Equity in the Romanian Higher Education System

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Contents

Part A

1. Introduction

The Executive Agency for Higher Education, Research, Development and Innovation Funding *(UEFISCDI)* is currently implementing a project meant to increase the institutional capacity for evidence based public policies in higher education. One of its planned activities is an analysis of two essential dimensions of Universities in Romania: equity and internationalization. Starting from the premise that each institution defines its own university mission and strategy in an autonomous fashion, it is desirable to map out the policies regarding equity and internationalization within the Romanian higher education system and on an institutional (university) level. Furthermore, recommendations were formulated by teams of both national and international experts regarding national and institutional policies. This document focusing on issues of equity is also intended for international audiences, in order to improve the understanding of the current state of affairs of national and institutional policies regarding equity in the Romanian higher education system.

The economic changes following the Second World War and subsequent changes in society have led to an evolution in the public understanding of the role of universities. One of these changes was the transition from elite education systems to "massification" of education. In Romania this process only began after the fall of communism in 1989. After 1990, private institutions of higher education were established, the number of universities (including private ones) and the number of students rapidly increased, together with a large diversification of specializations offered. The number of registered students in the academic year 2008/2009 was almost seven times higher than the number of students registered in 1989/1990. At the same time, massification has led to a series of challenges: mismatch between the level of public funding and the rapid expansion of the system, difficult balance between maintaining quality and allowing the system to expand, especially through the emergence of private universities, and a clash between the notions of merit-based participation in higher education and tapping into the full potential of the Romanian population, especially with a view to access, progression and completion of underrepresented groups in higher education.

According to the National Institute for Statistics (NIS)[1] publication: " The design of active population of Romania at 2050" published in 2011, the demographic change in the European Union (EU) and especially the low fertility rates have had important implications on aging, also having consequences for social policies and education. The EU-27 population was estimated in 2010 to be approximately 500 million. Giving the fact that low fertility is a major problem for the region, according to UN estimates, the population of the EU will decrease by 2.4% by 2050. Demographic problems faced by other EU Member States are also found in Romania, with the observation that the relatively lower performance of Romanian economy could have an even greater social impact in relation to the demographics.

Romania's population has experienced significant changes over the past two decades, in part due to the transition and changes in the political regime that had a strong influence on the evolution of demographic phenomena. Since 1990, the total population decreased year by year, to an average annual rate of 0.2%. During 1992-2002, the population decreased by 1.1 million people. Furthermore, in 2002-2010, the

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[1] Further in the document the abbreviation "NIS" will be used for data extracted from the National Institute for Statistics

population aged 15-24 years decreased by 13.8% and the population aged 25-34 fell by 8.2% while the population 55-64 years increased by 18.7%.

According to Eurostat data, the **risk of poverty** and **social exclusion** fell from 45.9% in 2007 to 40.3% in 2011. Despite this significant progress, Romania is still among the countries with the highest rate of risk of poverty and social exclusion in Europe, almost twice as high as the EU average. Only Latvia and Bulgaria had higher poverty and social exclusion rates.

The 2012 analysis of the Ministry of Education concluded that:"The main challenge for the education system in terms of risk of poverty and social exclusion is the significant gap between the situation of children and young people in Romania compared to average EU rates of poverty and the social exclusion of children and young people[2]. Romanian rates of poverty and social exclusion are considerably higher (almost double) than the EU average, this having direct negative effects on access and participation in education. Economic support measures for children in this situation are required and need to focus on specific groups of children and young people from disadvantaged groups while implementing inclusive education principles in economically and socially disadvantaged areas".

The NIS data show low participation rates in higher education for students from disadvantaged groups such as rural students, disabled, Roma students or those coming from low income families. Also, the available data show a correlation between participation rates in higher education and participation rates in secondary education, which means that when developing a national strategy on equity in higher education, the situation of previous formal education levels should be taken into consideration.

As shown before, the number of students in Romania increased after the communist period since the academic year 2008/2009 when the total number of students began to significantly decrease in close correlation with the lower number of high school graduates and the low percentage of high school students that passed the national examination (baccalaureate). These factors led to a lower number of students enrolled in the first year of study. This decrease in higher education enrolment could act as a catalyst for the Romania to develop a coherent strategy on equitable access to higher education as the country will need to make an extra and concerted effort with regard to equitable access in order to increase or even simply maintain higher education participation and graduation rates at levels required for economic and social development in the future.

Giving the social context of Romania and also the fact that the current governmental strategy includes as a main priority the development of equity policies regarding higher education, the project is designed as a first step in the development of a national strategy on equity. It involves international and national experts as well as representatives from Romanian universities in order to ensure that any future strategy can be centered on both institutional realities and experience and on relevant expertise related to equity in (higher) education.

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[2] Ministry of Education: Needs analysis on education and training in Romania , 2012
http://administraresite.edu.ro/index.php/articles/18802

EUROPEAN UNION
European Social Fund

GOVERNMENT OF ROMANIA
Ministry of Regional Development

Innovation in Administration
Operational Programme
and Public Administration
"Administrative Capacity Development"

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The current document represents a policy instrument for supporting Romanian policy makers in the decision making process regarding equity policies in higher education. The document is structured as follows:
-        Part A presents a background paper which clarifies the concept of equity as defined within different policy and official documents, gives an overview of the main national policies with impact on equity, presents relevant indicators of access, retention and completion in education and, finally, summarizes the relevant pieces of education legislation, policies and instruments with impact on equity;
-        Part B presents the findings and experts' recommendations for the institutional level.;
-        Part C presents the experts group's recommendations for the further development of equity policies at national level;
-        Part D includes the relevant Annexes.

Part A of the document is structured as follows:
-        **General presentation** – introduces the conceptual considerations on equity related to access, progress, completion and transition to the work market, as a pre-condition for social cohesion. It also makes references to the international commitments of Romania with impact on equity;
-        **General policy framework** – describes the national policy framework with impact on equity in education which includes, inter alia, governmental strategies, The National Pact for Education, the National Reform Plan, the Education Law (1/2011) and ends with an overview of the institutional structures with responsibilities on equity;
-        **Indicators and Relevant References Regarding Equity in Higher Education and Social Cohesion –** comprises data regarding access, retention in and graduation from higher education. It starts by giving a series of indicators on secondary education and continues to describing participation of different categories of students in higher education, ranging from the gender distribution to the participation of Roma students, mature, students with special needs etc.;
-        **The Specific Framework of Policies and Instruments concerning Equity in Higher Education –** describes specific instruments and policies implemented in Romania which have direct or indirect impact on equity in higher education, such as: funding higher education and the financial support for students, social and academic services for students and policies for quality assurance;
-        **Challenges and opportunities** – Analyzing the status of Romanian higher education in terms of data, policies and instruments regarding equity, the chapter concludes by describing, from the experts' perspective, both the challenges and the opportunities that the Romanian system faces.

Due to the fact that the framework of "equity" used in the international and European policy discourse is not a familiar framework in the Romanian context, the present policy document puts emphasis on the shared understanding of the social role and responsibilities of higher education. A "social role of higher education" perspective might therefore stimulate a more comprehensive reflection on societal needs in a broader perspective that is most likely to include equity and social cohesion in higher education, while taking into account the system effectiveness and efficiency. For the institutional level of policy, the social role of higher education is related to outreach, access and retention.

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Figure 1 Social role of higher education
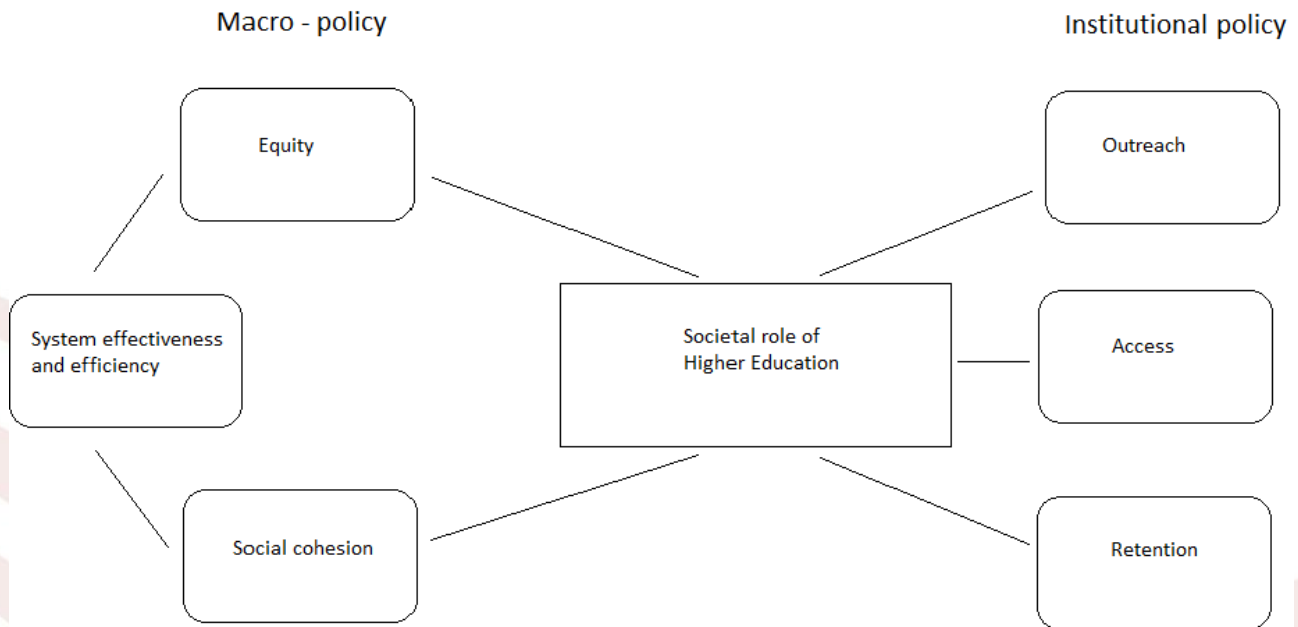
To provide a general overview of access and retention in the Romanian higher education system, the document relies on data from the following main sources:

- Statistical data from the National Institute for Statistics (NIS);
- Data from the process of classification of Romanian universities[3];
- Data from the national institutions and councils responsible with higher education: Ministry of Education (MEN), National Council for Funding Higher Education (CNFIS), the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ARACIS);
- Studies and reports launched by the Ministry of Education and the World Bank;
- International comparison data from Eurostat and Eurostudent.

For the development of the institutional analysis and recommendations, the experts group drew on the experience of the International Association of Universities (IAU). In this regard, an open call was launched for Romanian universities willing to be part of the exercise and to contribute to the overall objectives based on their institutional experience. The universities who responded positively to the open call were:

- "Stefan cel Mare" University of Suceava;
- "Carol I" National Defense University of Bucharest;
- Polytechnic University of Timisoara;
- "Titu Maiorescu" University of Bucharest.

