachelor), second cycle (Master) and third cycle (PhD, Doctorate) compatible with the European qualification framework, as provided for by Law 288/2004. The ECTS system and the diploma supplement have also been introduced as mandatory elements at national level.

One of the main achievements of the Romanian higher education with a view to becoming an active and attractive part of the European Higher Education Area was the adoption of the Law 87/2006 on quality assurance in education. This law has a trans-sector approach of quality assurance, covering all the education service providers in Romania. The Law on quality assurance in education includes:

- Methodological principles for quality assurance/ accreditation in higher education
- External quality review procedures and criteria
- Quality assurance at institutional level
- Institutional arrangements for quality assurance.

The Law also provides the establishment of the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ARACIS) as an independent public institution with competences in accreditation, academic evaluation and quality assurance.

In 2010, Romania took over the Bologna Secretariat, and will organise the 2012 European Higher Education Area/ Bologna Process Ministerial Conference of the ministers responsible for Higher Education and the Third Bologna Policy Forum in Bucharest (26-27 April 2012).

Basic data on higher education flows

Looking at the total number of HEIs, there is a considerable increase over time. At present, Romania's higher education system includes 112 public (state) and private higher education institutions. There are 56 public higher education institutions and 56 private ones.

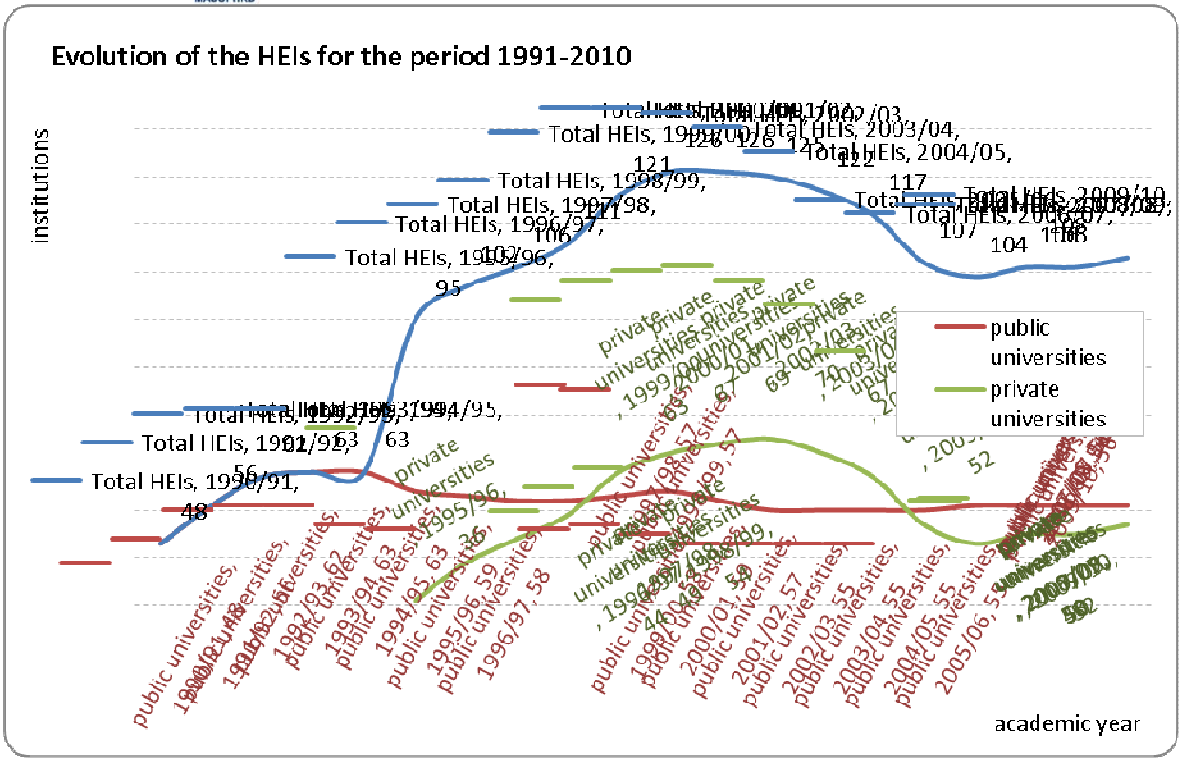


Fig. 3 – The evolution of the number of public/ private higher education institutions for 1991-2010

The increase in the total number of higher education institutions was associated with a sharp increase in higher education enrolments, the number of students reaching a peak in the academic year 2008/2009. Enrolment numbers dropped steadily since then and this trend seems to continue, as a consequence of negative demographic growth and of changes in the examination standards of high school graduation exam (the “bacalaureat”)[4].

