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Operational Programme
"Administrative Capacity Development"

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Internationalisation and Equity in the Romanian Higher Education System
14 – 15 November, 2013
Conference Report

On the 14th and 15th of November 2013, the Executive Agency for Higher Education, Research, Development and Innovation Funding (UEFISCDI), together with the UNESCO department of the National School of Political Studies and Public Administration, organised the International Conference entitled "Internationalisation and Equity in the Romanian Higher Education System".

The Conference aimed at both debating the concepts of internationalisation and equity in higher education and at presenting the results of a strategic structural funds project whose final goal is to increase the capacity of public administration for evidence-based policy making: "Higher Education Evidence Based Policy Making: a necessary premise for progress in Romania". Within this project, an expert team coordinated by Eva Egron-Polak, Secretary General of the International Association of Universities (IAU), with national and international experts, has focused on two essential dimensions of Romanian universities: equity and internationalisation.

The event brought together around 200 participants, national and international experts in the field of higher education, members of the academic communities and policy makers. The first day of the conference highlighted the main findings concerning equity at the Romanian higher education level under the guidance of Mr. Jamil Salmi, former World Bank coordinator of the tertiary education programme. The second day focused on the internationalisation of higher education, with Eva Egron-Polak, Secretary General of the International Association of Universities, addressing the key project findings and expected results of the conference. The event also gathered national and international experts in the field of equity and internationalisation, representatives of the European Commission, the International Association of Universities (IAU), the Ministry of National Education (MEN), the National Council for Higher Education Funding (CNFIS), the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ARACIS), student organisations and universities of Romania. The conference also benefited from the presence of Mr. Remus Pricopie, Minister for National Education, Mr. Adrian Curaj, the General Director of UEFISCDI, Mr. Graham Wilkie, from the European Commission, DG EAC and numerous international and national speakers.

The first day of the conference highlighted the main findings concerning equity in Romanian higher education, under the guidance of Mr. Jamil Salmi, former World Bank coordinator of the tertiary education programme.

The Minister of National Education reaffirmed his commitment to take into account the final recommendations developed within the project. He underlined the key role that internationalisation and equity have on the Romanian public policy agenda and mentioned that equity in higher education is also linked with the access and success of different categories in secondary education (for example students coming from rural areas) and that the problem of disparities is an issue for many European countries.

The EU 2020 targets, especially those related to increasing tertiary education attainment and the dropout rate from secondary education, were mentioned by the European Commission representative, together with the need for Romania to have a strategic approach. One way to tackle these issues, including the

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access of disadvantaged groups as Roma children, is described in the country specific recommendations for the current year.

The social responsibility of universities and their contribution to building social cohesion were tackled by IAU Secretary General. Bridges with secondary schools should be built for narrowing gaps and enhancing social justice. University leadership has an important role in promoting education and access to learning opportunities as a universally response to marginalisation.

Following the welcome statements, Jamil Salmi (Global Tertiary Education) defined equity as 'providing equal opportunities for access and success in tertiary education'. In spite of rapid enrolment growth worldwide, tertiary education remains largely elitist, with strong disparities in access and success persisting in high, middle and low income countries. Examples were given in this regard:

- enrolment rate by income quintiles in Chile (19.9% from the poorest quintile compared with 39.6% from the wealthiest quintile);
- in Israel, the Arab population represents 19% of total population, but only 11% of students at universities are Arabs;
- growing barriers faced by children of migrants (Berlin, Spain, USA, Netherlands);
- in Romania, 29.2% represents overall completion rate in tertiary education while 0.7% represents the completion rate of Roma students;
- in France, only 7% of universities have a system to accommodate students with disabilities;

In addition to the financial barriers, the non-financial barriers include inadequate information, motivation, academic preparation and social capital. The most effective equity promotion policies to increase opportunities for disadvantaged students at the tertiary level are those that combine financial aid with measures to overcome non-financial obstacles.

For financial barriers, well-targeted and well-managed financial aid (scholarships and student loans) can be instrumental in reducing financial barriers to tertiary education. There are several types of financial aid:

- need-based grants;
- unconditional grants, work grants, tuition discounts;
- student loans;
- mortgage types, income-contingent loans.

The last panel presentation gave an overview on the main findings from the project implemented by UEFISCDI. The existing data regarding equity and access and the main conclusions regarding policy implementation at the national level were introduced. The four parallel sessions followed up on the subject going into details on different aspects of equity.

In the Q&A sessions, some issues were debated:

- the need for data – even if within the project, data from the institutional level was collected, reliable data from all universities is permanently needed and a coherent national data collection system, in order to be able to develop national equity evidence-based policies;
- the way policies are being implemented in Romania – for example, policies and instruments are legally in place for encouraging Roma to access higher education, but the reality shows that they lack proper implementation and monitoring. In order to solve this issue, a proper monitoring system and a link between objectives and concrete measures is needed. In Romania, even if there

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are special quota places for Roma high school students, the low number of high schools Roma students shows that the policy is failing;

- a balance between merit-based scholarships and social scholarships is needed, given that nowadays in Romania approximately one out of four scholarships is distributed on social criteria.

Parallel session 1: Strategic approach to equity

The parallel session started with a short introduction about the project and the main findings regarding equity and social cohesion in the Romania higher education system.

The good practice example regarding the development of the national strategy on equity and access in higher education from Ireland brought added value to the debates. The presentation outlined how the strategy was designed, what were the objectives, as well as the policies and measures proposed. The presenter also introduced the way in which the evaluation of the strategy was foreseen and carried out in the specific national context.

In Ireland, every HEI has an access plan and an access office. These instruments might be considered in the Romanian context as well. Also, it was emphasised that Ireland has a fund for students with disabilities in place since the 1990'. Equity is not considered to be just about the social role of higher education, since the concept should also incorporate the transformative role of HE. There is a need to shift the understanding of how a 'normal student' is defined, as well as how higher education can be adequate for all student profiles.

The „Stefan cel Mare” University of Suceava (USV) approach to equity issues is influenced by the regional socio-economic context and by the composition of the student body, which reflects the regional population. The institutional behaviour in terms of setting objectives and developing instruments for integrating different types of students in higher education is influenced by the socio-economic characteristics of the region. 5.4% from the total number of students (undergraduate) in „Stefan cel Mare” University applied for a social grant dedicated to the students coming from low income families during the 2011/2012 academic year. The university encourages the faculties to develop tailored policies for inclusion of students with poverty background, according to the financial situation of each academic year of the universities. Other concrete actions are put in place by the university, such as fee reduction up to 50%, paid part-time jobs in university for students from low-income families, low accommodation fees for student hostels and covering the costs of utilities.