In order for the working group to analyze the institutional strategies and statutes of the Romanian universities in relation to equity in higher education, a **self-assessment instrument** was developed by the

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[3] The process of collecting the data and information for evaluating universities and study programs to the purpose of classifications of universities and hierarchies of the study programs http://chestionar.uefiscdi.ro/

experts group, based largely on the IAU Self-assessment instrument used previously. The instrument enabled each institution to provide a snapshot of their characteristics, policies, instruments and current practice in relation to equity.

It is important to mention that focusing on equity in higher education in a comprehensive and exhaustive manner requires more time and resources than were available for the current activity. A further debate with decision makers, universities representatives and other stakeholders is needed, as well as an ex-ante impact analysis of the proposals made.

2. General Presentation
2.1. Conceptual Considerations
2.1.1. What is equity in education?

Access to education is a *sine qua non* condition to be to be socially included and successful in a knowledge-based economy. Even if we witness a massive expansion in education, there are citizens, not only of less developed countries, who do not have enough chances to graduate a secondary school and to enroll in a higher education institution. If, at the societal level, the money allocated to education can be seen as an investment in future economic and technical competitiveness, at the individual level, these resources can be used to diminish social inequalities in education that are a foundation for future inequalities (Schlicht, 2010, 30). Therefore the existence of socio-economic factors that influence school performance and the access to higher educational system is a source of waste of human capital and of reproduction of social inequalities.

The European Union stresses, in its treaties, directives, regulations and strategies, the role of the relationship between education, employment and risk of poverty and / or social exclusion. In the Communication from the Commission to the Council and to the European Parliament on September 8, 2006 there is a special focus on the relationship between efficiency and equality in the European education and training systems, which are "critical factors to develop the EU's long-term potential for competitiveness as well as for social cohesion". According to this document, equity in education is not only related to equal opportunities and access, but it is connected with equal treatment and with the outcomes of the educational and training systems:

> "Equity is viewed as the extent to which individuals can take advantage of education and training, in terms of opportunities, access, treatment and outcomes. Equitable systems ensure that the outcomes of education and training are independent of socio-economic background and other factors that lead to educational disadvantage and that treatment reflects individuals' specific learning needs." (European Commission, 2006, 2)

The Communication of the Commission underlines that even if the concept of equity does not overlap with the concept of inequalities (which are caused by gender, ethnic minority status, disability and regional disparities, etc.), there are socio-demographical variables that are the main sources of disadvantages. Moreover, there is a relationship between equity and efficiency, which are mutually reinforcing, taking into consideration the fact that "systems are efficient if the inputs produce the maximum output" (Commission, 2006, 2). Therefore a high level of equity is associated with a high level of efficiency and, therefore, equity is not just a moral goal, but a pragmatic source of efficiency, as well.

In their article, Salmi and Bassett also stress the importance of equity for fairness and efficiency purposes. The economic efficiency argument in favor of promoting equity in higher education is related to the development of human resources and the capacity to capture economic and social benefits from tapping into the entire talent pool. The example given is that of a talented, low-income and/or minority high school graduate who is denied entry into tertiary education, this representing an absolute loss of potential for the individual person and for society as a whole (Salmi & Bassett, 2012).

In an OECD paper, Field *et al*. (2007, 11) consider that equity in education has two dimensions that are intertwined: fairness and inclusion. Fairness means that personal and social circumstances are not obstacles in fulfilling the individual potential and inclusion means that there is a minimum standard of education for all. There are similarities between EU and OECD perspectives regarding equity, both underlining that access and school performance should not be negatively influenced by socio-demographical variables. The lack of equity is not only a problem of fairness, but a source of future social inequalities and social exclusion.

Since there is a relationship between equity and equality in education, should we try to equalize the educational outcomes? Ben Levin (2003) considers that this kind of equality is not only impossible, but also undesirable. The main goal should be that the differences in outcomes would not be determined by the economic and social differences:

> "There is general agreement that the aim of public policy cannot and should not be equality in the sense that everyone is the same or achieves the same outcomes – a state that appears to be both impossible and undesirable. Rather, a commitment to equity suggests that differences in outcomes should not be attributable to differences in areas such as wealth, income, power or possessions." (Levin, 2003, 5)

If there is an acceptable degree of inequality, it is important to determine how much and what kind of inequality should be acceptable? It is proved that school performance is determined not only by socio-economic factors, such as parents income or the size of the locality where the school is, but by the level of intelligence as well (Hatos, 2011, 618). Moreover, students are different in terms of skills or interest for different kind of disciplines, fact that is associated with different school performances. Thus the equality of the outcomes is not possible, but the state should be involve to create fairness and justice "in terms of opportunities, access, treatment and outcomes" for every student. The educational and training systems should build strategies and policies to diminish the negative impact of individual and social factors in order to increase access and performance of citizens at the higher educational level. Equity means more that equal opportunities and it increases all people's (regardless of their social and economic backgrounds) chances to graduate from higher education. Therefore equity implies the decrease in the risk of social exclusion.

2.1.2. Access and school performance. Individual and social factors

It is not in our intention here to present an extensive theoretical analysis regarding the factors that create inequity within the educational systems, but to present the main socio-economic variables that lead to educational disadvantage.

There are sociologists saying that, paradoxically, equality of chances in the educational system can create economic inequality (Boudon, 1990). The French sociologist underlines that academics and politicians are too optimistic regarding the fact that the development of the education increases the chances for children with a lower social status to have a better life, compared with their parents' life.

In opposition to this approach, the EU stresses the role of education in order to adapt to a knowledge-based economy: "better educational levels help employability and progress and increasing the employment rate helps reducing poverty" (European Commission, 2010, 9). On the other hand, it is true that the decrease of poverty or social exclusion does not necessarily imply the increase of economic equality. Social cohesion, one of the main objectives of the EU policies based on social equity, can be defined as:

> "a state of affairs concerning both the vertical and the horizontal interactions among members of a society, as characterized by a set of attitudes and norms that include trust, a sense of belonging, and the willingness to participate and help, as well as their behavioral manifestations" (Chan et al., 2006, 290).

Taking into consideration this definition, social cohesion is more related to social inclusion and not to the decrease of the economic gap. But, in a report elaborated by the Council of Europe, social cohesion is defined as "the capacity of a society to ensure the well-being of all its members, minimizing disparities and avoiding marginalization" (Council of Europe, 2008, 14). Therefore social cohesion does not mean only economic and social integration, but minimizing disparities, as well.

To analyze equity in education in terms of opportunities, access, treatment and outcomes, we have to underline the individual and social factors that create disparities and diminish the possibilities of people to graduate from higher education and be integrated into the labor market. Literature that approaches school performance, dropping out risk and intention to continue education at a higher level (at the undergraduate or the graduate level) takes into consideration variables that are related to students' families, quality of schools, socio-economic development of communities, peer group pressure, gender and social values.

As far as family is concerned, several studies underline the importance of the family relationship, family income, and parents' level of education. Sun and Li (2009) consider that teenagers, especially girls, from unstable families have lower school performance in mathematics and social sciences. Therefore the two authors underline the importance of family counseling and of school counseling for students. Parents' education and income affect students' academic performance directly, by the fact that parents with higher education and/or income set higher school expectations and offer higher economic conditions to study.

School performance can be influenced indirectly by what Basil Bernstein (1964) called "restricted code" and "elaborate code" of communication. Children (students) from working class families have access only to the restricted code, and the middle class can use both restricted code and elaborate code. If within the restricted code "the range of the alternatives, syntactic alternatives, is considerably reduced and therefore it is much more likely that prediction should be possible", the elaborate code "will facilitate the speaker in his attempt to put into words his purpose, his discrete intent, his unique experience in a verbally explicit form" (Bernstein, 1964, 57). Because the elaborate code is not accessible for workers' families children and „school and universities are obliged to use elaborate code and to recompense its usage by the students"

(Hatos, 2011, 625), students from low-educated families have a linguistic disadvantage and lower chances to achieve (high) school performance.

Gender is another variable that influences school performance and the intention to enroll in higher education. If, in the past, usually boys had better school performance, in the last decades this situation has changed, girls have higher grades and the percentage of female students (enrolled in higher education) is higher than the percentage of male students. The gender gap regarding secondary school pupils and first year students' performance was underlined in Romania in a survey conducted in 2010 (Pricopie *et. al*, 2011). Furthermore, female pupils from secondary school are more interested to complete higher education than male pupils, regardless of their grades, families' income or parents' level of education. In this context, it becomes more and more clear that we face a new challenge, namely how to motivate students, especially male students, to have high school performance and to continue to study at a higher educational level.

Because teenagers are very much influenced by peer groups, we have to take into consideration the importance of the belonging groups and the reference groups for pupils. Martin H. Jones *et. al*. (2012) conducted a study regarding the relationship between school performance in mathematics and perception of the friends' academic and social behaviors. Perception of friends' social behavior represents the fact that, in the respondents' opinion, friends are more interested to go to parties, to be popular, have boy/girlfriends, or to hang out. The academic behavior means that friends are more oriented to get good grades, attend classes, study, and to continue education beyond high school. The research findings confirmed the hypothesis that perception of friends having an academic behavior positively correlate with academic performance, rather than the case where friends are perceived having a social behavior. (Jones *et. al*., 2012, 30). Therefore the social environment is very important for students, especially for teenagers, in determining their school performance and willingness to continue education beyond high school.

Peer groups, together with family, schools and community, influence not only academic achievements but resilience, as well. And between resilience and academic achievement there is a strong correlation, because the more pupils or students are resilient, the higher their school performance (Wasonga, 2003). In a survey conducted in USA, six variables that constituted resilience were identified: cooperation and communication, empathy, problem-solving, self-efficacy, self-awareness, and goals and aspirations (Wasonga, 2003, 44). We can say that resilience consists of the capacity to adapt to norms, values, standards of the school, to be sociable, to be aware of others, and have pro-social behaviors, as well. Therefore, "if individuals had sustained experiences in caring relations, high expectations, and opportunities for meaningful participation across the stages of the life circle and across institutions, they were likely to develop resilience and perform better in school" (Wasonga, 2002, 45). Similar conclusions regarding the role of values in school performance were mentioned by Holma *et al*. (2009) in Finland. The findings of the study showed that there is a relationship between intercultural sensitivity and academic achievement. Consequently, Holma *et al*. (2009) consider that "gifted students should be prepared for cultural diversity, for example, by promoting critical thinking in school and by encouraging them to be aware of and comfortable with other cultures" (Holma *et al*., 2009, 198). Therefore, materialistic values, which focus more on possession and acquisition of goods and less on warm relationships with others (Richins & Dawnson, 1992, 312), negatively correlate with school performance (Pricopie *et al*., 2011). Consequently, we can recommend that the curriculum should support solidarity, awareness for community issues, openness for cultural diversity and moral sensitivity.