In the academic year 2009/2010 there were 944 198 students registered in the Romanian higher education system: 322 337 students in private universities and 621 861 in public universities. An evolution of the student numbers in Romania is shown in the fig. 4 below.

[4] Only high school graduates that have passed the „bacalaureat” are allowed to enrol in higher education and the „bacalaureat” success rate dropped to 45.72% out of 205 000 candidates in 2011, from 67.29% out of 210 086 candidates in 2010.

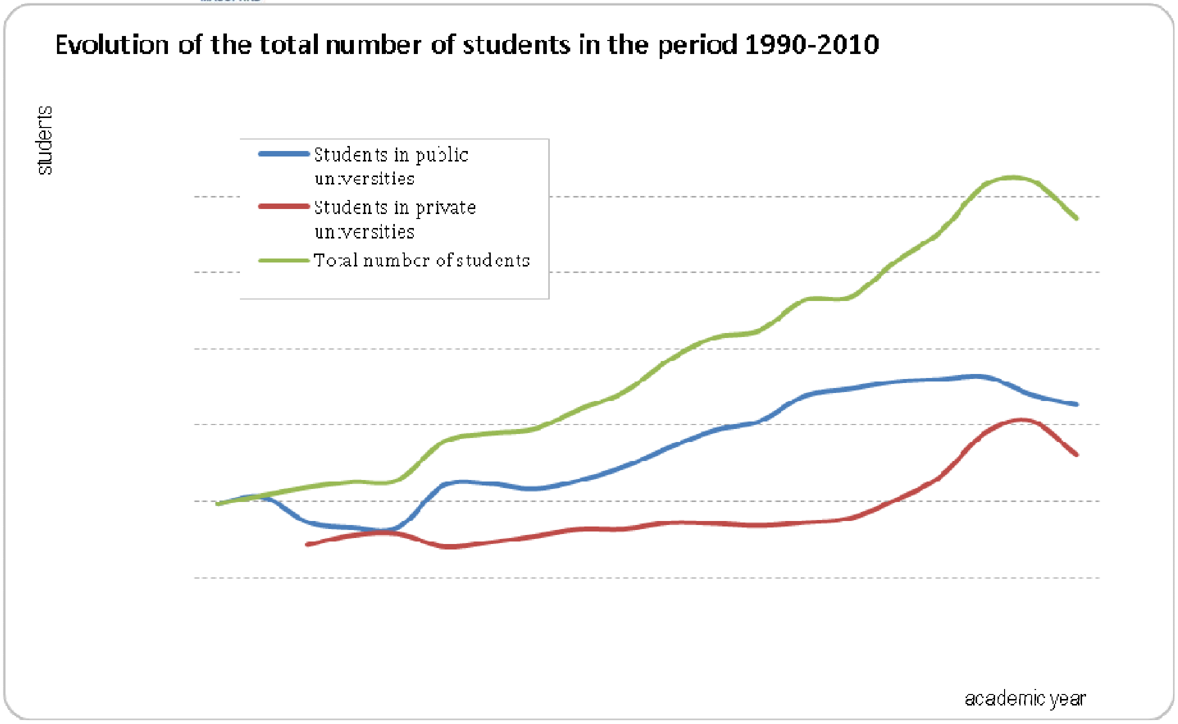


Fig. 4 – The evolution of the total student numbers in Romania for 1990-2010

Concerning the student – staff[5] ratio, the general evolution follows the trends set by the student numbers. The public institutions register less wide fluctuations of their student – staff ratio, whereas for private universities the ratio reaches a peak of 61 students to one full time teaching staff for the academic year 2008/2009.