Additionally, USV awards scholarships and grants on social criteria, amounting to 200 lei, according to the internal university regulations. USV plans to introduce criteria to enhance the chances of students from low socio-economic backgrounds to access university hostels in the academic year 2014-2015 and take into consideration the recommendations made by the panel experts through the report resulted from the study visit.

In the debate, several ideas were highlighted, such as:

- flexible learning paths, academic guidance services for students in order to be successful;
- cooperation is needed between secondary and tertiary sectors, as well as between them and the labour market, taking into account that sometimes working abroad in a non-skilled job is more attractive financially than job requiring higher education attainment;



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- assessing the impact of the current national scholarship scheme is essential for effectively using the available funds in the future;
- recognition and recognition of prior learning (RPL) is essential for increasing equity in HE.

International policies regarding equity in higher education and the international strategies and instruments already in place or planned for the next period were presented. Eurostudent has a role in enhancing access and equity in higher education.

In connection with the recommendations proposed in the policy document, some new ones have been raised:

- the law provisions regarding loans incentives for graduates who work in the rural area for five years after graduation in order „to pay back their studies” is an instrument without effect;
- there is a need to find the right instruments in order to make visible the HEIs efforts and performance in increasing HE equity.

Parallel session 2: Community outreach

The session started with a short overview of the main findings in the PODCA project and information about what "community outreach" means in the context of equity in higher education.

Regarding the distribution of public money to different groups of students, the main ideas highlighted were:

- funding is being distributed to the universities according to an algorithm and a specific formula;
- distribution of budgeted study places does not alter significantly the current inequalities;
- needs-based scholarships are allotted a very small percentage of the overall scholarship fund (15 % of the overall scholarships);
- the middle income students benefit from the distribution of accommodation facilities in student dormitories (lowest income students live with their parents/relatives);
- no specific data on the gender distribution is available (e.g. evolution of the number of female students at university level, at doctoral level, etc.) since it has not been collected.

The Titu Maiorescu University case study aimed to show how a university can contribute to the community to which it belongs through bridges with secondary schools, outreach programs or partnerships.

Starting from an analysis of the challenges in the daily activities, such as the increase in the cost of living, the increase of the dropout rates or balancing the student fees (the main source of income for a private university), Titu Maiorescu University took a fresh look at the idea of community connections and equity, from two points of view:

- related to the university's role in society;
- employing marketing instruments for attracting new categories of students and retention for the existing students.

In the Q&A session, the following was noted in regard to the process of data collection:



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- a distinction was made between the data used to measure the distribution of student financing (ARACIS / CNFIS data on student cohort) and the data collected at project level, which envisioned a broader approach;
- a coherent political will on data collection and reporting is needed, since there is large amount of data being collected (with an important influence on the QUALITY of data), without being properly used afterwards;
- most data provided for OECD, EUROSTAT, UNESCO is collected by the National Institute of Statistics from HEIs and there are some inconsistencies between what HEIs collect and what HEIs report.

Regarding the case study, community outreach is perceived by the university as a good instrument for changing the mind-set, as a very important aspect. Faculty members could be encouraged to become more involved in this type of activities by recognising their merits, possibly through university awards.

Additionally, the notion of social justice has a different connotation for people growing up in the socialist regime. The fundamental principles of equity need to be promoted as a value in the society, even if a different set of words is being used.

Further on, participants attempted to respond to the question 'Does the loan system respond to the need of enhancing equity?', with the main ideas outlined below:

- a sustainable funding strategy entails resource mobilisation, effective resource allocation, efficient and effective resource utilisation and equitable distribution of public resources;
- as a general trend, some countries have moved from public funding to private funding (e.g. Australia has a universal student loan scheme);
- an optimal fees policy should be universal (charging fees for everybody), directly linked to student aid and adjusted to the cost of living;
- student loans should be designed to support students; the rationales for implementing them range from equity to financial sustainability or improved quality of education;
- information awareness is required, in order to prevent students from getting expensive loans;
- the idea of student loans should be further explored in order to identify the best model applicable in the Romanian context.

The final discussions focused on the recommendations made in the equity policy document. After being concisely presented, the participants expressed their opinion on national and institutional recommendations. Some amendments to the existing recommendations were made:

- raising public awareness on equity should be done at a general level of the Government, including for example the Ministry of Finance;
- recommendation 4 could be broadened to cover the assessment of the financial system that impacts on equity;
- recommendation B2 could also target the existing instruments, not necessarily only "new" instruments.

Parallel session 3: Access to higher education

The discussion started with a general presentation about the topic, taking into account that what matters is to ascertain that the unrepresented groups are attracted and that students feel they belong to the higher education community. Unfortunately, many countries have policies not supported by data. However, in

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order for these policies to work, both political support from decision-makers, but also from the community is necessary. This support is not easy to muster, as social justice is not a concept which is automatically understood or adopted by the wider public or the academic community. Though equity is primarily addressed by each higher education institution in the Romanian educational context, universities have the limitation of being highly contextualized and can mainly focus on the locally defined minorities and risk groups. Thus, policies at the national level could be designed to balance this local focus.

As many pupils do not even stand a chance to enter higher education and more students are lost and left behind, while as the gap between rural and urban raises, a proposed solution would be to offer them role models, as well as to focus on raising access particularly for various smaller HEIs. Two types of strategies could be employed to solve these problems:

- one driven by pragmatism and focused on solving the problem: funded by stakeholders, based on national political aims and not always driven by social justice, but sometimes lacking data for monitoring;
- the other driven by a vision on inclusion and the wish to make a change that approaches the problem holistically and has both a short-term and a long-term focus for social sustainability.

Nevertheless, regardless of the strategy adopted, it is important to understand that beneficiaries are many more groups at risk of exclusion than those who are frequently mentioned - students coming from ethnic minorities, students with disabilities and those coming from rural environment. Moreover, public policies should also address regards the needs of the students which are already enrolled in the system, in order to create the context for them to fully benefit from existing learning experiences (finding the right learning path and being actively involved in the learning process), as this is another form of subtle exclusion (from the full extent positive externalities).

However, the first step would be to collect and analyse data about student population in order to define these special categories and then design public policies for raising access to higher education addressing their particular needs. Currently the available data is sometimes misleading due to the differences in reporting procedures, difficulties to compare formats, or the lack of transparency in the reporting process.

Furthermore, in the design of public policies for raising access, there are many affirmative actions that can be shared as good practice examples, both in Romania and the countries around, therefore it would be important to identify what has worked and analyse the possibility of adapting and implementing them in our context– e.g.:

- preschool intervention (a six month non-compulsory programme for kids and their families before the age of going to school);
- legal requirements adapted to the strategy of raising the equity in access;
- scholarships;
- full-package of services for integrating different student categories which address their specific problems – as it is not enough to offer help for access to education, but also providing housing, infrastructure, employment is needed in order to help individuals to actually reach their full potential.