2.1.3. Equity as a pre-condition for social cohesion

In the last decade, a European memorandum and the review of citizenship education policies emphasized the problem of equity showing an increasing preoccupation for social exclusion and simultaneously for the social – or wider, non-economic – benefits of learning (Green and Preston, 2001). However, observes Green (2003, p. 14), the dominant policy discourse, at least in the Anglo-Saxon countries, is no longer about social cohesion and social solidarity, and the impacts of education on these, but rather on community renewal and impact of education on 'social inclusion' via the labor market. The dominant theoretical discourse has changed as well. Theories of social integration have been superseded in current theory by the burgeoning new discourse of social capital. In both cases – in terms of policy and theory – there has been a significant shift from the macro societal perspective on social cohesion (whether of the Left or Right) to the more micro individual or community level – analysis.

Halimi (2005) reviews the current problems of equity in higher education, explaining the recent concern of the Council of Europe for "opening the doors of higher education to people who have so far been under-represented there — women, ethnic and cultural minorities, the disabled, young and not-so-young people from underprivileged social backgrounds", in a humanistic model which leads to a better quality of life. The author recalls a classification of people interested in lifelong learning: the *postponers*, who postponed access to higher education at the end of their secondary education, for various personal or career reasons; *returners*, who have already benefited from it, and come back to upgrade their knowledge; and lastly, *second chancers*, those who have not yet had an opportunity to benefit from academic learning, and who apply for or are offered another chance to do so (Halimi, 2005, p. 15). Most of these are from underprivileged groups that have so far been underrepresented in higher education: members of ethnic and cultural minorities, women with family commitments, disabled people. The third category is especially vulnerable, because it suffers from economic weaknesses, and has difficulties to gain recognition for their studies in their social group. Also, they have special needs in learning methods and curriculum (adaptation to practical targets, lack of prerequisite certificates, difference in cultural background and expectations, refuse to obey to academic rules) that are challenges to the program designers.

Not only the globalization and the emergence of lifelong learning were issues to deal with in the matter of equity. Also, increase at a mass proportion of the higher education in some countries was reported as generating inequalities to access and continuing academic studies in university (especially in case of growth of private universities) (McCowan, 2004). Other scholars (Brennan, Naidoo, 2008) considered that the excluded, disadvantaged or underrepresented groups are only one side of the problem. The other side refers to fairness of private benefits and to proper balance between public and private sources of funding, academic autonomy and links between university and community. In debating this balance, some studies (Johnstone, 2004) explore various forms of support for academic studies (for example, the notion of cost – sharing) and their implication on equity, through the increase of participation.

Preparing a cross-national research, Green et al. (2003) made a distinction between social capital and social cohesion saying that, even if they are related, the two concepts should not be identified with each other. Thus, a society that is rich in social capital at a community level does not necessarily have a high level of social cohesion (Green et al., 2003, p.2). In this research, authors used cross-national, quantitative techniques to test the model on aggregated data for 15 countries from the World Values Survey (WVS), the International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) and Interpol Crime statistics. Data was used to build an aggregate

measurement of social cohesion at a societal level, the "social cohesion index". The aggregate measure for social cohesion included, as variables, the general trust and trust in democracy, the civic cooperation /attitude of cheating in taxes and public transport, and indicators of violent crimes (p. 27). Among results, it was no significant correlation in the analysis at the national level between aggregate levels of education and social cohesion (p.36) an important finding in this study showed a negative and significant correlation between societal cohesion and education inequality and also a negative relationship between income inequality and social cohesion (p.6). Thus, inequality of educational outcomes, which is closely connected to income inequality, appears to have a significant effect on social cohesion.

2.2. General overview on the HE system in Romania

The general education framework is established by the Law on National Education no.1/2011 and specific regulations and procedures are adopted by decisions of the Minister of Education (Ministerial Orders) and Government Decisions.

In Romania, education has the following sub-sectors:
- Early education, divided into early pre-school (0-3 years) and pre-school (3-6 years);
- Primary education, including the school preparatory class and grades I-IV;
- Secondary education, which includes: Lower secondary education or gymnasium (grades V-VIII), upper secondary education or lyceum (IX-XII);
- Trades schools with a duration between 6 months and 2 years;
- Postsecondary non-tertiary education;
- Tertiary education which includes bachelor, master and PhD cycles;
- Post university education;
- Lifelong learning.

With the fall of the communist regime in December 1989, a difficult process towards organizing the Romanian higher education system began. The initial stage lasted from 1990 to 1995 and was marked by efforts to prepare a new law of education, depoliticize the academic curricula, improve work condition for teachers and introduce new fields of study.[4]

The most important moments for the development of higher education in Romania were:
- Adopting Law no. 88/1993 - the legal framework for the accreditation of higher education institutions and diploma recognition;
- The establishment of ARACIS (The Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education) in 2005, in compliance with the Government Emergency Ordinance no. 75/2005 approved with modifications by the Law no. 87/200;
- Emergence of private universities; Creation of the legal basis for tuition fees in public universities and the acceptance of private higher education as an alternative to the public sector;
- Increased number of higher education institutions and enrolment quotas;
- Promulgation of the Education Law (nr. 84/1995);
- Better definition of the autonomy of higher education institutions;

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[4] Monographs on Higher Education, Silvia Florea and Peter J. Wells, 2011

- Introducing the "per capita" funding system, complemented by financing granted to universities according to quality criteria amounting to 30% from the total sum allocated for basic financing;
- Alignment with the Bologna Process and implementation of policies (since 2004);

The number of higher education institutions (both state and private) evolved since 1991 as follows:

Table 1 Number of higher education institutions (public and private institutions)

	Total HEIs	Public universities	Private universities
1990/91	**48**	48	
1991/92	**56**	56	
1992/93	**62**	62	
1993/94	**63**	63	
1994/95	**63**	63	
1995/96	**95**	59	36
1996/97	**102**	58	44
1997/98	**106**	57	49
1998/99	**111**	57	54
1999/00	**121**	58	63
2000/01	**126**	59	67
2001/02	**126**	57	69
2002/03	**125**	55	70
2003/04	**122**	55	67
2004/05	**117**	55	62
2005/06	**107**	55	52
2006/07	**104**	56	48
2007/08	**106**	56	50
2008/09	**106**	56	50
2009/10	**108**	56	52

According to the official website of the Ministry of Education[5], the status of higher education institutions in Romania is as follows:
- 56 accredited state universities;
- 36 accredited private universities;
- 21 accredited for limited period private universities;
- 5 provisional authorization private universities which only organize study programs at Master level and adult education.

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[5] Reference: www.edu.ro

As a new law of education was adopted in 2011, the main changes brought (though not yet were fully implemented) are the following:

- A new funding system based both on the number of students and on performance indicators;
- A process of classification of universities and ranking of study programs;
- New advisory councils to assist MEN in its activity: the Council for Academic Management and Ethics, the National Council for Scientific Research Ethics, Technological Development and Innovation, the National Council for the Validation of Academic Titles, Diplomas and Certificates, the National Council for Statistics and Prognosis in Higher Education;
- Changes in the academic management of universities and new provisions related to academic integrity;
- A loan scheme for students (not yet implemented);
- Improved provisions for Lifelong Learning services.

Regarding the process of classification of universities and ranking of study programs, a methodology was developed (according to the law) by a council which included ARACIS, CNATDCU and CNCS. In the first exercise the Council was assisted by EUA experts, which were consulted in the methodology drafting phase. The universities were classified as follows:

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

The ranking of study programs comprised 1,074 study programmes that were divided in five specific types (A>B>C>D>E, where > means better results than). The results were as follows:

- A – 20%
- B – 22%
- C – 25%
- D – 12%
- E – 21%

From 2011 until 2013, EUA, through its Institutional Evaluation Programme (IEP), acts as the agency responsible for the external evaluation of universities. EUA is responsible for planning and implementing institutional evaluations focusing on a broad range of issues such as institutional missions and how they relate to the classification exercise; supporting quality provision, quality assurance mechanisms and strategic management. Following each evaluation, an institutional report is published for each HEI. The country level evaluation process will be finalized with a national report on institutional differentiation within the Romanian higher education system[6].

2.3. International commitments of Romania on equity in higher education

International commitments presented in this document are those contained within the Bologna Process official Communiques, Council of Europe recommendations or other official statements.

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[6] Reference: http://www.eua.be/News/12-01-09/EUA_s_Institutional_Evaluation_Programme_IEP_to_evaluate_90_universities_in_Romania_as_part_of_national_higher_education_reforms.aspx

A statement about the responsibility for the development of the social dimension of education was underlined by the European Ministers responsible for Higher Education, for the first time, in the Communique adopted on the occasion of the Ministerial Conference in Prague, in 2001. Subsequently this ideal was operationalized in political commitments regarding equity, access and completion of studies in higher education, through setting quantifiable objectives, adopting government strategies and clear targets for widening access and participation. With the adoption of the London Communique (2007), the Ministers reaffirmed the political commitment to the principle of equity, defining it as: „the student body that enters participates and finalizes, on all levels of higher education, needs to reflect the diversity in the population. We reaffirm the importance of students to be able to finalize their studies without facing obstacles connected to their social and economic situation".

The concrete objectives that Romania adopted as part of the Bologna Process, regarding equity and access to higher educations, are:
-       Setting quantifiable targets for enlarging access to higher education and adopting necessary measures for reaching these objectives (Leuven 2009, Bucharest 2012);
-       Raising graduation and participation rates in higher education (Bucharest 2012);
-       Increasing the participation of under-represented groups in higher education (Leuven 2009, Bucharest 2012);
-       Reporting national strategies, action plans and measures for efficacy evaluation (London 2007).

Political commitments part of the Bologna Process aim at developing the social dimension of education, decreasing inequalities, adequate support services for students, counseling and orientation, flexible learning paths, alternative access routes, including the recognition of prior learning and removing obstacles related to the social and economic background of students.

The Council of the European Union's conclusions of 11 May 2010 on the social dimension of education and training encompass the following recommendations to member states concerning higher education:
-       Promote widened access, for example by strengthening financial support schemes for students and through flexible and diversified learning paths;
-       Develop policies aimed at increasing completion rates of higher education, including through strengthening individualised support, guidance and mentoring for students;
-       Continue to eliminate barriers to, expand opportunities for, and improve the quality of, learning mobility, inclusive by providing adequate incentives for the mobility of students from disadvantaged backgrounds;
-       Promote specific programmes for adult students and other non-traditional learners.