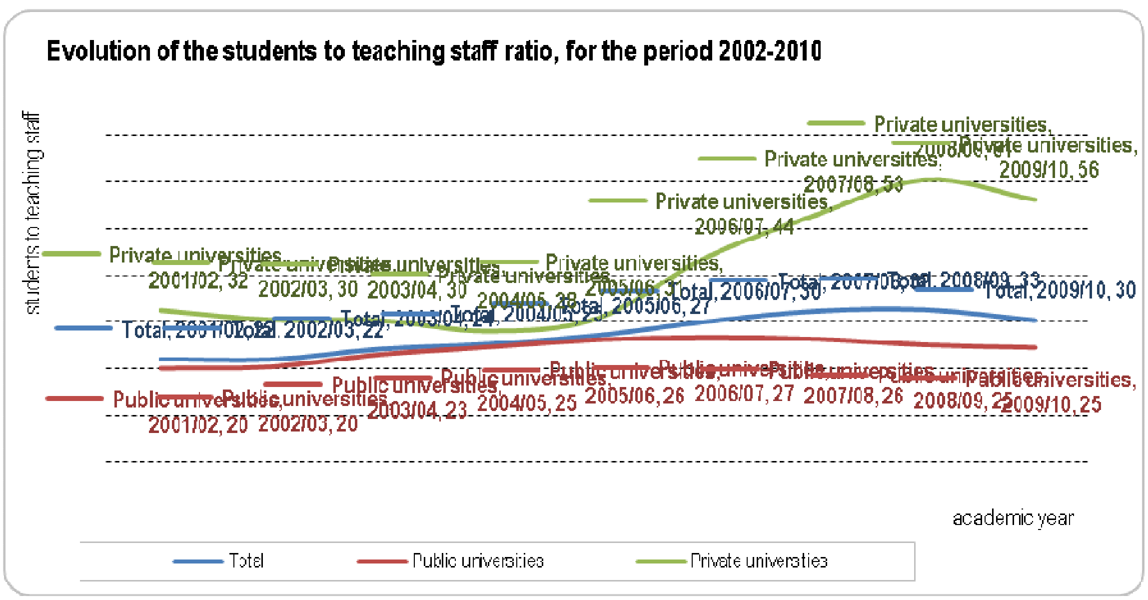


Fig. 5 – The evolution of the students/ teaching staff ratio for 2002-2010

In terms of study programme disciplinary profiles, economy and law s, hard and mainly soft sciences[6] have gained in popularity in Romanian higher education institutions at the expense of engineering. It appears

[5] This numbers only cover full time employed staff. They do not cover part time teachers or other forms of cooperation.
[6] The National Statistical Office uses the same denominator (university study programmes) for both soft and hard sciences. Applied and medical sciences are counted in different categories.

that the spread of study programmes' disciplinary profiles is uneven on the public-private axis. Enrolments in economy and law have increased substantially in private universities, while hard and soft sciences have developed almost in a balanced way in public and private universities. Engineering, medical pharmaceutical and agriculture studies are mostly provided in public universities.

The distribution of the number of students by broad disciplinary profiles in public and private higher education institutions (2008/09) is as follows:

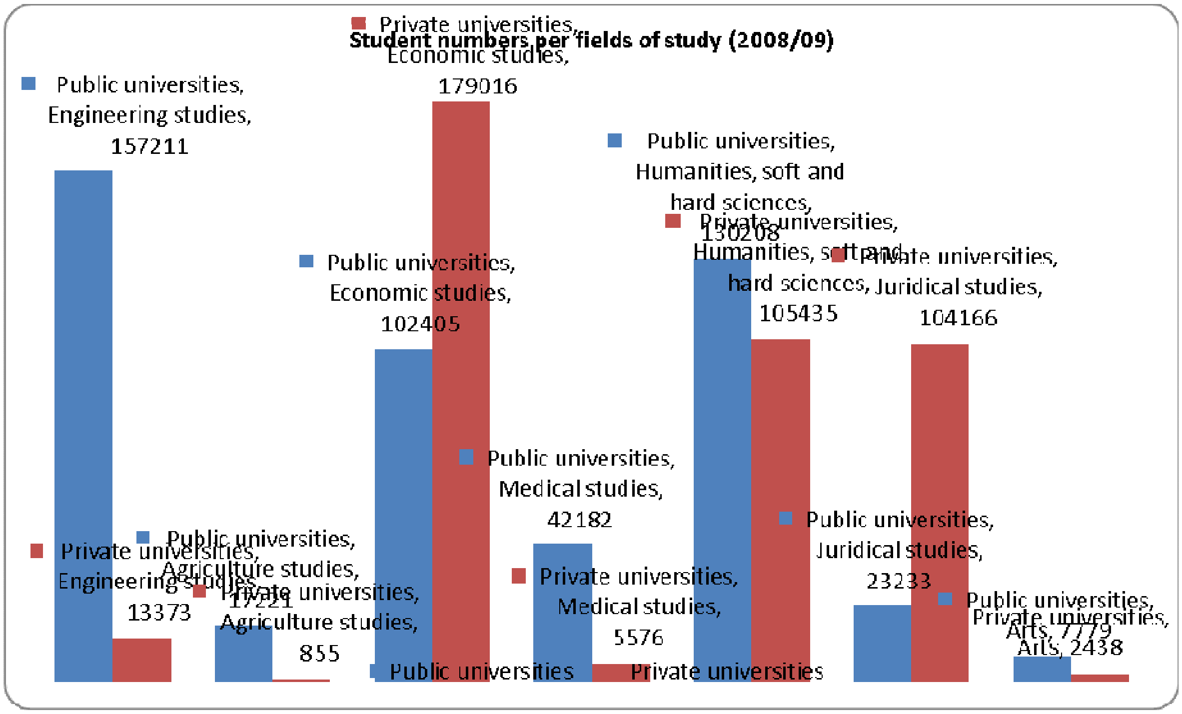


Fig. 6 – Distribution of students by broad disciplinary profiles in Romania 2008-09

52% of students in private universities are enrolled in distance learning courses, while only 30% of them are registered for full time studies. In public universities, most of the students are enrolled in full time programmes.

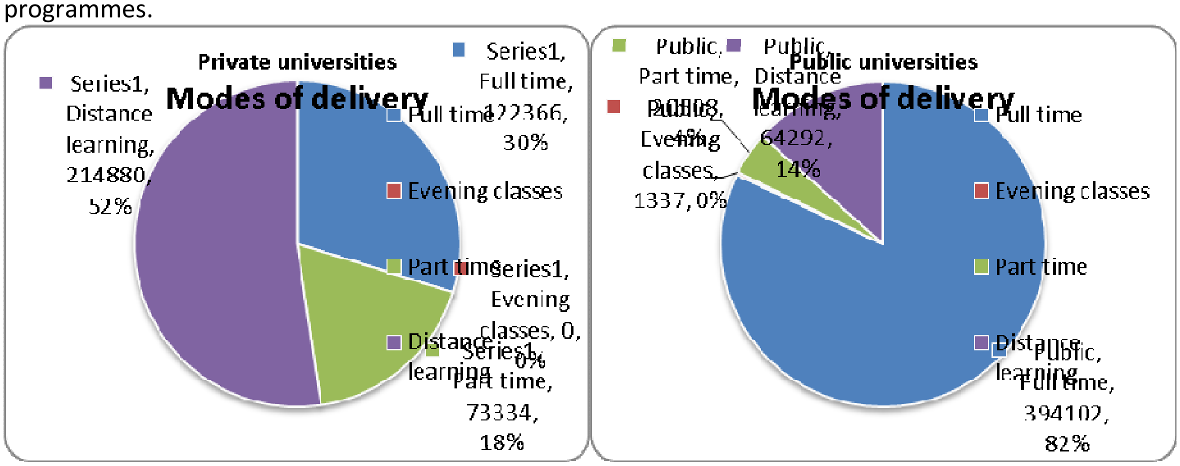


Fig. 7 – Distribution of the student enrolment according to the modes of delivery

Regarding the age distribution of students, public universities enrol students mostly within the 19-24 age cohorts, while private universities have a higher number of older students (35+ cohorts).