Participants also underlined the importance of involving the entire community in designing strategies of raising access through affirmative actions, based on what has already worked, while taking into consideration the contexts and the history of these excluded groups.



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Poland is reforming its equity policy for the second time. This reform defines people with disabilities in an inclusive way, while avoiding indirect discrimination, by addressing students with simultaneous disabilities. The policy was accompanied by a series of measures and instruments introduced in schools: counselling services for special needs students, commuting support, assisted note taking, personalised access to library, mental health mentor, alternative sport activities, physical access to buildings etc.

These above mentioned measures and instruments are also accompanied by: alternative sports activities, alternative learning paths, learning instruments, preparing students for the labour market etc. The services have been developed in an individualised manner for each group: deaf persons (language classes in small groups, facultative classes for polish language, inductive loops, specially adapted rooms etc.), persons with visual impairment (orientation and mobility trainings in the academic buildings, braille, digital library, acquisition of books in daisy format etc.), persons with physical disabilities (access to buildings, support to move around the campus, support for commuting, note taking, alternative practical and sports activities) etc.

The future challenges of the Polish system are: including students with disabilities that are not yet recognised as such (e.g. dyslexia), improving social assistance services by professionals, increasing the available funding for their needs etc.

The last part of the discussions focused upon the proposed recommendations. The main reactions were as follows:

- finding and promoting role models among young people to encourage them to go to school;
- prepare students to get involved in research at an earlier age (before accessing a higher education degree), in order to identify those passionate about this field and maximise their potential simultaneously with motivating them to stay in the educational system for a longer period;
- collecting and distributing proper information about the labour market opportunities;
- developing and using new more detailed standards for quality assurance in evaluating the HEIs so that they address the issue;
- create courses/trainings/integrated programmes for parents to help them understand the importance of taking their children through education;
- undergo (and finance) a long-term research in order to define the categories of students at risk of exclusion and their special needs so that later on decision – makers could fundament their public policies upon the results;
- finding new ways to promote the benefits of education in the areas where going to school is unpopular/difficult and extra-efforts are needed so that the full potential future students is reached;
- designing the educational system in such a way that it empowers students to become active and entrepreneurial;
- promoting education at top level and research all around the country;
- finding a way to maximising student potential, through different learning pathways or methods.

To conclude, everybody agreed that education is a way of dealing with poverty and to enhance social mobility and that a common effort in creating and implementing an integrated and holistic equity strategy has more chances to solve the access problem in a sustainable way. Such an integrated strategy should

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address all life dimensions of potential students that often have the characteristics of several risk groups at once: housing, education, employment, counselling and education for parents etc. .

Parallel session 4: Retention in higher education

The session started with a presentation regarding the main findings in the PODCA project outlining indicators and references in equity: gender distribution, poor background students, rural background, disabilities and Roma students. The topic regarding working students was also discussed. The presentation raised a number of questions regarding the existing data:

- Which are the disadvantaged groups and how do we define them?
- Access versus retention of disadvantaged categories?
- How can we increase retention and correlate it with access?
- Financial insecurities. How to attract students and change mentality from performance to equity?

Equity could be tackled from the perspectives of: general guidelines from the National Education Law, general rules regarding higher education funding, student rights, student support mechanisms and the evolution of higher education funding in Europe.

First of all, the general principles on which Romanian higher education is based, according to the Law, are: quality assurance, equity, transparency, respecting academic rights and liberties, freedom of ideology, religion and political views, academic mobility, stakeholder consultation in decision making and last but not least student centred learning.

The Romanian state supports students with social needs, as well as the ones with special educational needs, by offering social scholarships or other forms of support. The minimum yearly quantum of the social scholarships is calculated by taking into account the minimum costs of housing and food. Universities can supplement the scholarships fund through their own income.

Regarding higher education funding, students in Romania have the following rights: free medical and psychological healthcare, fees reduced by a minimum of 50% on public transportation and 75% for museums and other cultural activities, subsidised housing, food and transportation for student internships and no charges for study paper issuing.

In Romania, education funding increased between 2003 (3.45% from the GDP) and 2007 (4.25% from GDP), followed by a steady decline until present days. The level of financing per student is situated well under the European average. Out of the overall education budget, only one quarter of the total funds are aimed for higher education. Eurydice (2011) identifies three main approaches regarding financing aimed at increasing participation in higher education: increasing public funding while diminishing taxes, increasing taxes while establishing a wide system of loans and scholarships or developing the private higher education system in order to reduce pressure on the national budget. While political declarations focus on social needs in education, in reality there are other criteria that play a more important role in financing mechanisms of higher education institutions: quality of teaching, quality of research and system efficiency.

Moreover, a clear dependency of public higher education institutions to public financing can be observed, the number of taxpaying students decreasing between 2009 (64.24%) to 2013 (38.88%). In master and doctoral programs this figures tend to increase even further.



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The National Council for Higher Education Financing (CNFIS) has undertaken its own analysis on the real costs of study programmes, because there are real problems in determining student personal costs, indirect costs and those for utilities and other facilities. Concerning bachelor studies, the base public financing represents between 33% and 47% of the costs and total financing covers 50% to 69% of all costs. If real costs would be taken into consideration when calculating the grant, the Romanian state could finance only 35,000 out of the 63,000 budgeted study places it is presently financing.

On the subject of quality assurance, an external QA methodology was developed in 2006, in line with the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG), and a quality assurance agency was put in place (ARACIS). The base criteria of quality assurance apply to all study programmes and higher education institutions and the specific criteria apply to every field of study.

Some of the main problems mentioned when dealing with equity in higher education institutions were that:

- in some universities, the places for Roma students are not always distributed to Roma candidates because universities are tempted to enrol other students on these places;
- Romania is subject to brain drain, procedures in higher education institutions are not always applied and students are not always represented according to the law;
- universities did not provide functional career guidance and counselling centres,

Regarding the financial support for students, social scholarships are much lower than merit based ones, a problem that can be solved at the level of higher education institutions, because the legal framework leaves the decision on setting the amounts of both social and merit based scholarships to universities themselves.

Last but not least, universities should not forget their missions: to train students for the work place, to train students as citizens and to conduct research while assuring that quality is found in all these areas.

The students' view on equity is that according to the political statements, all sounds perfect. The equity principle is mentioned in the National Law of Education and it plays a very important role in the Bologna Process. Furthermore, students should reflect the characteristics of the population and family wealth should not decisively influence the chance of entering higher education.

According to the students, the minority groups in Romania are not clearly defined in the National Law of Education. This is probably because data regarding national minorities is not collected at the national level and the criteria through which a group is defined as being disadvantaged are not clearly set up.

One conclusion was that a national formula for expenditures related to student social cases needs to be defined. Equity needs to be raised at the same level of importance as performance.