Participants at the World Conference of Higher Education organized by UNESCO in 2009 adopted a communication mentioning the fact that although increasing access to education has become a priority for member states, the disparities in participation rates are a source of inequality. Thus equity does not simply refer to access to education, but also to "the objective must be successful participation and completion while at the same time assuring student welfare. This must include appropriate financial and educational support to those from poor and marginalized communities."[7]

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[7] 2009 World Conference on Higher Education, UNESCO http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001832/183277e.pdf

3. General policy framework
3.1. References to Government's vision and policy documents with regard to equity

Analyzing **the Government's program for 2013-2016**, the chapters on education and youth acknowledge the following objectives related to equity and social cohesion, without mentioning specific measures and instruments for reaching these objectives:
- Developing social equity policies;
- Strengthening social cohesion and increasing citizen participation to economic and social development programs through promotion of active citizenship;
- Stimulating participation of the Roma population to higher levels of education; Ensuring complementary education for raising the ability to adapt to changing circumstances and rebuilding social cohesion through:: developing educational alternatives, training youth through sports, rebuilding camps for students, institutionalizing the participation in projects and programs dealing with areas complementary to the curriculum;
- Supporting the *Second Chance through education* programs, for eliminating illiteracy and for labor market integration, through: guaranteeing equal opportunities and eliminating all forms of discrimination, adequate facilities, policies and programs for vulnerable groups, support programs for early-leavers from school;
- Stimulating youth from a rural background to go to school;
- Social scholarships need to ensure expenses for meals, school supplies and housing necessary for students each month.

3.2. The Pact for Education

Following a diagnosis of the education and research system and proposing some of the solutions presented in the 2007 *Romania of Education. Romania of Research* report of the Presidential Commission for the Analysis and Elaboration of Policies for Education and Research in Romania[8], the National Pact for Education (2008) was signed by all political parties in parliament and by 22 civil society organizations. This document lists eight major objectives on which a new legislative framework is to be based.

From an equity and social cohesion perspective the National Pact for Education includes:
- "Transformation of early education in a public good, guaranteeing a compulsory education of 10 years and access to free education for 13 years. Only in this way Romania can align itself to a knowledge based society, preparing successive generations from schools and high schools to fully benefit from the Bologna reform already implemented in Romanian universities";
- "Defining priority education areas, in order to surpass the differences that dramatically separates the rural and urban environments or affects different categories of Romanian citizens.

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[8] Reference: http://www.presidency.ro/static/ordine/Pactul_National_pentru_Educatie.pdf

3.3. The National Reform Plan (NRP)

The National Reform Plan [9] adopted by the Romanian Government for 2009-2013 represents the framework for defining and implementing Romania's economic development policies, in accordance with EU policies.

As far as access to education is concerned, NRP mentions as an issue the fact that access is not an actual priority--Romania placing in the last position in Europe regarding participation in education by youth aged 15-24--and proposes the adoption of a new legislation that would abide by the objectives of the NRP.

As far as increasing the percentage of the population aged 30-34 with tertiary education, an objective which is part of the EU2020 Strategy, Romania aims at reaching the target of 26,7% in 2020 with the following prognosis of evolution:

Table 2 Evolution of the EU2020 target in Romania

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2020
Indicator (%)	18,1	18,7	19,4	20,2	21,3	22,1	26,7

The Measures defined through NRP are: developing a National Qualifications Framework, attracting youth with aptitudes to the qualifications, creating the mechanism for recognition of non-formal education and stimulating lifelong learning.

Referring to social inclusion the NRP mentions a series of disadvantaged groups for which MECTS constantly developed policies: rural population, Roma population, children with special educational requirements (CES); other vulnerable groups (children from socio-economical disadvantaged groups, home alone children – children that have parents which are working abroad, immigrants, and others).

3.4. Law of National Education (Law 1/2011)

The Law of National Education (Law nr. 1/2011) represents the legal framework that regulates the structure, positions, organization and operation of the higher education in Romania. Regarding equity in higher education, the Law provides a definition of the principle of equity and also includes provisions regarding different mechanisms and policy instruments meant to stimulate the access and participation of the following underrepresented groups:
-        Students with physical disabilities;
-        Students coming from low income families;
-        Orphan students or those coming from foster care;
-        Ethnic Romanians coming from abroad;
-        Students coming from environments with high socioeconomic risk or socially marginalized;
-        Roma Students;
-        Students from rural environment.

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[9] Reference: http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/nrp/nrp_romania_ro.pdf

The Law also regulates a series of instruments for access and retention of the underrepresented groups such as:
- Regulation for a loan system;
- Procedures for scholarship allocation;
- Procedures for funding of student dorms and canteens;
- Public transport subsidies;
- The possibility to distribute study grants on social criteria.

The mentioned articles are quoted in the present document when describing different policy instruments.

3.5. Institutional structures responsible for equity in HE

In Romania there is no structure responsible for equity policies in higher education, but related responsibilities can be found in institutions such as the Ministry of Education (MEN) and the National Council for Funding Higher Education (CNFIS). Even within the MEN, there is no specific department responsible for these issues, and tasks are divided among several departments (e.g. the department for funding or public policies, the general department for higher education and others).

CNFIS has the following tasks: it sends proposals to MEN concerning the allocation of complementary funding, funding which includes subsidies for dorms/ canteens and proposes the annual minimum amount of social scholarships for the support of low-income students, taking into account that these have to cover minimum meal and housing expenses according to the law. Moreover, within CNFIS there are several working commissions, one of which is concerned with student services.

The Agency for Student Loans and Scholarships (ACBS) is the institution that will manage the loan system for students when it is set up. In the meantime, this institution administrates a series of scholarships that MECTS and/or the Government finance primarily for studies abroad after signing bilateral agreements with other countries.

The Ministry of Education (MEN) has a series of tasks and competences that impact equity, particularly in pre-university education (for giving special coupons to children from different vulnerable groups) or, generally tasks and competences for integrating youth with special educational requirements into the work life.

Universities, based on university autonomy, are responsible for developing their own strategies and procedures for ensuring equity in education. Thus, they are the ones that can influence the way the fund for scholarships is distributed (between social scholarships or achievement scholarships), they have their own admission procedures and procedures for progressing from one university year to another, they can influence how budgeted study places are distributed within different faculties and study programs or they can distribute from their own income funding to support certain categories of students.

4. Indicators and relevant references regarding equity in Higher Education

This chapter aims to provide a series of data and information on student's characteristics, relevant within the field of equity in higher education.

Because equity, as previously defined, refers both to increasing access and to retention and graduation, this chapter will refer to the following aspects: access to higher education, highlighting data and information on the transition from high school level to tertiary level and retention in higher education, with a focus on students' characteristics.

The data presented in this report are mainly obtained from national and international institutions with responsibilities linked to collecting data on higher education. As far as collecting data at the institutional level is concerned, a UEFISCDI[10] report indicated that out of the 69 interviewed universities, 55% said that they manage personal data of students using electronic means at university level for all undergraduate levels, 47.6% did so for MA students and 31.7% for PhD students.

Three major issues will be highlighted here: the evolution of the number of students and the inclusion rate as well as the characteristics of the student body.

As far as characteristics of the student body are concerned several categories were addressed:
- Gender distribution;
- Students from poor backgrounds;
- Students from rural backgrounds;
- Students with disabilities;
- Roma students;
- Mature Students (over 30 years old);
- Parents' educational attainment;
- Students with children;
- Immigrant students;
- Working students;
- Ethnic Romanian students coming from abroad.

4.1. Access to Higher Education

When addressing access to higher education it is necessary to have data on the number of those participating in high schools and trade schools and of those graduating with the Baccalaureate (a first legal condition for accessing higher education).

To have an overview of the current population structure in Romania, we present a dataset displayed in the study launched in 2012 by the Ministry of Education: "Needs analysis on education and training in Romania"[11]. The data is mainly taken from the NIS.

According to the Ministry analysis, **the age structure of Romanian population** reveals the process of demographic aging mainly influenced by the decreasing birthrates, which affected the pronounced

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[10] Report on the Current State of Affairs, at a national level, of the systems of managing students in higher education institutions in Romania, 2009
[11] Needs analysis on education and training in Romania , 2012
http://administraresite.edu.ro/index.php/articles/18802

decreasing of young population (age 15-24) of total population from 14.7% in 2007 to 12.4% in 2012 and also the school age population (age 0-14) of total population from 15.5% in 2007 to 14.9% in 2012.
The forecasts regarding the population evolution made by the NIS show that the downward trend in the number of inhabitants will increase by 2020 and it will also affect the young population at enrollment age. According to the forecasts, by 2020 we will see a drastic decrease of young population aged 15-24 with almost a quarter compared with 2007 and approx. 27% lower compared with 2010.

According to the study mentioned before, for 2014-2020, as an immediate consequence of these demographic phenomena, the school population will constantly decrease and this will affect the number of available teaching positions, as well as the functioning or sustainability of schools. The phenomenon will also determine the entry of a smaller number of students in the higher education system.

In 2011, the structure of the active population[12] (15 - 64 years) by level of education showed the following **distribution**:
- 18.8% of the total active population have a university diploma;
- 3.9% have only post-secondary studies;
- 35.3% were high school graduates;
- 21.7% were vocational school graduates;
- 17.9% were secondary school graduates;
- 2.5% were graduates of primary education or without formal education.

Between 2007 and 2011, the most important increase was noted in the active population with tertiary education in relation to the total active population (from 14.6% in 2007 to 18.8% in 2011).

As far as the transition from high school to tertiary education is concerned, according to the EUROSTUDENT Report *Economic and social conditions and International Mobility of Students from Romania* (ISE, 2010), 85% of the questioned students had a direct transition from high school to university and approximately 10% had a time-out period between graduating high-school and university enrollment.

Primary and secondary education

The compared data regarding the participation rates at all levels of education, as a ratio of population aged 6-18 years[13] , in 2011, was the following:

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[12] Active population is a fraction of a population that is eather employed or activly seeking employment
[13] Students (ISCED 1_6) by sex aged 16-18 year - as % of corresponding age population, Eurostat.

Table 3 Participation rates at all levels of education

Country	Participation of 6-18 aged population ratio (2011)
Belgium	99.4
Bulgaria	98.0
Czech Republic	97.9
Denmark	97.1
Germany	95.9
Estonia	95.6
Ireland	95.4
Greece	95.1
Spain	95.1
France	95.0
Croatia	94.7
Italy	94.6
Cyprus	94.6
Latvia	92.6
Lithuania	91.5
Luxembourg	89.7
Hungary	89.3
Malta	89.0
Netherlands	88.9
Austria	88.4
Poland	88.2
Portugal	88.2
Romania	87.0
Slovenia	86.1
Slovakia	85.7
Finland	85.7
Sweden	84.8
United Kingdom	83.8
Iceland	83.5
Liechtenstein	83.4
Norway	81.0
Switzerland	80.5
Turkey	79.6
Albania	68.6

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In all European countries a high level of educational participation for the 16-18 age bracket can be observed, the proportion of young people studying at that level of education being over 90 % in at least 15 countries. One can observe that in Romania 87% from this population cohort is enrolled in education.