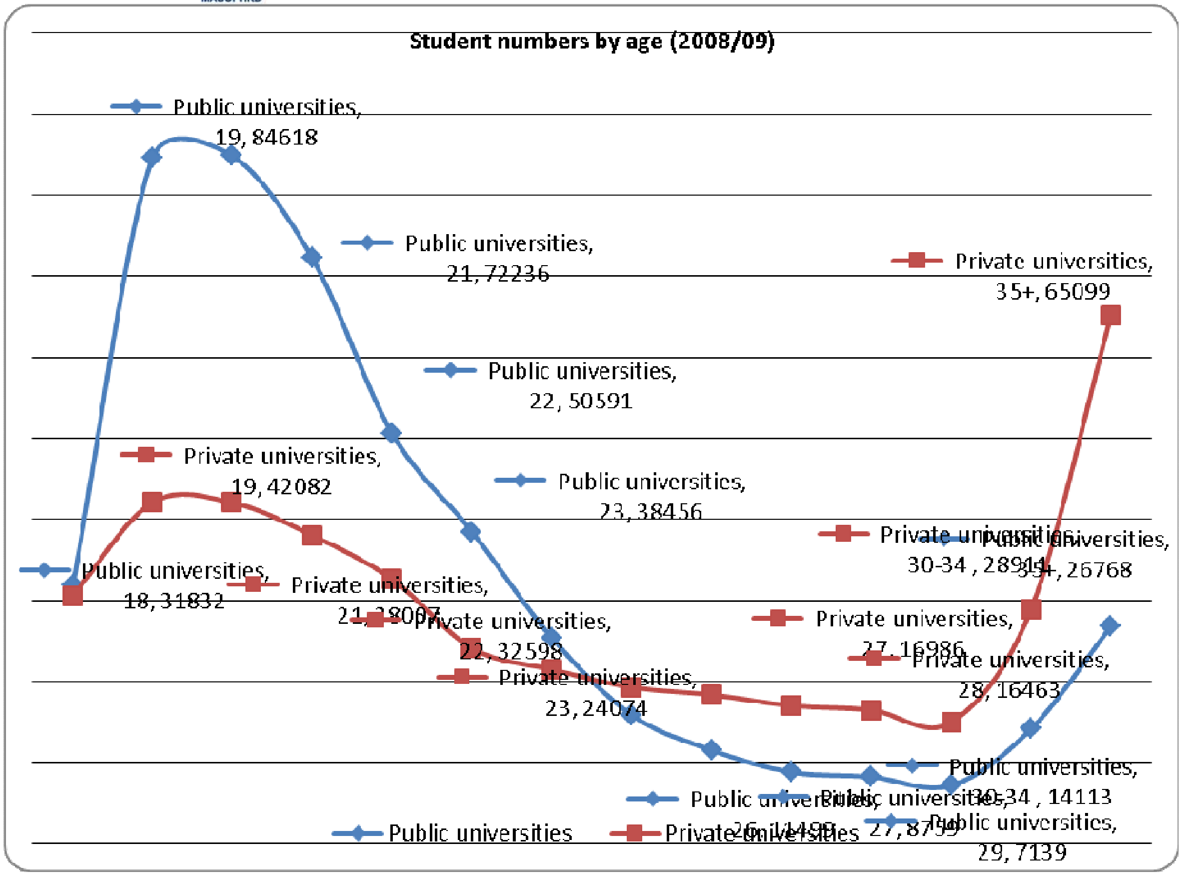
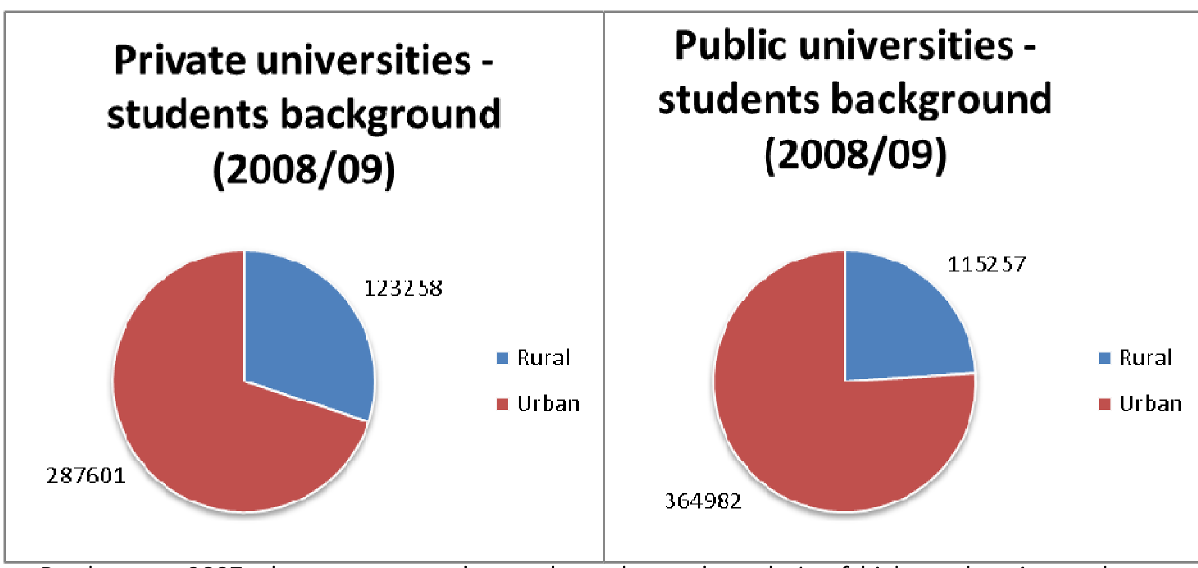