Regarding the national recommendations included in the report, the main ideas outlined were:

- the recommendations are too broad;
- social scholarships should be prioritised;
- there is a lack of balance between higher education on-line massification and quality assurance in that perspective;
- career and counselling centres should be reformed not only on paper;

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- higher education institutions' strategic plans should include objectives regarding the social role of higher education and equity;
- the importance of equity should be raised equally to that of performance in Romanian HE;
- the existing provisions in the Law of National Education should be implemented by HEIs and their implementation should be supervised.

The final plenary session aimed at drawing conclusions from the parallel sessions regarding equity in the Romanian higher education system.

Therefore, equity should not be separated from the overall HE policies, but be an integral part of the broader HE strategies. Moreover, it is the responsibility of each institution to also include equity in its strategic plans. Proper data is needed to assess the current situation and monitor progress.

Actions at secondary level should be integrated with actions at HE level, which include reaching out to the whole community and integrating all stakeholders into the discussions.

What already exists at the national level in terms of legislation should be implemented at the institutional level, while experiences should be assessed, promoted and replicated. These were raised during the study visits within the project when institutions said that there is a disconnection between the national and university level.

There is a broad focus on merit based subsidies. In this regard, there is a need to move away from merit based to needs based. Multiple interventions are necessarily, not one single intervention will be the "magic bullet". A comprehensive set of policy interventions is needed for bringing equity on the public agenda.

The students' view on the subject is that there are serious problems with participation of the under-represented groups (such as Roma, students from low-income families, rural student). There are also important issues regarding the dropout rate.

In this regard, the recommendations proposed within the project are welcomed by the students with the following amendments:

- there should be financial incentives for universities that focus on equity;
- an effective national data collection process should be in place;
- a department dealing with equity should be set-up within the Ministry of National Education;
- universities should have proper infrastructure for disabled students;
- loans should not replace the current "budgeted places". Many students do not favour the idea of taking a loan because of the uncertainly related to future job;
- the state should allocate 6% from the GDP for education, as stipulated in the national Law;
- social scholarships should cover the cost of living;
- a methodology for the functioning of career counselling centres should be adopted.

In the final panel, Eva-Egron Polak highlighted the final messages of day by concluding that there is a consensus that starts from the need for the Ministry of National Education to develop policies regarding equity. One of the most important things about addressing equity is related to people mind sets. To change mind sets is to reward and recognise success.

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There should be coherence between the national and institutional level. For example, there is the problem of the lack of data. It is hard to recommend the institutions to improve their data collection without having a national instrument of data collection.

Education has to be seen as a continuum. Whatever happens in the beginning influences the rest of the process. If no successful results are being obtained at the primary level in terms of Roma or disability students' participation, it is impossible to have them at HE level.

The proposed recommendations have not met disagreements. The policy document should be sent to the Ministry and a meeting should be organised in two years' time to assess the progress.

2nd Day - Internationalisation of Higher Education

The second day of the „Internationalisation and Equity in the Higher Education System” Conference focused on the internationalisation of higher education, with Eva Egron-Polak, Secretary General of the International Association of Universities, introducing the key project findings and expected results of the conference.

The discussions covered the way in which higher education actors can collaborate in order to improve existing policies in equity and internationalisation and to better suit the needs of the academic environment.

The second day of the conference began with an introductory speech from Adrian Curaj, General Director of UEFISCDI, Tiberiu Apostol, General Director, General Division International Relations, Ministry of National Education (MEN) and Eva Egron-Polak, Secretary General International Association of Universities (IAU).

The session continues with a speech from Graham Wilkie, representing the European Commission, DG EAC. The presentation emphasised the importance of linking internationalisation of higher education and equity, as key dimensions for the Europe 2020 strategy. He also explained how these dimensions are linked to the broader goals of the EU and how academic communities and societies benefit from it and concluded with how Erasmus+ contributes to advancing internationalisation and equity in higher education.

Several arguments and recommendations emerged, underlining the importance of internationalisation and equity as key dimensions for Europe 2020:

- internationalisation strategies have to be owned by the people/institutions which implement them, such as HEIs;
- more people should be engaged in the international offices of HEIs and partnership collaboration should be an interconnection of institutional dimensions, not just a collaboration between few people who have connections;
- universities should build their own comprehensive strategies, which should include objectives and targets regarding all the aspects of internationalisation, such as mobility for students and staff, internationalisation at home, internationalisation of curricula and sources of capacity building and strategic cooperation;

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- mobility should be seen in its complexity and not only as one of its components, namely student mobility. Internationalization should be perceived in terms like visa procedures, recognition issues etc. Looking only at student mobility when thinking about internationalisation results in a too narrow perspective of both mobility and internationalisation of higher education overall;
- equity should be included in the internationalisation strategy with the purpose of helping more students to benefit from credit mobility, so that the strategy addresses more than an narrow elite as a target for mobility;
- in order for students to start acquiring international methods and skills, students should have access to digital learning, MOOC (Massive Open Online Courses), OER (Open Educational Resources), etc.;
- in order to make Romania an attractive destination and to promote the Romanian higher education system outside Romania, national institutions should work alongside and complementarily;
- mobility should be developed in both directions, with more opportunities for staff, researchers and students to go abroad;
- Romania should have comparative and competitive qualifications.

It was also reminded that by 2020, 20% of graduates should have been involved in at least a 15 ECTS credit mobility or training period abroad. The presentation also emphasised the EU contribution regarding the financial support for programmes, such as Erasmus+, explaining that credit mobility for students and staff, joint masters and PhDs will be financed by the European Commission (EC). Furthermore, the last EC Communication released regarding internationalisation was brought into discussion. The document recommends policies to be linked to the long-term needs of the job market, while also stressing the links between innovation, technology and capacity building.

As a conclusion, it was highlighted that internationalisation is just a tool which fits with modernising higher education and a tool of delivering quality and benefits to people, institutions and states.

At the Q&A session several remarks were underlined:

- Erasmus now makes it possible for students to study in the USA and the ratio between US / European students benefiting from financing is 50/50;
- the EC will cooperate with industrialised countries;
- curricula development projects will be part of the strategic partnerships area and the budget allocated for this is of 35 mil Euros;
- mobility is not a goal in itself. HEIs benefit from it along with the national economy, students, academic staff etc. In the context of brain drain vs brain gain, Europe is seen as a big winner of brain gain, being the most attractive world region for most of the students. Some European countries are more popular than others, that is why EC aims to collaborate with the national agencies;
- the issue of brain drain vs brain gain becomes brain circulation.

The following contribution was delivered by Eva Egron-Polak, who provided a general overview on internationalisation as a concept, as well as a snapshot of the current developments and challenges in this field. The contributor also linked the general context to the Romanian needs for developing internationalisation as a key priority for higher education.