Regarding the enrolment rate for school aged population, according to data provided by the NIS in 2012, the situation is as follows[14]:

Table 4 Enrolment rate for school aged population (%), NIS 2012

Age	Enrolment rate for school aged population (%)					
	2005/2006	2006/2007	2007/2008	2008/2009	2009/2010	2010/2011
3-6 years	80,4	80,9	81,8	81,7	81,9	82,1
7-10 years	98,0	97,0	96,0	95,0	94,9	94,6
11 -14 years	96,2	95,0	94,4	94,4	94,5	94,0
15 -18 years	73,5	75,7	77,4	79,2	81,3	80,8
Above 19 years	51,2	55,9	63,8	63,3	59,3	56,0

Analyzing the data regarding the enrolment rate for school aged population, according to data provided by the NIS in 2012, one can conclude the following:
- The number of young people above seven years old going to school has been falling annually;
- The drop in numbers of people going to school in the school year 2010/2011 compared to previous years is even greater when looking at older children;
- The inclusion rate[15] in education decreases with age. Basically, even though most young people aged 7-10 years are in school, a good portion of them drop out of school until the age of 19-23 years;
- 17.5% of young people aged 15-18 years in 2005/2006, dropped out until 2010/2011.

Analyzing the data provided by the NIS in 2012 in terms of secondary education, as well as the data from the university classification on the evolution of the number of students enrolled in first year university programs, we find the trends as presented in Table 5.

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[14] Enrolment rate for school aged population represents the ratio between number of pupils from a certain age group, no matter of education level and total population of the same age group .Reference: Statistical Yearbook 2011/Education
http://www.insse.ro/cms/files/Anuar%20statistic/08/08%20Educatie_ro.pdf
[15] Inclusion rate represents the total number of students of a particular age group included in a form of education, regardless of education level they are enrolled, as a ratio of total population in the same age group

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Table 5 Evolution of high school graduates, number of students who have passed the baccalaureate, students enrolled in the first year

	2005/2006	2006/2007	2007/2008	2008/2009	2009/2010
High school graduates	185255	187576	218205	202113	204863
Number of persons who have passed the baccalaureate	171015	181589	199972	199006	162482
Students enrolled in the first year – not paying tuition fees	62470	62520	57894	62809	63154
Students enrolled in the first year – paying tuition fees	193264	223777	258143	250891	152164
TOTAL number of students enrolled in the first year	255734	286297	316037	313700	215318

Figure 2 Evolution of high school graduates, number of students who have passed the baccalaureate, students enrolled in the first year
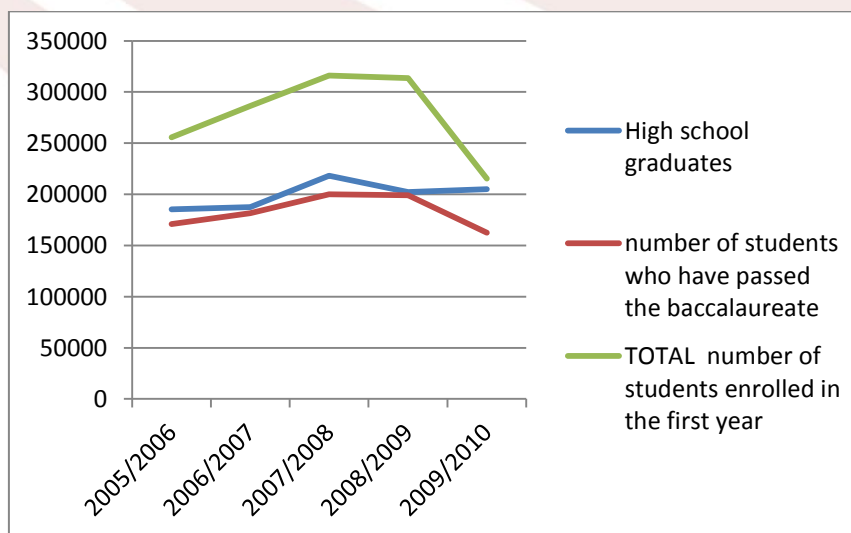
The above figures show, on the one hand, a minor increase in the number of high school graduates (by 1.4%) in 2009/2010 compared with the previous year, but on the other hand, that same year, a 18.4% decrease in the number of young people who complete the baccalaureate. Moreover, the number of students enrolled in first year of study decreases by 31.4%.

In terms of access to higher education, it is also important to analyze high school student achievement at the national examination (baccalaureate). Thus, according to the "Report on the state of school education",

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if we look at the number of students who register for the national examination to the total number of high school students enrolled, in the same year, at the beginning of 12th grade, we observe for the year 2009/2010, **the lowest level for that indicator** - 63.9%, which is by 27.3% lower than the level in 2004/2005. Thus, the level of this indicator in 2009/2010 shows that **one in three high school students** enrolled, at the beginning of 12th grade (36.1%) **did not made it to the final exam**.

Higher education

According to the National Reform Plan[16], the indicator of the Europe 2020 Strategy – of young people aged 30-34, 8.9% were graduates of a tertiary form of education in Romania, in 2002, 16.8% in 2008 and 16.8% in 2009. At the same time, according to EUROSTAT, in 2010 the percentage of population aged 30-34 with tertiary education was 18.1%, and 20.4% in 2011. In 2012, the share of higher education graduates in Europe among the population aged 30-34 years ranged from 51.1% (Ireland) to 18% (Turkey), according to data from Eurostat. Romania had one of the lowest shares of graduates in Europe; only Italy and Turkey have lower levels of higher education graduates for the same age cohort.

Comparative, in Europe, the share of higher education graduates among the population aged 30-34 years, according to data from Eurostat evolved as follows:

Table 6 Share of higher education graduates among the population aged 30-34 years, Eurostat 2013

Country/ Year	Share of HE graduates among 30-34 years old population / Year					
	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Ireland	43.3	46.1	48.9	50.1	49.7	51.1
Cyprus	46.2	47.1	45	45.3	46.2	49.9
Luxembourg	35.3	39.8	46.6	46.1	48.2	49.6
Lithuania	38	39.9	40.6	43.8	45.8	48.7
Sweden	41	42	43.9	45.3	46.8	47.9
Norway	43.7	46.2	47	47.3	48.8	47.6
United Kingdom	38.5	39.7	41.5	43	45.8	47.1
Finland	47.3	45.7	45.9	45.7	46	45.8
Belgium	41.5	42.9	42	44.4	42.6	43.9
Switzerland	36.5	41.3	43.4	44.2	43.8	43.8
France	41.4	41.2	43.2	43.5	43.3	43.6
Denmark	38.1	39.2	40.7	41.2	41.2	43
Iceland	36.3	38.3	41.7	40.9	44.6	42.8
Netherlands	36.4	40.2	40.5	41.4	41.1	42.3
Spain	39.5	39.8	39.4	40.6	40.6	40.1
Slovenia	31	30.9	31.6	34.8	37.9	39.2

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Estonia	33.3	34.1	35.9	40	40.3	39.1
Poland	27	29.7	32.8	35.3	36.9	39.1
Latvia	25.6	27	30.1	32.3	35.9	37
Germany	26.5	27.7	29.4	29.8	30.7	31.9
Greece	26.2	25.6	26.5	28.4	28.9	30.9
Hungary	20.1	22.4	23.9	25.7	28.1	29.9
Portugal	19.8	21.6	21.1	23.5	26.1	27.2
Bulgaria	26	27.1	27.9	27.7	27.3	26.9
Austria	21.1	22.2	23.5	23.5	23.8	26.3
Czech Republic	13.3	15.4	17.5	20.4	23.8	25.6
Croatia	16.7	18.5	20.6	24.3	24.5	23.7
Slovakia	14.8	15.8	17.6	22.1	23.4	23.7
Malta	21.5	20.9	21	21.5	21.4	22.4
Romania	13.9	16	16.8	18.1	20.4	21.8
Italy	18.6	19.2	19	19.8	20.3	21.7
Turkey	12.3	13	14.7	15.5	16.3	18

Table 7 presents the evolution of the number of students **at the bachelor level**, according to the Report on the State of Higher Education in Romania 2011 and the data from the NIS.

Table 7 the Evolution of the Number of Students, source: NIS 2003-2012, data do not include foreign students

	2003/2004	2004/2005	2005/2006	2006/2007	2007/2008	2008/2009	2009/2010	2010/2011	2011/2012
Total	611779	641400	716464	785506	896258	891098	775319	673001	539852
Public	468024	486419	513678	520263	516650	480239	452982	433063	399464
Private	143755	154981	202786	265243	379608	410859	322337	239938	140388

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Figure 3 The evolution of the total number of students at bachelor level, NIS 2012
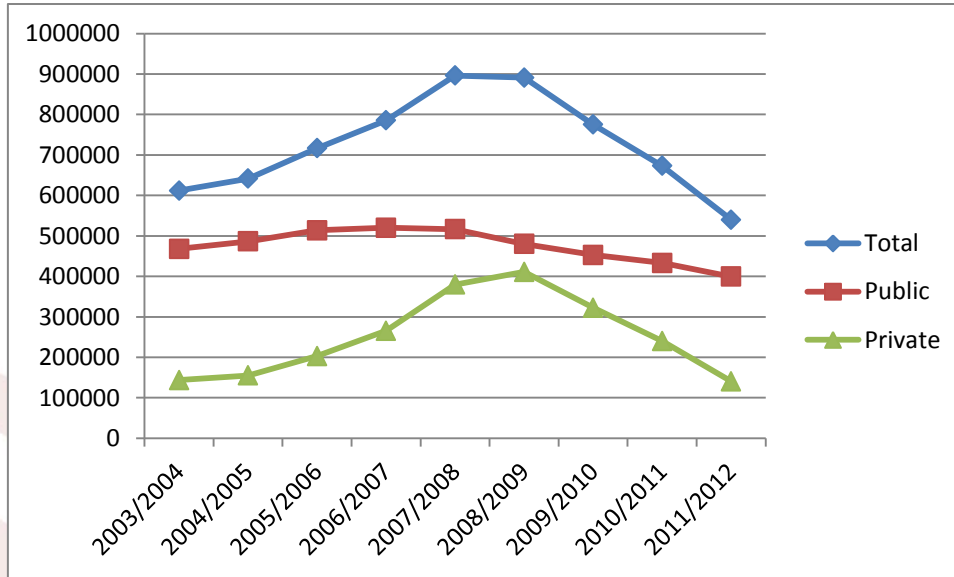
According to data collected as part of university classification process[17], the total number of students (bachelor, master and PhD level) presents the following evolution:

Table 8 The Evolution of the Number of Students, source: university classification process; data does not include foreign students

Year	2005 /2006	2006 /2007	2007 /2008	2008 /2009	2009 /2010
Total	859030	961114	1076050	1072721	971537

We also observe, in both the numbers from NIS and the data from the classification process, an increase in the number of students until the academic year 2007/2008, with numbers decreasing after that. According to the NIS, the number of enrolled students **in 2011/2012, at the bachelor level is approximately 40% lower than the number of enrolled students in 2007/2008**.