Fig. 8 - Distribution of the number of students by age in public and private higher education 2008/09

Access of students coming from rural areas is problematic in Romania. Private universities fare slightly better at enrolling such students. The share of students with a rural/ urban background enrolled in private and public universities can be comparatively observed in the graphs below.



By the year 2007, there was a need to make a thorough analysis of higher education and research in Romania. A Presidential Commission, chaired by Professor Mircea Miclea, was appointed by the President of Romania, Traian Basescu. This commission issued a '*Diagnosis of the Educational and Research Systems in Romania'* and then put forward a set of reform proposals, included in a document entitled "*Education and Research for the Knowledge Society".* This document aimed for a wide and consistent reform and modernisation of education and research (for further details please see: http://www.presidency.ro/static/ordine/Raport_CPaepdec_2007_.pdf). The documents were put forward for public consultation, were widely debated and finally the key stakeholders adopted and signed a '***National Pact for Education'***, which was based on the above-mentioned documents.

The *National Pact for Education* set ambitious objectives to be reached by 2015. The objectives aimed *inter alia* to: increase the quality and relevance of education; widen access of vulnerable groups and expansion of adult education; change student assessment standards and procedures; accelerate decentralisation of financial and human resources, as well as of administration and curricula; implement a comprehensive programme to enhance the performance of teaching staff and institutional management. Specifically for higher education, full autonomy of universities in managing their financial and human resources was to be granted, differentiation of universities in terms of their missions was to be enhanced, the need to improve the external evaluation of public and private institutions and study programmes was asserted, improved access and quality of student services and students' voice in decisions, as well as the introduction of student loans were to be promoted. Finally, lifelong learning should be actively promoted through the adoption of appropriate legislation, government financial support, and information and communication campaigns. A key demand of the *National Pact for Education* was that of adopting a new law on education to generate the legal framework which would facilitate new developments and corresponding competitive outcomes in higher education.

The need for a higher education reform

The above mentioned diagnosis of the education and research system, which is at the basis of the new Education Law, identified certain important shortcomings in the existing system of higher education:

- *"In higher education and research, a few islands of excellence are dipped into a sea of mediocrity".* No Romanian university has reached the top 500 in the Shanghai world ranking (Academic Ranking of World Universities) or high positions in other world or European rankings. To overcome this situation, Romanian universities would need to increase their research production by 7 - 8 times.
- The structure of the education system was considered to be the reason for Romania's place at the bottom of Europe's index of participation rates in education for the 15-24 year age group. Moreover only 41.9% of the young population was enrolled by then in some kind of education (in comparison with Lithuania – 64.5%, Poland 63.4% and Slovenia 62.7%). The authors concluded that this situation had damaging consequences on young people's employment prospects and more generally on their preparation to access the labour market. Romania lagged behind also in terms of the overall percentage of higher education graduates in the overall population (where the EU benchmark is set for 40% graduates by 2020).
- All universities in the country, public or private, consider themselves to be institutions with both higher education and research missions. However, even a quick glance at their formal mission statements and at their achievements would show almost no evidence either of a strong research focus or the provision of a teaching taking account of the needs for students' personal development, graduates' employability or community development.
- Current public funding is highly uniform and provides little incentive for improving quality of education and/or research outcomes. Each institution receives funding primarily on the basis of its student numbers. The analysis made by the presidential commission leads to the recommendation that a higher percentage of performance-related funding of teaching/learning is necessary.
- Up to that moment, academic staff procedures for employment and promotion were strictly managed by the Statute of Teaching Personnel. This practice has interfered systematically with the human resources policies of an autonomous university, with constraints on both staff employment and promotion. Moreover, the criteria for a tenure-track position within a university were the same

across the board nationally, and awarded by a unique institution (National Council of Accreditation of Titles, Diplomas and University Certificates). Thus, recruitment and promotion have not been considered hitherto as the basis for performance.