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Some of the main ideas regarding the evolution of internationalisation were stressed. It was mentioned that internationalisation is an evolving concept which suffered a lot of transformations over the last two-three decades and is seen as internationalisation of education, cross-border/transnational education, internationalisation at home and international cooperation in education. The concept suffered a comprehensive transformation of the 'why', the 'what', the 'how' and the 'whom' of higher education.

There are many definitions for this concept, such as Jane Knight's, who noted that internationalisation is a process of integrating an international/cross cultural and/or global dimension into curriculum, research, delivery and management of HE.

Regarding the main trends when looking at internationalisation, the first one is increasing the importance of internationalisation as a priority policy for HEIs, state level and regional level. The second main trend which is seen as a solution to numerous problems is to increase the expectations when it comes to internationalisation. The third trend is to direct a strong focus on students, mostly on their mobility and increase the outward mobility from countries which are traditional hosts. The last trend emphasised was the high level of policy homogenisation at state and HEIs level, which could be a possible threat to diversity and to increasing competition.

Regarding the challenges and how to respond, a few recommendations were pointed out:

- a long-term strategy is necessary although building long term becomes rather challenging;
- adopting a coherent, strategic and institution-wide approach;
- recognising that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts and it is more important to focus on the process of building ownership when talking about internationalisation;
- viewing internationalisation not as an 'add-on', as something else that needs being done, instead seeing the process as an alternative way of doing things, a way to transform most policies and programmes;
- building institutional buy-in, social responsibility, synergies between institutions, research and teaching, understanding and support by all stakeholders.

Ligia Deca, public policy expert at UEFISCDI and coordinator of the fourth project module made a short overview of the main findings of the project regarding internationalisation of education at the national level. The status quo of the policies both at national and international level, student and staff mobility, partnerships and cooperation, as well as challenges and obstacles were all emphasised in the brief presentation.

Few of the main conclusions in regard with the development of internationalisation of higher education were as follows:

- for credit mobility, the conclusion is that for every 35 students going for a mobility period abroad (outgoing credit mobility), only 10 foreign students choose to study at a Romanian university (incoming mobility);
- for degree mobility, the numbers show that the quota of incoming students is 2.4 times lower than that of outgoing students for an entire cycle.;
- one of the findings showed that 63% of Romanian universities do not have their website available in at least one language of international circulation;
- according to an analysis of public strategic documents of Romanian HEIs, only 19 out of 92 universities have set detailed objectives and concrete references regarding internationalisation of HE.



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Ross Hudson, Programme Officer at IAU, highlighted the main findings of the project regarding internationalisation of education at the institutional level in the Romanian context, with an emphasis on the status quo of the policies, challenges and obstacles, as well as unique selling points of Romanian HEIs. Most of the identified challenges and obstacles at the institutional level were the lack of financial support at institutional level, the low level of foreign language ability for academic and administrative staff along with the incoming students which do not speak Romanian. Other obstacles identified were the lack of recognition of studies undertaken overseas by Romanian students and the insufficient human resources to cover administration of internationalisation department in a university.

With regard to the national level, some of the obstacles underlined were the delays in issuing visas to international students and researchers, instability and lack of coherence of the national education legislation, bureaucratic procedures for admitting international students to Romania and difficulties in hiring foreign academic staff. Also, the lack of incentives for academic and administrative staff to learn foreign language was underlined. However, institutions seem pleased with the current national efforts to develop a more coherent national policy for promoting internationalisation of Romanian education, although there is an urge for more resources, targeted efforts and better initiatives to present the Romanian HE abroad.

Liviu Matei, Chief Operating Officer, Central European University followed with a presentation about national examples of strategies concerning internationalisation of higher education. The aim of the presentation was to introduce, in a comparative manner, good practice examples of national strategies concerning internationalisation of higher education, looking at Germany, Estonia, Poland and Romania.

In terms of system-level internationalisation strategy in Poland there is a bottom-up approach coordinated by Rectors' Conference in cooperation with a non-governmental agency. In Estonia there is a 2006-2015 internationalisation strategy coordinated with related strategies and followed by public debates, while in Germany there are numerous strategies in place since 1990s, in comparison with Romania where is a lack of unified formal strategy at the system level.

Regarding the key elements of the strategy/policies or key practices, in Poland there is a development of internationalisation strategies on individual HEI level along with strong marketing campaign "Study in Poland" (where 43 HEIs are involved). Estonia is more focused on attracting MA and PhD-level students and developing a support system for internationalisation, while Germany has nine fields of action and a strong marketing campaign focused on "Study in Germany" and "Research in Germany"; since 2005 Germany put in place a new immigration law. As for Romania, the main focus is on participation in bilateral and multilateral agreements. In Estonia 3 % of permanent teaching staff positions are occupied by foreign staff.

Three of the main lessons learned were emphasised as follows:

- internationalisation of HE remains marginal, with the exception of Germany, but ambitions are different and this may lead to differentiated impact in the future;
- there are difference between strategies and practices;
- in regard to the actors involved, it is important to include regional and local authorities, rectors conferences, associations of universities and NGOs, not solely HEIs and governments.

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As conclusions, Liviu Matei gave us a short profile of the analysed countries in terms of internationalisation. For example, Germany has a systematic approach with all levels and actors involved, elaborated policies and actions, with political visibility and commitment, which lead to a significant impact.

When looking to Romania, there are scattered actions, most likely deriving from historical inertia. There is significant potential with major economic, intellectual, institutional, political possible benefits.

In Poland, universities are the driving force behind the process. "Poland lacks centres of excellence" and there is demand for an independent, inter-ministerial agency.

After these panel presentations, participants split in four parallel sessions, which addressed key themes such as the concept of internationalisation in the world, the status quo of the Romanian policies to support internationalisation, students and staff mobility and internationalisation of teaching and learning. A special focus was given to the recommendations already proposed by experts, which were discussed with the conference participants in each parallel session and also in the joint panel.

Parallel session 1: Strategic approach to promotion of Romania's higher education abroad

The aim of this session was to provide answers to questions such as "Is Romania promoting Romanian HE abroad? What should Romania do in order have a strategic approach?". The discussions begun with a short overview of the main findings from the PODCA project regarding the current Romanian policies for promoting the HEIs abroad as well as regarding the institutional partnerships and cooperation, delivered by the moderator, Laura Engel (one of the team experts, coming from George Washington University).

In this context, the main bodies responsible for promoting Romania abroad are: the Ministry of National Education, the General Direction for Higher Education, in collaboration with the International Relations Direction, the European Affairs Direction and the Direction for Bilateral Relations and International Organisations. In Romania there are some relevant regional cooperation initiatives, such as the South-Eastern European Regional Cooperation Council, the Regional Network on Qualifications Networks for South East Europe or the Black See University Network. Also, the national institutions and the universities cooperate with international structures or they are members in different international bodies as IAU, EUA ENQA and others.