According to the data from NIS regarding the situation at the beginning of academic year **20011-2012**, the Romanian higher education system includes 108 universities, 614 faculties, 539.900 students attending courses at bachelor level (19.8% less than in previous academic year). About 74% of the total number of students are studying in public institutions.

More than that, from the total number of students enrolled, **82.0% attend full-time studies, 8.6% attend part-time studies and 9.3% attend distance education**.

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[17] The process of collecting the data and information for evaluating universities and study programs to the purpose of classifications of universities and hierarchies of the study programs http://chestionar.uefiscdi.ro/

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Table 9 Distribution of students by cycle and form of study, NIS 2012

	2010-2011		2011-2012	
	Total	Public Univ.	Total	Public Univ.
Total number of students			**692061**	**531523**
Bachelor studies	673001	433063	539852	399464
Master Studies			128669	108748
PhD Studies			23540	23311
Students from the country	656863	418352	**522564**	**383835**
Students from abroad	16138	14711	17288	15629
Full-time students	513491	368617	442613	347851
Part-time students	94239	16912	46628	13840
Distance learning students	64276	46539	50019	37181
Evening learning	995	995	592	592

Regarding the distribution of students financed by the state and those paying tuition fees in public universities the status is as follows:

Figure 4 Number of students financed by the state and number of students paying tuition fees, CNFIS 2012
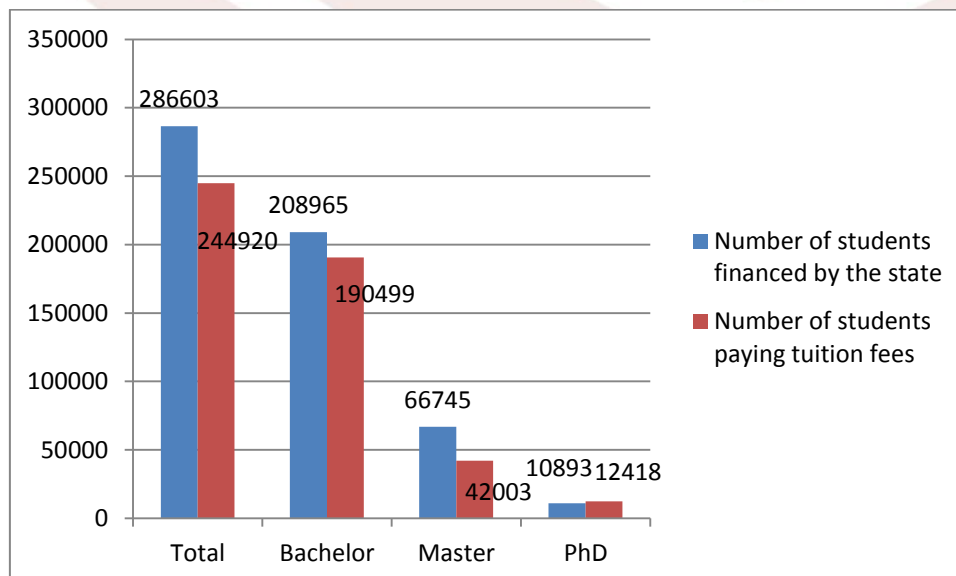
According to the NIS, at the beginning of the academic year 2011-2012, the distribution of students in public and private universities by localities was as follows:

Table 10 Distribution of students on localities, NIS 2012

Distribution of students in public univ. by localities		Distribution of students in private univ. by localities	
Bucuresti	23.20%	Bucuresti	52.6%
Cluj-Napoca	12.80%	Arad	7.8%
Iasi	11.70%	Brasov	6.4%
Timisoara	7.80%	Constanta	5.3%
Constanta	5.20%	Timisoara	3.2%
Craiova	4.80%	Iasi	3.2%
Brasov	4.30%	Craiova	3.0%
Sibiu	3.80%	Galati	2.6%
Oradea	3.50%	Cluj-Napoca	2.1%
Galati	3%	Sibiu	2.0%
Pitesti	2.20%		
Targu-Mures	2.10%		
Suceava	2.10%		

Table 10 shows that half of the students studying in public universities are distributed in four universities cities – Bucuresti, Cluj-Napoca, Iasi and Timisoara (also the biggest cities in Romania), while half of the students enrolled in private universities are in Bucharest.

The figure below highlights the eight development regions of Romania, the distribution of the number of inhabitants per region and the distribution of students at bachelor level. It can be observed that, while in some areas there is a strong correlation between the two distributions (Center, Northwest) in other regions there are significant differences either by the presence of a higher percentage of students that the percentage of population in the region (Bucharest-Ilfov) or by an insufficient percentage of students that the percentage of the population (South, Southeast).

Table 11 Distribution of inhabitants and of students at bachelor level per regions, NIS 2012

	Number of inhabitants	Distribution of the total number of inhabitants per regions	Number of students	Distribution of the total number of students at bachelor level per regions
Northeast	3674367	**16.9%**	66356	**12.29%**
Southeast	2848219	**13.1%**	45988	**8.51%**
South	3379406	**15.56%**	26110	**4.83%**
Southwest	2330792	**10.73%**	32762	**6.06%**
West	1958828	**9.02%**	61222	**11.34%**
Northwest	2746064	**12.64%**	78862	**14.60%**
Centre	2533021	**11.66%**	61699	**11.42%**
Bucuresti-Ilfov	2242377	**10.32%**	166853	**30.9%**
TOTAL	21713074	100 %	539852	100 %

4.2. Retention in Higher Education

Gender distribution

As regard to the participation of females, the data from Eurostat shows the status of female participation in higher education among Europe:

Table 12 Women among students at bachelor and master level as % of the total students at this level, Eurostat 2013

Tertiary education participation
Last update: 13-03-2013

INDIC_ED: Women among students in ISCED 5-6 - as % of the total students at this level

TIME ▶ GEO ▼	2009	2010	2011
European Union (27 c	55.5(i)	55.4	:
Belgium	54.8	55.2	:
Bulgaria	55.6	55.5	55.1
Czech Republic	56.5	56.8	57.2
Denmark	58.2	58.1	:
Germany (until 1990	51.4(i)	51.3(i)	:
Estonia	61.9	60.9	:
Ireland	53.9	52.4	51.7
Greece	:	49.8	:
Spain	54.1	53.9	53.9
France	55.2	55.0	54.8
Italy	57.7	57.6	:
Cyprus	46.8	46.1	:
Latvia	63.7	62.7	61.1
Lithuania	59.2	59.4	59.0
Luxembourg	:	51.9	:
Hungary	56.8	56.5	55.9
Malta	56.5	56.3	:
Netherlands	51.8	51.8	:
Austria	53.2	53.1	53.4
Poland	57.9	59.2	:
Portugal	53.4	53.3	:
Romania	56.3	56.4	:
Slovenia	58.0	57.8	60.6
Slovakia	60.5	59.7	59.6
Finland	54.0	53.8	54.0
Sweden	60.1	59.4	59.1
United Kingdom	57.0	56.6	:
Iceland	64.3	63.4	:
Liechtenstein	31.7	37.2	32.8
Norway	61.1	60.8	:
Switzerland	49.7	49.2	49.2
Croatia	55.0	56.3	:
Former Yugoslav Rep	53.0	52.6	:
Turkey	43.6	44.4	:
Albania	:	:	:
Bosnia and Herzegovi	:	:	:

According to the data from the NIS, the gender distribution of students at the bachelor level, according to the main fields of study, evolved as follows:
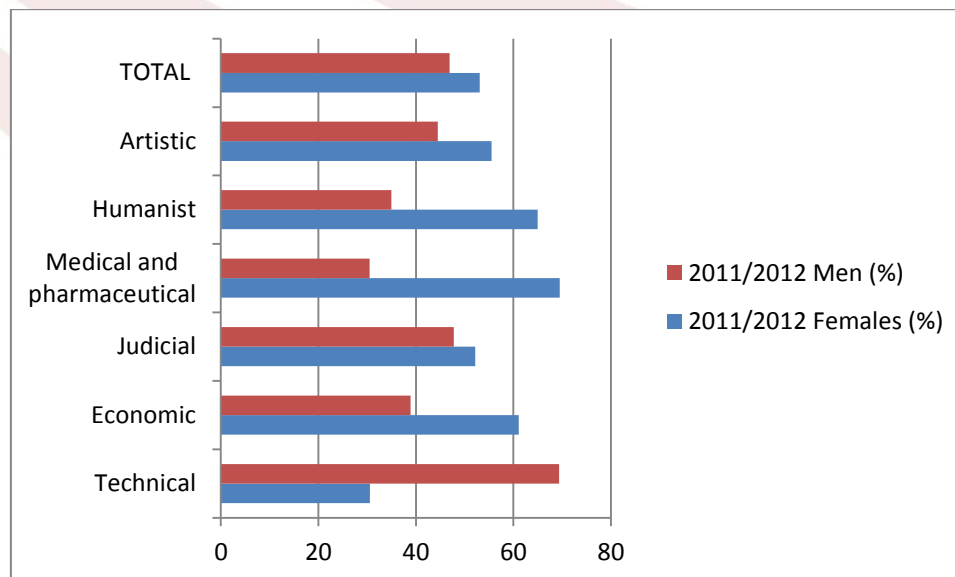
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Table 13 Distribution of students on gender on the main fields of study (% of total number of students), NIS 2012

	2002/2003		2011/2012	
	Females (%)	Men (%)	Females (%)	Men (%)
TOTAL	54.5	45.5	53.1	46.9
Technical	29.7	70.3	30.6	69.4
Economic	62.5	37.5	61.1	38.9
Judicial	52.9	47.1	52.2	47.8
Medical and pharmaceutical	66.3	33.7	69.5	30.5
Humanist	66.8	33.2	65	35
Artistic	53.8	46.2	55.5	44.5

Figure 5 shows that females are the majority, especially in medical, pharmaceutical education, humanistic, economic, artistic and judicial fields. By contrast, men predominate in technical education.

Figure 5 Distribution of students on gender, 2011/2012, INS 2012

A Eurydice report mentions the fact that in most countries women with higher education are in higher numbers than men, but most states have policies on gender equality with the main concern being the number of women included in certain education domains, those included in the PhD level and those working in the academia[18].

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[18] Eurydice, *Gender Differences in Educational Results*, 2009
http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/documents/thematic_reports/120EN.pdf

Romania does not have gender equality policies in higher education the data presented in this report indicate that:

- 	In most domains women graduates outnumber men graduates, with the exception of: engineering and constructions (32.2%), services (42.7%) and agriculture (40.9%);
- 	The percentage of women PhD graduates is 49.9%;
- 	The percentage of women working in universities - teaching and administrative positions, is 43.9%.