- Uniformity in quality standards, likewise a matter of national legislation, has proved to be a further negative aspect, in particular given the great difference in institutional development paths. It is worth noting, for example, the particular issues caused by the development of significant numbers of private universities in recent decades. This in turn led to uniformity in the internal organisation and management of universities, in strategies for teaching and learning and on the target groups defined by the university; thus there has been no flexibility enabling universities to develop quality procedures according to their own specific profiles.
- Finally, the collegial management of Romanian universities has proved inefficient in the present context, given the changes of the last few decades and the challenges facing the system. Many studies and reviews of this type of system have shown the need for change if universities' performances are to be improved in relation to their core functions: research, innovation and education. Moreover, there has been a great need to increase the efficiency of university management and administration which is still very weak in a wide range of areas.

The Law of Education (no.1/2011)

The newly envisaged Law of Education was to be based on the strategy *"Education and Research for the Knowledge Society"*, put forward by the Presidential commission, while considering the provisions of the *National Pact for Education* (2008). Also, the law was expected to be the result of a significant number of consultations with the stakeholders (Rectors' Conference, students and trade unions' associations, employers, NGOs, etc). The new ***National Education Law*** was adopted on 5 January 2011. Since its adoption, application methodologies have been implemented. Moreover, as from 2009, the Ministry of Education, through the Executive Agency for Higher Education and Research, Development and Innovation Funding (UEFISCDI), the National Council on Higher Education Financing (CNFIS), the National Council on Research in Higher Education(CNCS), started implementing five strategic projects, funded by the EU Structural Funds: "Quality and Leadership for Romanian Higher Education", "PhD in Excellence Schools", "Doctoral Studies in Romania: Organization of the Doctoral Schools", "Improving University Management", "Romanian Tracer Study"(www.forhe.ro). In 2010, the five projects were complemented with an additional project, namely "University Graduates and Labor Market". The main objective of these projects was to enhance the performance of the Romanian higher education system. The project results were and are being used in the work done for initiating and implementing the new law of education and its specific working methodologies and strategies.

The higher education reform at work

The new law of education was designed and approved in order to offer new opportunities for university development and for promoting and providing incentives at system level. Some of its key provisions are outlined below:

- Increased university autonomy and increased public responsibility. University autonomy allows universities to establish their own mission, internal structural organisation, institutional development strategy, curricula design and implementation, quality assurance mechanisms, financial and human resources management.
- Diversification/Classification of HEIs in three groups: (a) advanced research universities; (b) teaching and research universities; (c) teaching universities; a ranking of study programmes is to be performed every four years and associated with corresponding financial incentives.
- Concentration of resources, through the development of university consortia or institutional mergers on a voluntary basis.
- Developing entrepreneurial universities and changing their governance and management accordingly.
- Human resources policy reform through employing procedures that encourage high performers, increased academic freedom and increased responsibility.

- Lifelong learning through mechanisms for encouraging the recognition of non-formal and informal learning.

The main changes facilitated by the new law provisions are further outlined:

Student Centred Learning

Students are considered partners in the HEIs and equal members of the academic community. Their rights, freedoms and obligations will be contained in a Code of students' rights and responsibilities that will be proposed by the national students' associations and adopted by the Ministry of Education, by means of a Ministerial Decision. The students' associations will publicly present an annual report regarding the implementation of the code.

Ranking of study programmes

For each academic discipline, a ranking will be built to provide information to potential beneficiaries with regard to the level of academic quality provision in the areas of teaching, research, student services, community services and internationalisation.

Classification of universities

This is meant to set out criteria and procedures for a wide university and study programme differentiation. Romanian universities are to be classified in three types according to an evaluation of their quality and institutional capacity, as follows:

- teaching oriented universities
- teaching and research/art universities
- universities with advanced research and educational programmes.

University classification is based on outputs and performed every four years. The classification exercise is structured in two stages:

(a) <u>The identification stage</u>: each university is invited to identify and assume its own mission and provide data and information, which will substantiate that mission; data and information are to be processed and institutional classes generated accordingly.

(b) <u>The consolidation stage</u>: an institutional quality evaluation is to be undertaken in order to consider and seek to improve institutional quality provision in the context of each university's mission and the various different classes that have been identified.