Romania annually signs partnership agreements with countries and distributes scholarships for international students (based on bilateral agreements and no strategy for systematically attracting foreign students).

The 2013-2016 Government Programme on Education specifies the following aims linked to the internationalisation of education:

- "to continue to strengthen international bilateral and multilateral partnerships, foster exchanges of students, teachers, in the existing programs and develop new ways of international cooperation."
- "develop bilateral and multilateral relations, national and international in order to identify best practices and implement them in our country."

Regarding partnerships and cooperation, a wide range of goals for internationalisation were identified for the case study universities involved in the project regarding:

- high quality degree programmes;



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- development or increase the number of joint degrees;
- increased international visibility and prestige;
- increased and more in depth cooperation in university networks and foreign universities;
- increased attractiveness of institutions to international students;
- promoting Romanian language and culture abroad.

To follow up on the subject, a case study - West University of Timisoara (WUT) was presented, in order to briefly highlight the status quo of how communication, academic marketing and strategy related to internationalisation are conducted at the institutional level.

In this regard, WUT is a university with 11 faculties and more than 17,000 students, out of which 700 incoming mobile students. The institutional structure that deals with internationalisation issues is the Department for International Relations, together with the Vice-Rector for International Relations and Institutional Communication. The university is building an internationalisation strategy based on a bottom-up approach, setting common goals with different frames for faculties. It deals with issues as: reorganisation of the International Relations Department (improving student support services, evaluation of the existing programmes and actions aimed at increasing internationalisation, increased better and more mobility abroad, etc.).

Some difficulties were mentioned by the WUT representative, such as: difficulties in hiring foreign teachers due to the lack of system flexibility and bureaucracy, the continuous changes of the Romanian legislation and procedures, the lack of national actions for promoting the study in Romania.

It was noted that for a Romanian university it is hard to set up a specific institutional structure dealing only with internationalisation issues and hiring professionals. WUT is a good practice example in this regard. It was pointed out that it is extremely challenging for a teacher to deal with teaching and research while engaging in building strategies and developing structures.

The lack of a national strategy on internationalisation makes each Romanian university "swim alone". It is important that such a strategy be developed on a bottom-up approach and taking into consideration the work carried on within the PODCA project.

Furthermore, the national recommendations were debated and the main ideas noted were as follows:

- the importance of financial resources allocation, together with the development of a national strategy;
- the national strategy should be connected with the overall governmental strategy. The process of designing the strategy is as important as the outcome. The strategy should be based on consultation with universities, as they are supposed to implement it;
- the possible creation of a national institution to deal with internationalisation could integrate the activities of different bodies. This national institution should be closer to the universities not the ministry. It could be a national inter-ministerial institution (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Education);
- the lack of communication between the current national institutions that deal with internationalisation issues;
- more assistance for universities should be provided by embassies of countries where students choose to study;

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- international activities of the staff should be part of the staff evaluation criteria. This could be a motivating instrument for staff to be internationally active;

Regarding the institutional level recommendations, the following ideas were noted:

- an open call for teaching positions should be mandatory, together with publishing the calls for employment of professors on international level;
- the number of foreign teachers should be an indicator in a national assessment process;
- opportunities for learning foreign languages should be increased (the universities now offer one or two foreign languages opportunities). Students should be able to receive certificates for foreign languages;
- integration of foreign students in university life should be an institutional objective, as foreign students are currently not visible in the academic community and their involvement would significantly contribute to the internationalisation of campuses;
- students' language skills in English should be developed. Even if the institutional contract for Erasmus requires a B1 level in English, many times international students come to study without knowing proper English;
- there should be a possibility for students to gain practice experience in a foreign country after finishing a study programme by extending the study visa with a year.

Parallel session 2 – Defining and monitoring institutional policy to support internationalisation (including cross-border provision)

This aim of the session was to focus on the main institutional policies implemented by HEIs to support internationalisation in Romania. The university of Alba-Iulia – UAB and Titu Maiorescu University – Bucharest were the proposed case studies, which introduced their institutional policy approach and practices used to support internationalisation of education. The goal of the presentations was to focus on their main objectives when talking about internationalisation and on their specific targets/ strategies to achieve them.

The session started with a presentation of the moderator, Hans de Wit (University of Applied Sciences, Amsterdam), who gave a brief description of the five study visits performed at five Romanian universities and the policy document elaborated, outlining:

- the most noticeable challenges and obstacles encountered at institutional level were: lack of financial support, foreign language skills, recognition of studies abroad, a more strategic and comprehensive approach in terms of internationalisation;
- specific needs at national level: to develop a more coherent national policy to promote internationalisation, more resources and tailored internationalisation initiatives, the creation of national initiatives to present the Romanian HE abroad, resolving visa issuing problems, frequency of legislative changes;
- the main national and institutional recommendations put forward by the experts team.

Iulia Alecu presented the Titu Maiorescu University case study, outlining:

- the different views on globalisation: the good vs bad approach, each with its arguments;
- the targets for internationalisation/ globalisation, focusing on both quality and quantity (number of mobility, foreign programmes, etc.)
- the international conferences in which the university takes part or which it organises;

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- the integration of graduates in the labour market, which constitutes the main aim of the university (also stated in the university mission);
- most outgoing Erasmus students do not wish to return home after their mobility period;
- the report prepared by the expert team was translated and disseminated at university level, but the institution still seems a bit reluctant in implementing the specific recommendations.

In the discussions that followed, the participants noted that public universities are more focused on research and teaching, while private universities are more profit oriented. Private universities find it easier to manage internationalisation, as they have more autonomy (also in managing their own budget and making their own decisions). In terms of financial aspects, activities bring more money in universities, which in turn can be used to invest in promotion and improving study conditions.

The second institutional case study focused on "1 Decembrie 1918" University of Alba Iulia, with Teodora Popescu delivering the presentation that focused on the internationalisation strategy recently adopted by the institution.

The presentation stressed:

- the university's strong links with the regional community;
- the main principles on which the internationalisation strategy was built: extending the international dimension of research activities, and teaching/learning processes, raising intercultural and multilingual awareness, and an active involvement in society, by making use of the social responsibility and collaborating with corporate companies;
- the specific objectives of the strategy, the actions to be taken and the achievement indicators for each of these objectives.

The university representative noted how the project study visit revealed to the university that things cannot be done overnight. Furthermore, the specific recommendations prepared by the project expert team are being implemented at institutional level, by focusing more on the neighbouring countries and also on the diaspora (despite competition from Timisoara universities), attempting to raise awareness amongst the staff or having dedicated people in all faculties to work closer with the International Department.

When asked in the Q&A session, the representative of "1 Decembrie 1918" University of Alba Iulia mentioned amongst the aspects that still require improvement are the language competences of the academic staff, as well as the need to create more awareness among the academic staff concerning the internationalisation strategy.