Even more, as far as undergraduates are concerned, the EUROSTUDENT Report states: "The gender difference favoring girls is maintained for all group ages, all education levels and all types of transition from high school to university; the percentage of women is even higher in the case of MA students, of students over 30 years old and those with a delayed transition from high school to university"

Regarding the gender distribution among graduates, according to the Ministry of Education analysis (2012), in 2011, almost 22% from the active women population graduated a form of tertiary education compared with 16.3% men from active men population.

Participation in higher education of youth coming from low-income families
According to calculations made by the World Bank based on the household budget survey (2011), one can see that, in 2009, **3.8%** of youth aged 25-29 from the 20% (quintile) the poorest young people, have graduated one cycle of higher education, while **52.4%** of the top 20% (quintile) most affluent young people have graduated.

Figure 6 Percent of 25-29 year olds completed higher education by income quintile in Romania, source: Romania Household Budget Surveys in World Bank (2011) *Romania Functional Review for Higher Education*
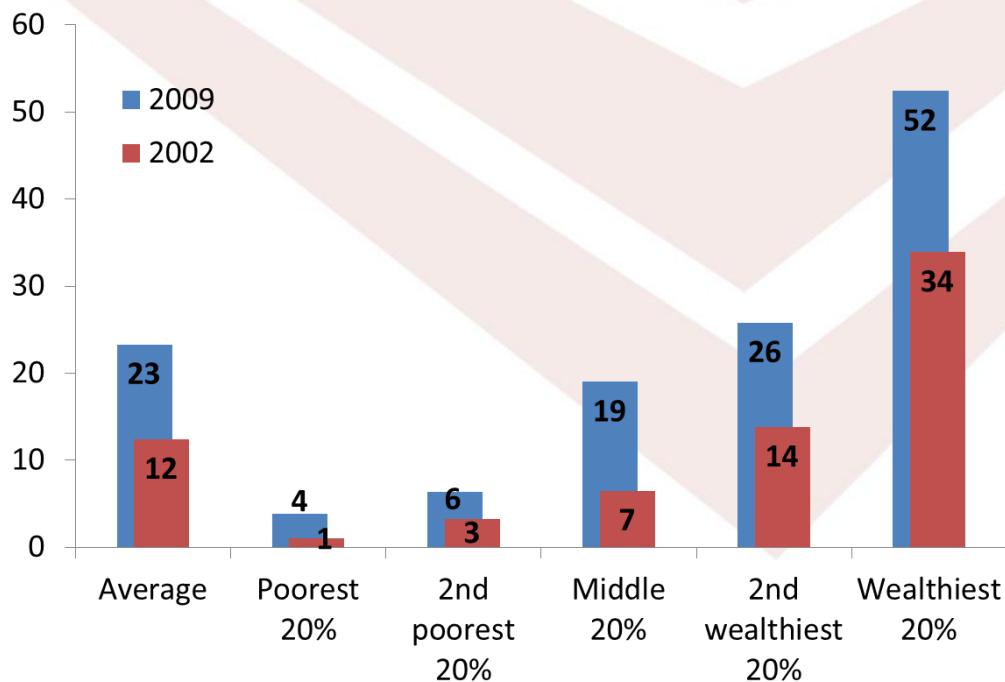
Participation in higher education of youth from a rural background

According to the NIS, in 2011, the distribution of population according to the place of residence and age was as follows:

Table 14 distribution of population according to the place of residence and age, NIS 2013

2011	Urban	Rural
Total population	54.9%	45.0%
10-14 years	45.8%	54.1%
15-19 years	48.7%	51.2%
25-29 years	60.0%	39.8%

The Report on the State of Higher Education in Romania observes that the access of youth from a rural background has decreased by approximately 10% in the last 4 academic years. This indicates the still severely reduced access of people from the rural environment to higher education and also the emergence of serious labor market challenges for this population.

According to the data from the NIS, at the beginning of academic year 2011-2012, the distribution of students at the bachelor level according to their origin (urban/ rural) is the following:

Table 15 Distribution of students at the bachelor level by place of origin, NIS 2012

	Total	(%)Public Univ.	(%)Private Univ.
Urban	395475	75.26	76.84
Rural	127089	24.74	23.16

This table shows that in the academic year 2011/2012, approx. 24% of all students, were students with a rural background. A World Bank and Ministry of Education, Research and Youth study (2008) indicates that only 3.7% of youth aged 25-29 from a rural background have graduated from a higher education institution, while 27.2% from an urban background have graduated from a university. This would indicate that students from rural areas have significant problems with progression and completion in higher education, not just with access.

Regarding the distribution of active population with tertiary education, according to the analysis of Ministry of Education (2012), in 2011 only 5.1% from the active population from rural area had completed a form of tertiary education degree (from 3.5% in 2007), compared with 28.4% from urban area (from 22.8% in 2007).

Another important element to be considered is the participation of youth from a rural background in universities with highly competitive admission procedures. One can notice that in these situations the

participation of youth from a rural background is considerably lower (less than 1% according to a research by prof. George Poede in 2003[19]).

Regarding the distribution of active population with tertiary education, according to the analysis of Ministry of Education (2012), in 2011 only 5.1% from the active population from rural area had completed a form of tertiary education degree (from 3.5% in 2007), compared with 28.4% from urban area (from 22.8% in 2007).

Participation in Higher Education for youth with disabilities
In regards to the participation of the under-represented groups, a comparative study conducted by Eurostudent[20] at the international level shows the percentages of students with physical disabilities and chronic illnesses in the total number of students in different states as follows:

Figure 7 Students with physical disabilities and chronic illnesses in the total nr of students, Eurostudent
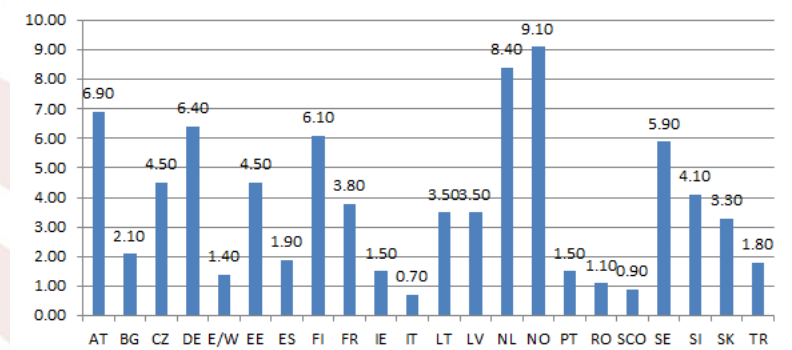
Regarding the participation of students with disabilities in Romania, the percentage of youth with disabilities, aged 20-29 from the total youth aged 20-29 was 2.06% (according to the population census of 2002). According to the National Institute of Statistics, the share of disabled people in the total number of population was 3.66%. According to the general direction for protection of persons with disabilities, the number of disabled person in 2012 and their participation in the labor market is as following[21]:

Table 16 The number of disabled persons in 2012 and their participation on the labor market, NIS 2012

Number of disabled persons	Not institutionalized	Institutionalized
Children	60,844	15
Adults	618,921	17,389
Total	679,765	17,404
Number of disabled employed people	28,756	

[19] Dincă, George (2003) *Changes in the Funding System in Higher Education,* Ministry of Education, Research and Youth, http://www.almamater.ro/schi_finante.pdf
[20] Reference: Eurostudent, Social and Economic Conditions of Student Life in Europe 2008-2011
[21] Reference: http://www.anph.ro/tematica.php?idt=13&idss=41

Table 16 shows that only 4.65% of the disabled adult population is employed. The limited access to higher education can represent an important factor to the unemployment rate of the disabled people.

In the last university years, at national level, the percentage of students with disabilities has not been higher than 0.07% of the total number of students, according to data collected as part of the university classification process.

Table 17 Participation of youth with disabilities, university classification process

Year	Students with disabilities				
	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010
Total students with disabilities	378	455	587	665	691
Percentage of total number of students (%)	0.04%	0.05%	0.05%	0.06%	0.07%

According to NIS, at the beginning of the academic year 2011-2012 there were 333 disabled students (out of 539.852 students) of which 309 in public universities and 24 in private universities.

Participation of Roma students
As far as Roma youth participation is concerned, according to the previously mentioned World Bank Report, less than 1% of the Roma population graduates from higher education. At the same time, according to the population census of 2002, 2.5% of Romania's population is Roma, and by2011 the proportion had grown to 3.2 %) This includes only people with personal ID that declares their ethnicity.

Regarding the participation of Roma youth to secondary education, according to the data from the Ministry of Education, we note that the number of Roma students admitted in high schools in Romania increased by 44.2% from 2009/2010 to 2011/2012. Even if there is a sizeable increase in Roma participation in secondary education, we can see that the number of available places for Roma students is still unused (40.1% of available places).

Table 18 Roma participation in secondary education, MEN 2012

Year	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012
Number of planned places for Roma	7483	7675	7906
Number of Roma high school students admitted	2246	2974	3239

Regarding the participation of Roma students in higher education, according to the Government decisions from 2010, 2011 and 2012, the number of state financed places reserved for Roma evolved as following:

Table 19 Places for Roma students in higher education

Year	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013
Number of places for Roma students (Bachelor)	555	611	555

No information is available regarding the percentage of study places filled from the total vacancies.

Participation of mature students

According to the data from NIS, at the beginning of the university year 2011-2012, the distribution of students on age, at bachelor level, is the following:

Table 20 Distribution of students on age at bachelor level, NIS 2012

Percentage of students on age		Percentage of students on age	
18	3.6%	25	2.8%
19	16.8%	26	2.0%
20	18.7%	27	1.5%
21	18.8%	28	1.2%
22	14.0%	29	1.0%
23	7.5%	30-34	2.7%
24	4.6%	35 and above	4.8%

At the master and PhD level, the distribution is the following:

Table 21 Distribution of students on age at master and PhD level, NIS 2012

Age	Master	Phd
21-29	84.5%	41.7%
30-34	5.1%	19.8%
35 and above	10.4%	38.5%

The distribution of mature students (aged 30 and above) according to types of study is as follows:

Table 22 The distribution of mature students (aged 30 and above) on forms of study, NIS 2012

	Total	Full-time students	Part-time students	Distance learning students	Evening learning
30 and above	30165	16973	3801	9202	189
% from the total number of mature students	100	56.26%	12.6%	30.5%	0.62%

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According to data collected as part of the university classification process in 2009-2012, 14.75% of the total number of students (bachelor, master and PhD) were aged over 30.

Table 23 Mature Students Participation, university classification process

Mature Students (aged over 30)					
Year	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010
Total	110370	137986	184229	186074	144612
Percentage of student total (%)	12.78%	14.27%	17.02%	17.22%	14.75%

A EUROSTUDENT report[22] states: "Out of 3339 questioned students, 87.5% enrolled in higher education immediately after high-school, and 12% has a delayed transition (with a break between high school and university). The relatively high percentage of students over 30, which is part of a constant tendency of recent years, is explained, on the one hand, by the enlargement of higher education access (determined by the increase of the annual enrollment numbers and the private university networks) and, on the other hand by labor market pressure, that requires a workforce with a higher qualification level".

