



UNIUNEA EUROPEANĂ



GUVERNUL ROMÂNIEI



Fondul Social European  
POSDRU 2007-2013



Instrumente Structurale  
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# EUA Institutional Evaluation Programme 2013-2014 Evaluation Rounds: Main Findings and Recommendations

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Calitate și diversitate  
a universităților din România



# Structure of the cluster report

- Governance, including quality assurance
- Teaching & learning
- Doctoral education and research
- Service to society
- Internationalisation
- Concluding remarks
- Introduction, including a discussion of the context

	<b>The universities</b>	<b>First round</b>	<b>Second round</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Total</b>		17	12	29
<b>Size</b>	< 5 000 students	9	12	<b>21</b>
	5 000 to 10 000 students	4	-	4
	10 000 to 20 000 students	4	-	4
<b>Type</b>	> 1 discipline	15	3	<b>18</b>
	Specialised	2	9	11
<b>Status</b>	Private/public	9/8	12/0	<b>21/8</b>

# National context

- An ever changing legal framework... although less legislative change this evaluation cycle than in the previous project
- The worst period of austerity seems over... but the compounded results of the economic crisis and declining demography are hitting some institutions very hard

# Governance

## (1) Decision-making structures and processes:

- Senate, Administrative Council and rector
- Senate commissions and vice rector
- Private institutions: role/place of Founders' Council

## Governance: recommendations (2)

- ⇒ Review the current legal framework that regulates the relationship between the Senate, the rector and the Administrative Council
- ⇒ Make the rector a non-voting member of the Senate in order to ensure that the Senate's agenda is informed by the Administrative Council's work
- ⇒ Focus the remit of the Senate to core academic issues of integrity and standards
- ⇒ Expand Senate membership to include administrative staff and external stakeholders
- ⇒ Clarify the role and place of Founders' Council



## Governance (3)

(2) Faculties and departments

(3) Students and administrative staff

(4) Human resources

(5) Financial resources

- Level of public and private funding is low
- Demographic trends are declining
- Some institutions in a survival mode
- Evidence of efforts to do better with less resources

⇒ Need internal allocation models to support institutional strategy

## Governance (4)

### (6) Mission/vision and strategy:

- Some elements of good practice but strategic plan is the rector's campaign manifesto and is enshrined in a contract instead of looking at this as a living document
- Disconnect between what the leadership wants to do and how this is documented



## Governance (5)

(7) Fragmented universities and multiple layers of approval:

- Is this leading to lack of ownership of decisions at the right level?
- Is this leading to red tape?
- Is a single model for the decision-making bodies, regardless of a university's status and size, suitable?

⇒ Streamline the university structures

# Governance (6)

## (8) QA:

- a) Lots of developments in this area: vice rector for quality, students' involvement, questionnaires (course evaluations, exit questionnaires, employers and alumni surveys), etc.

But a sense that QA culture is bureaucratic and compliant

- b) Ethical issues are being pursued (fairness of examination; scientific misconduct)

- c) Recommendations:

⇒ Deal with ethical issues at national and institutional level

⇒ Change external QA to a trust-based, improvement approach

⇒ Develop a quality culture

# Internal QA: Creating a sense of ownership



# Success factors

## The most successful internal QA systems are:

- Closely linked to institutional strategies
- Grounded in effective internal decision making processes and structures
- Context-sensitive: take into account different organisational/disciplinary cultures
- Not punitive but developmental
  - ✓ They reflect institutional autonomy and self-confidence
  - ✓ They reflect commitment of institution to its staff and students

# Evidence of strong commitment to teaching and learning (2)

- Learning-outcome approach and new pedagogies
- Students internships
- Access to academic staff
- Innovative study programmes
- Focusing on “soft skills” development and adapting to the evolving needs of employers

# Evidence of strong commitment to teaching and learning

- Reducing costs by providing core courses across the faculties
- Offering staff development and student support services
- Offering a multilingual education (e.g. English, French, Hungarian, etc.) and language courses
- Offering enrichment activities to the best students
- Supporting extracurricular activities



# Teaching and learning: recommendations (1)

Future efforts should focus on:

- Learning outcomes and aligning the exams to this approach
- More active and autonomous learning and better balance between theoretical / practical courses => adjusting student & staff workloads
- Interdisciplinarity and flexibility (optional courses) via cooperation across faculties
- Identifying and supporting at-risk, first-year students

# Teaching and learning: recommendations (2)

Future efforts should focus on:

- Pastoral care and student engagement
- Tracking students whilst at university and after
- Developing e-learning and b-learning
- Academic staff development

# Doctoral education and research (1)

Major challenges:

- The scarcity of financial resources (concentration of national funding, increasingly competitive EU funding)
- The scarcity of research equipment
- The heavy teaching workloads

# Doctoral education and research (2)

## Major challenges:

- The layered administrative structures, even in small institutions + the small number of administrative staff => academic staff do not have enough time for research
- Too many research centres
- Little cooperation across faculties and institutions=> critical mass issues

# Doctoral education and research: recommendations

⇒ Focus on improving teaching and learning

⇒ Develop research capacity in a realistic and step-by-step fashion

and

⇒ With a view of strengthening the link between research and teaching

# Service to society

Good practices:

- Partnerships with local companies;
- Consultancy and delivery of services;
- Internship arrangements and student community work;
- Lifelong learning activities;
- Links to local secondary schools; etc. public sports and cultural events
- Alumni associations.
- External stakeholder groups (consultation on curricula, internships)



## Service to society: recommendations (2)

- ⇒ Improving the connection with secondary schools
  
- ⇒ Scaling up the efforts to prepare students for employment, e.g.:
  - courses on entrepreneurship
  - careers office
  - Internships
  - Improving links with employers

## Service to society: recommendations (3)

- ⇒ Developing further lifelong learning activities and distance learning
- ⇒ Responding to regional needs through the following steps:
  - Mapping possible partners in the region.
  - Developing multi-disciplinary research
  - Creating an “entry point” for external partners

# Internationalisation

- Internationalisation is an important strategic objective for many institutions
  
- Some good developments:
  - VR international
  - international office
  - language courses
  - sections in FR/E
  - networking and benchmarking
  - institutional agreements, etc.

# Internationalisation: recommendations

## 1) for institutions:

- ⇒ Strengthen institutional strategies by identifying: the goals, the rationales, the geographical targets, staff skills, the measurement tools, etc.
- ⇒ Review international agreements and focus on quality rather than quantity
- ⇒ Develop staff expertise, including language skills

## 2) for national authorities:

- ⇒ Develop a national strategy that would support institutional strategies

# Conclusions: 5 recommendations to universities

1. Engage the academic and administrative staff as well as students in a discussion of university wide strategic goals and priorities.
2. Engage a wide variety of external stakeholders in a dialogue about their expectations of higher education and research.
3. Develop a coherent internationalisation strategy.
4. Develop an information strategy to support e-learning, e-research and the management of the university.
5. Create good conditions for research and teaching through a range of actions: e.g. streamlining structures, offering staff development and student support services, etc.



# Conclusions:

## 5 recommendations to national authorities

1. Review the Romanian system in the context of demographic decline and limited resources. Provide incentives for structural changes and consolidation at regional level.
2. Improve conditions to encourage public and private organisations to engage with university research.
3. Consider staffing issues in the context of massive retirements by focusing on young academics and ensuring quality work conditions.
4. Reframe academic staffing policies to allow more flexibility.
5. Address such constraints as financial management requirements, detailed organisational structures, etc.