Furthermore, when addressing possible improvements at national level, the support of ARACIS to authorise study programmes in foreign languages and designing more attractive master programmes for students, in closer correlation with the labour market, was needed. Other recommendations – already mentioned in the policy document – were also mentioned: the existence of a national policy for internationalisation, improved visa procedures (especially for Asian students) or a "Study in Romania" portal.

Some amendments to existing recommendations emerged:

- at national level (possibly at regional level), specific measures should be taken to increase the amount of Erasmus grants;

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- at institutional level, awareness towards the internationalisation strategies should be raised amongst the university staff.

Parallel sessions 3 - Mobility in the Romanian context. Outward vs. inward mobility

This aim of the session was to address the subject of mobility in the Romanian context with a short review of the evolution of incoming vs. outgoing students and staff numbers. As a case study, the "Lucian Blaga" University of Sibiu had the main objective to highlight targets and objectives when looking at increasing academically meaningful mobility numbers. It was also proposed to emphasise challenges and obstacles to mobility.

The session was moderated by Dan Lazea (one of the expert panel members). Nicoleta Burdusel was invited to present the "Lucian Blaga" University of Sibiu (ULBS) case study.

It was highlighted that it is important to determine which final benefit of internationalisation one intends to reach through the strategy: whether it is to generate income or to raise the quality of education in the system. What follows is the creation of a specific plan linked to the regional context. Nevertheless, financing the actions in the strategy is equally important.

Presentation tackled the subject of internationalisation from several perspectives: internationalisation at home or abroad, financing sources or benefits etc. Furthermore, as far as mobility is concerned, it could either be non-degree or degree-oriented.

First of all, internationalisation should be integrated in a national strategy, supported politically and financial by the decisional factors. This should be supported by the strategies of the higher education institutions. However, at this point universities do not have a regional policy articulated and at national level, the majority of the policies address specific neighbouring countries (e.g. legislation framework, scholarships, facilities offered to students coming from Republic of Moldova).

ULBS has analysed its context and opportunities and has developed a strategy for internationalisation. As push-pull factors determining a progress in internationalisation, the following have been identified and mentioned: the prestige of the hosting institution, increased competitiveness upon return to the home institution, international competencies offered, promoting intercultural exchange and values, the possibility of knowledge and research exchange. The university has created a structure at university level and similar ones at faculty level to deal with the implementation of this institutional strategy.

Moreover, in order to encourage mobility not only among students but also among teachers, language courses were offered to them as well as counselling and support in preparing them for a mobility period. Then, some summer schools were organised in order to raise the international visibility of the university and the experience in preparing activities in other languages leading towards expanding the course offer. Nevertheless, there seems to be confusion among the stakeholders about internationalisation, as many of the elements integrated in the universities' strategies or action plans are copied from international documents or experiences without a thorough analysis over the regional/local contexts and potential. Romanian attempts to cover the inefficiencies in the field of internationalisation with the activity targeting



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the students in the neighbouring countries show a misunderstanding of the reasons behind these actions: whether they are part of an internationalisation attempt or a nationalisation hidden agenda.

The answers to many questions raised could be offered after deciding which potential outcomes are more attractive for the institution. This only after taking into account the possible side-effects of mobility programmes, among which one could include: brain-drain or lowering standards in the educational system. Moreover, there are still existing barriers in the way of people benefiting from the system. Thus, measuring the impact of the under-gone measures towards improving mobility is rather difficult to measure or to standardize a methodology or instrument for it.

The mentioned good practice examples include:

- investing in the international promotion of university and its programmes (in order to raise the number of incoming students, as well as the budget of the ERASMUS programme of the university and other resources available for outgoing students);
- creating strategies at the level of university and faculty for internationalisation – for the coherence in regulations;
- full-time paid staff dealing with internationalisation;
- a council / structure responsible with the internationalisation of the institution;
- teaching and Lifelong Learning (LLL) development of the academic staff for raising the potential of the institution to develop internationalized programmes;
- involving local stakeholders in supporting mobility grants (e.g. the local council).

Additional recommendations were formulated in addition to those already included in the report:

- finding a way to involve more stakeholders in the development and implementation of the internationalisation strategy – e.g. attracting financial support from the local council;
- developing infrastructure for managing the students and faculty members involved in mobility programmes (centre of international relations with a full-time paid staff, dormitories, etc.);
- hiring specialised human resources in order to work in the international relations department and deal with the technical aspects of the implementation of the strategy;
- develop services to support the reach of the objectives in the strategy: both for outgoing and incoming persons (e.g. social services, financial support, counselling, professional orientation etc.);
- overcoming the financial barriers that prevent students or teachers to participate in mobility programmes can be partially done within the autonomy of the university when setting the level of the mobility grant in accordance to the level of costs-of-living from the host country (instead of an even grant);
- using online instruments for promoting the mobility (social/new media – Facebook, Twitter; sites with full-length information about the host institution) to the fullest;
- supporting NGOs and youth initiatives helping with the promotion of the mobility programmes and the integration of the incoming students (e.g. ESN) both at national and institutional level;
- supporting any initiative of promoting the universities and fully using the opportunities of raising the visibility of the programme and institutions;
- organising one year language preparatory courses for the incoming students (solving the connected visa-issues for accepting students during this year and assuring their flexibility regarding length and intensity as well as accreditation);
- changing the national legislation in order to offer the universities the opportunity to organise two enrolment periods for students (the beginning the university year could be organised in two different periods of the year);

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- change the way in which the National Centre for Equivalence and Recognition of Diplomas (CNRED) is working to ensure fluency, functionality and transparency in procedures considering the opportunity to diversify the potential new agents to ensure diploma recognition and developing the pallet of services offered by CNRED (e.g.: reducing the duration of the procedures);
- developing international partnerships and agreements in order to accept and facilitate Romanian diploma recognition linked with the accreditation and QA procedures in Romania.

Parallel session 4 - Internationalisation of teaching and learning within university campuses

The aim of the session was to look at internationalisation of teaching and learning, addressing topics such as curricula reform, academic recognition and the use of tools such as ECTS, language provision in support of internationalisation, integrating foreign and returning teachers and students, challenges and obstacles to joint programmes and activities related to internationalisation of campuses. Constanta Maritime University (UMC) was the proposed case study, with its representative explaining how internationalisation of curriculum is addressed in a niche specialisation.

The session was moderated by Mihai Korca (Professor in Applied Statistics in International Business, Department of Statistics and Econometrics) who also held the first presentation on internationalisation in Romanian higher education.

The presentation tackled the subject of internationalisation starting from a global perspective and then focusing on higher education institutions. The development of professional skills, aptitudes and attitudes which allow graduates to benefit from the international labour mobility and to become active citizens in the global village, universities have to consider: cross-border mobility of members of the academic community, international networking and cooperation in education, research projects and internationalisation at home, with its numerous possible components.