Public funding

The public financing of universities will take into account the results of the classification exercise and the different ranking processes. The financing streams will have the following structure:

- a core financing stream for public universities, based on a given set of quality standards and criteria, established by the National Council of Higher Education Financing and approved by the Minister of Education, Research, Youth and Sports of Romania
- an additional funding stream for institutional development addressed to the best universities and study programmes for each of the established classes.

A more efficient resource allocation and promoting excellence in relation to all types of higher education institutions in the system are expected to be put into practice. Every university will assume a mission, and the public financing of the university will be in accordance with the mission statement and academic quality provision.

Doctoral education

The National Law of Education will clarify the functioning and organisational structure of doctoral education. Nonetheless, it will leave enough space for doctoral candidates to choose their own educational path, according to their specific goals. The types of doctoral education to be developed according to the new National Law of Education are as follows:

- Research doctorate – with a set objective to produce scientific relevant knowledge at international level. It will be organised only for full time studies, an essential condition for achieving an academic career within higher education institutions.
- Professional doctorate – will be expected to produce knowledge by applying scientific methods and systematic reflections over a set of national and international standards.

Academic career

The new National Law of Education aims to promote specific facilities for encouraging a teaching career in pre-university education by financing undergraduates applying for a master's degree in education. Moreover, a network encompassing the most renowned professors will be formed to oversee the teaching path of the new prospective teachers. The initial development of the teaching staff will entail:

- Theoretical development provided by university accredited study programmes
- A two-year master's degree in teaching
- A practical teaching period for one year within an educational unit under the supervision of a teacher, with a mentoring role.

University consortia

The National Law of Education will encourage the development of University consortia and mergers, which will have a role in improving the management of resources and subsequently creating a critical mass of enhanced quality of higher education.

First reform results

The classification of universities (http://chestionar.uefiscdi.ro/) was the first indirect visible result that the law produced. With the help of the European University Association (EUA), all Romanian higher education institutions were evaluated, resulting the classification in three types:

- Research intensive universities – 12 HEIs
- Teaching and research universities - 30 HEIs / education and artistic creation
- Teaching universities - 48 HEIs.

The ranking of the study programmes was released soon after. The evaluation comprised 1,074 study programmes that were divided in five specific types (A>B>C>D>E, where > means better results than).

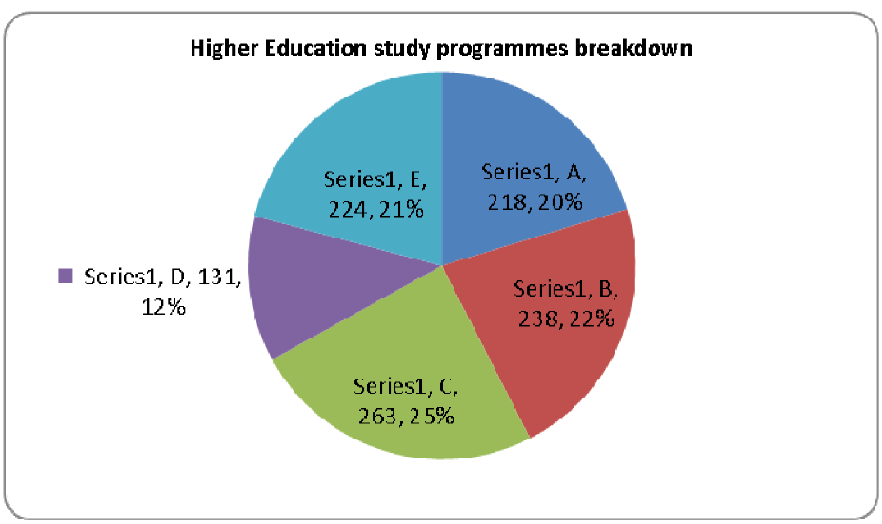


Fig. 10 – The breakdown of higher education programmes into the five specific quality ranks.

Building on such results, new actions are in the making and they all are expected to have consistent, convergent and complementary outcomes for a better higher education in Romania.

Useful links

www.edu.ro - Website of the Ministry for Education, Research, Youth and Sport
http://uefiscdi.gov.ro/ - Website of the Executive Agency for Financing Higher Education, Research, Development and Innovation
http://www.forhe.ro/ - Website of the Romanian Strategic Projects for HE
www.ehea.info – Website of the Bologna Process, maintained by the Bologna Secretariat, currently located in Romania (until July 2012)
http://www.aracis.ro/nc/en/about-aracis/ -Website of the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ARACIS)