The following benefits of internationalisation at home were presented:

- it offers development of knowledge and skills to all members of the academic community;
- it generates a consistent change in the organisational behaviour, in the university management and even in the philosophy of academic life and work on campus;
- it encourages a real quality culture promoted by all members of the academic community;
- it improves visibility and attractiveness of the university in the local and international education market;
- It enhances the competitive advantage of the university.

Furthermore, Mr. Korca underlined that internationalisation is not an aim in itself. It helps a university achieve wider goals. Therefore, internationalisation should be embedded in the mission and vision of the university and in its strategic sustainable development plan and in each and every action aiming at the implementation of the various objectives. In order for internationalisation to be successful it needs an appropriate financing and a responsible preparation of each institutional development initiative. By monitoring the internationalisation process, one sets criteria and measurable objectives which have to be combined with data referring to student and teaching staff satisfaction.

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Mr. Cornel Panait (Vice rector on institutional development and international relations at the Maritime University of Constanta) presented the wide experience of his university regarding internationalisation on the niche domain of maritime studies. In addition to being part of the national education system, the Maritime University of Constanta is strictly supervised by the Romanian Naval Authority and the International Maritime Organisation.

In order for students to graduate, they need to learn a very specific English terminology in the maritime field. Furthermore, a more collaborative approach is required from the state institutions (embassy's and institutions which regulate the navy partnerships) both with each other and with their pair-institutions (counterparts institutions) in order for the university to make student exchanges easier, as a national policy on internationalisation is not enough for the university to thrive.

In the Q&A session, Mr. Korca stated that an internationalisation process via an affiliation or extension of Romanian universities abroad encounters visa difficulties and inhibits Romanian international cooperation abroad. Mr. Panait further added that, for the moment, few European students are attracted to come and study in Romania and universities should invest in approaching other higher education institutions from abroad for future collaboration. The need for institutional networking was further underlined, the experts agreeing that Romanian embassies should better support these endeavours.

Another important idea mentioned was that the partnerships with the international business communities should be taken into account. This goal can be pursued by making a governmental strategy on internationalisation and establishing a national agency to tackle this issue.

At the end of the parallel sessions participants reunited in the panel session where Patricia Pol, University of Paris-East delivered the conclusions. These were followed by two responses: Mihai Dragos on behalf of the National Alliance of Student Organisations in Romania (ANOSR) and Ovidiu Folcut on behalf of the National Council of Rectors.

As a conclusion, it was highlighted that internationalisation is part of the overall system of higher education, research and diplomacy, and that economy and the wider context play a crucial role in achieving the internationalisation potential of the country or HEIs. It was stressed that at national level there is a strong commitment to the European policies, action lines and programmes, while at the institutional level there are different levels of maturity, of objectives (when talking about private or public HEIs), common features such as a strong commitment to Erasmus.

All participants agreed with the policy document recommendations and looked forward to the next challenges. Several conclusions from all the parallel sessions were underlined:

- all participants agreed on the necessity of strategic approaches at both levels (national and institutional level);
- there is a need of involvement from all stakeholders, specific structures, data collection (observatory), prioritise increased resources (human and financial), recognition of the workload for the staff and evaluation;
- the importance of harmonising international/European/ regional priorities;
- the need to promote a "Study in Romania" brand;
- the need to develop mobility for all;
- there is a necessity for recruitment plans at institutional level and Marketing policies;
- multilinguism and interculturalism in the curricula should be encouraged;



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- remove or lighten administrative, juridical and financial obstacles;
- internationalisation / access and equity are dimensions still not very mature in the Romanian context (universities and state institutions understand partially these dimensions)

Mihai Dragos, President of ANOSR, stressed out the fact that students coming from poor families are not able to benefit from mobility because of the financial issues. He also added that the next budget (2014) for Higher Education should encourage mobility by providing additional funds, otherwise students will not be able to embark on a mobility period in the Northern European countries for example, given the financial issues and the living standards. The student representative highlighted that international experience of academic and administrative staff should be rewarded, while each HEI should have a special budget for internationalisation

Furthermore HEIs should make sure that foreign students get properly integrated, receive proper information and that there are enough employees at the International Relations Department. It was also stressed that government should promote Romania as a study destination and resolve all the bureaucratic issues, especially the ones regarding visas. Nevertheless, it was mentioned that there are still problems with the recognition of studies and it was recommended that the diploma supplement details all the courses taken in the mobility period abroad. It was also added that students could help HEIs with the integration of foreign students through Erasmus Student Network or other student NGOs. As a last recommendation, it was suggested that in order for students to get more comfortable with international experiences, they should first have the chance to a national short exchange which could lead and encourage them for a more intercultural exchange.

Mr. Ovidiu Folcut also highlighted several ideas regarding internationalisation of higher education. He pointed out that in the near future the National rectors' Council will release an internationalisation strategy in line with HEIs vision and it is mandatory that the Ministry of National Education be involved in this strategy. Some of the encountered difficulties at the institutional level are the delays in receiving of the letter of admission for foreign students from MEN and the administrative and financial obstacles. It was also added that it is mandatory for students to have an international experience during their studies not only for professional reasons, but also for the overall benefits they could gain as human beings. It was also noted that students will return to Romania, if Romania succeeds in offering them a decent job. In the end, the main conclusion was that no strategy can be developed without a bottom up approach, with top down expectations and results, because the money has to come from top and the inputs to remove obstacles from top-down. As well, it was underlined that in order to have good results HEIs have to be proactive in this area.

The conference ended with a few concluding remarks:

- internationalisation should not be only about the benefits, internationalisation is a means not a goal in itself and every HEI has to look at its mission, values and priorities when developing an institutional internationalisation strategy;
- there are various approaches that HEIs could take and a comprehensive national internationalisation strategy should be developed, designed in a realistic manner, not overambitious; HEIs should also focus at how to prepare students for facing the real world, post-graduation;



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- internationalisation should not depend totally on the external funding because it is not sustainable on the long-term; it is important to make sure that academic staff is on the same page and working together for developing internationalisation;
- a distinct budget for internationalisation could help in its institutional development; HEIs should include a diverse sphere of partners and work with different institutions and not only with traditional partners. There are disregarded areas which could bring an added value and equity for students should be considered on the level of decision making.

Since all the proposed recommendations have not met disagreements, these along with project deliverables should be sent to the Ministry of National Education in order to be implemented. As it was stated in first day of the conference, a meeting to evaluate the progress for equity and internationalisation of higher education should be organised in two years' time.

*** Please note that all the used conference presentations, together with the background documents, can be found on the project website, at the following link: <http://www.politici-edu.ro/?p=1167>