Participation linked to parents' educational level
As far as family characteristics are concerned, the EUROSTUDENT report offers useful information:
-        More than half of students have parents employed with a full-time or a part-time job. Most of these parents have professions from upper and middle groups of occupations (technicians, specialists with intellectual and scientific occupations, workers in services, trade and similar) and have graduated from high school or a university. Few students (3.6%) have parents with lower educational levels (at most eight classes).
-        The percentage of students coming from families with higher education (university) attainment is much greater than the percentage of those whose parents have a lower educational attainment (at most eight years of study – primary school).

Even though at the international level such data is a revealing indicator in terms of equity, at the national level data on this topic is not collected by the NIS.

Participation of students with children
The EUROSTUDENT report mentioned above underlines the fact that 10.6% of students were parents at the moment of the research[23]. Also the percentage of students over 30 with children is seven times greater than the percentage of those aged 18-29.

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[22] EUROSTUDENT IV *Economic Conditions, Social Conditions and International Mobility of Students from Romania*, 2010
[23] 2010

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Even though at the international level such data is a revealing indicator in terms of equity, at the national level data on this topic is not collected by the NIS.

Immigrant students
The EUROSTUDENT report analyzes the status of immigrant students using parents' place of birth as a proxy. Data indicates that 2.4% of students are first or second generation immigrants, mostly first generation. On the other hand, of the total of foreign students, the majority comes from the Republic of Moldova (59%).

Even though at the international level such data is a revealing indicator in terms of equity, at the national level data on this topic is not collected by the NIS.

Working students
Data from the *Social Needs of Students* study[24], conducted by the National Alliance of Students' Organizations in Romania (ANOSR) on a sample of 20000 students studying in Romanian universities, indicates the following:
-        69.4% of students live on an income of maximum 500 lei/month (around 120 Euros). Of all respondents only 12.9% declare they have an income higher than 700 lei/month. In large University Centers (Bucuresti, Timişoara, Cluj, Iaşi), student incomes are slightly higher than in smaller university centers, but this is probably offset by the difference in living costs;
-        Of all respondents, 65.2% support themselves solely on parents or relatives income. 13.9% support themselves with their own job related income and on parents or relatives income, and 11.4% work to support themselves with no contribution from their family;
-        Approximately 25% of students have a full or part-time job. This percentage is influenced by the typology of the university (for ex. in medicine universities the percentage of employed students is very low).
The EUROSTUDENT report connects students' status on the labor market with their family situation. Thus the report states that "over 60% of students coming from families with low educational attainment have a stable paid job and work at least 5 hours/week, the income from the salary representing 78% of their total income; by comparison only 13% of students from families with a higher educational attainment have such a job".

Even though at the international level such data is a revealing indicator in terms of equity, at the national level data on this topic is not collected by the NIS.

Ethnic Romanian students coming from abroad
The Romanian state provides grants for young ethnic Romanian and Romanian citizens residing abroad (from Moldova, Albania, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Serbia, the Republic of Ukraine, the Republic of Hungary and the larger Diaspora), as well as a number of state funded study places (both for high school and in the university for all three cycles). This is complemented by scholarships or other facilities.
In the Romanian higher education system, the following categories of students can be identified (in both high schools and universities):

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[24] Reference: http://www.anosr.ro/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/2011-Studiu-Nevoile-sociale-ale-studentilor-din-Romania.pdf

a. Students that do not pay tuition fees and that receive a scholarship (they benefit from: financed tuition costs, a monthly scholarship which amounts to 65 euro for high school and bachelor students, 75 euro for master, 85 euro for PhD and a subsidy covering almost the total or all the costs for dormitories);
b. Students that do not pay tuition fees, but do not receive a scholarship (they benefit from: financed tuition costs and a subsidy covering almost the total or all the costs for dormitories).

All students are entitled to a minimum 50% discount on public transportation and for the railway network (on certain categories of trains).

The ethnic Romanian students coming from abroad benefit from all the social and educational rights as Romanian students.

The procedures for admission for ethnic Romanian students coming from abroad are the following:
- For secondary education, students enroll in Romanian county Ministry offices - inspectorates (for those continuing their studies without scholarship) or at the diplomatic mission of Romania in the Republic of Moldova or other states (for those applying for scholarship). For those candidates which are applying for scholarship, the county inspectorate from Iasi organizes the admission competition.
- For tertiary education, students who have completed their high school studies in Romania can directly enroll at universities and enter a competition for special quota study places allocated by the Ministry. Students, who have completed their high school studies in Republic of Moldova or other states, can enroll at the diplomatic missions of Romania. There is a national admission competition for all the quota places for ethnic Romanian students in all Romanian universities, which is organized by a common commission of Ministry of Education and Ministry of Foreign Affairs and has as selection criteria the grades of previous high school years studied in Republic of Moldova or other states.

The figure below details the number of budgeted places and scholarships allocated by country and level of study in academic year 2012-2013 for ethnic Romanian students:

Table 24 The number of budgeted places and scholarships allocated by country and level of study in academic year 2012-2013, MEN 2012

		Number of places with Tuition costs scholarship covered	Tuition costs
Secondary Ed	**Republic of Moldova**	750	550
	Neighboring countries and diaspora		
	Albania	20	
	Bulgaria	25	
	Macedonia	20	
	Serbia	25	
	Hungary	20	
	Ukraine	20	
	Diaspora	20	150
	TOTAL	900	700

Tertiary Education - Bachelor	Republic of Moldova - with Romanian secondary education diploma	300	200
	Republic of Moldova - with secondary education diploma from the Republic of Moldova	700	1600
	Of which Republic of Moldova - from high schools with teaching in Romanian language	70	
	Neighboring countries and diaspora		
	Albania	100	5
	Bulgaria	65	40
	Macedonia	29	1
	Serbia	200	100
	Hungary	100	100
	Ukraine	6	9
	Diaspora		100
	Israel		50
	TOTAL	1500	2205
Master	Republic of Moldova	250	300
	Neighboring countries and diaspora	113	270
	TOTAL	363	570
Residency	Republic of Moldova	25	0
	Neighboring countries and diaspora	112	0
	TOTAL	137	0
PhD	Republic of Moldova	25	100
	Neighboring countries and diaspora	25	20
	TOTAL	50	120

Insertion of graduates into the labor market

According to the data from the study launched by the Ministry of Education in 2012 previously mentioned, the following conclusions could be drawn as regard to the incorporation of graduates into the labor market:
-        In 2011, the youth employment situation is **better in rural areas** compared with urban areas, mainly due to employment in agriculture, and leaving school at younger ages;
-        A sharp increase in youth unemployment rate in **urban areas** can be observed, from 24.7% in 2007 to 32.4% in 2011, while the level of unemployment in rural areas remained constant (around 15-17% throughout the period under review). **In 2011 there are twice as many young people unemployed in urban areas than in rural areas;**

- The highest employment rates are found in the group of people with post-secondary education attainment (57.5%[25]), professional education attainment (52.1%) and tertiary education attainment (42.4%) and the lowest rates are for those which have only completed primary education – 15%;

- Compared with other age groups, young people (15-24 years) recorded the lowest employment rate (23,8% in 2011) - about three times lower than the 25-34 age group and those of 35-54 age group and twice lower compared to the population located closer to retirement age (55-64 years);

- The analysis in 2011 reveals that women with tertiary education attainment face a greater unemployment prospect than men;

- In 2011, of all young people aged 15-24 years, 20.2% (573,885 young people) are active persons who **are not employed, are not enrolled in any form of education or training and are not registered as persons looking for a job.**

5. **The Specific Framework of Policies and Instruments Concerning Equity and Social Cohesion in Higher Education**

5.1. **National Policies for Funding Higher Education**

The funding for public universities comes mainly from the state budget. Each year, the government approves the total number of study grants per field of study, per university and per study cycle. The recommendation of grant distribution comes from MEN on the basis of institutional capacity and also the place and type of university in the national classification.

According to the Law of Education, the incomes of higher education institutions include:

- Amounts allocated from the budget of the Ministry of National Education, on a contractual basis, for the base financing (represents the study grants described above);

- Complementary financing includes accommodation and food subsidies, funds allocated according to priorities for equipment, other investment expenses and repairs, funds allocated for scientific research on the basis of academic competition;

- Supplementary financing allocated based on criteria and quality standards set by CNFIS and MEN;

- Funds allocated on a competitive basis for institutional development. It targets those best institutions of higher education in each category;

- Funds for social inclusion, student scholarships and social protection;

- University own incomes - interests, donations, sponsorship, fees charged in compliance with the law;

- Other sources.

According to the data reported by the universities in the process of classification, the share of public fund (those coming from the Ministry of Education) within the total revenues of universities, since 2006, was as follows:

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[25] People employed with post-secondary education from the total number of people

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Table 25 Share of the public funds in the total revenues of universities, classification process

Year	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Share of the public funds in the total revenues of universities	44.13%	44.22%	41.75%	44.46%	42.20%

The base (core) funding is allocated on an annual basis (according to the HE Law the core funding should be allocated on a multi-annual basis - per cycle, but this has not yet been implemented), and is generally used by universities to cover personnel and infrastructure expenditure. The base funding has evolved since 1999 as follows:

Table 26 Evolution of base (core) funding between 1999 and 2010

Evolution of base(core) funding between 1999 – 2010												
Year	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Base funding (Thousands euro)	107.140	135.299	146.007	152.771	168.588	209.035	287.406	344.814	518.624	519.777	460.208	453.364
Base funding share in GDP	0,32%	0,34%	0,33%	0,32%	0,32%	0,34%	0,36%	0,35%	0,42%	0,38%	0,37%	0,37%
EUR (yearly avarage value exchange rate in lei)	1,63	2,00	2,60	3,13	3,76	4,05	3,62	3,52	3,34	3,68	4,24	4,21

5.1.1. Funding Tuition Costs

According to the Education Law, higher university education is free for the enrollment number approved annually by the Government or is paid for by the students, in conditions set by the law. Students who go to state universities either pay their own tuition or their tuition costs are covered by the state budget. In private universities all students pay tuition fees, except for situations where university senates decide otherwise.

From the perspective of access to higher education, we will present here how state budgeted study places are distributed.

The study places financed from the state budget are **distributed,** at the university level, after the end of the admission examinations organized by universities according to a general framework, approved by the Minister of Education. Thus, the ranking order is the result of the admission examinations. The study grants are given to the best candidates from all areas. When calculating the general admission grade, the universities can also use as criteria: the grades from the baccalaureate exam or grades from exams organized by universities (for testing knowledge and cognitive capacities).

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Access to state-budgeted study places is allocated according to students' ranking in the admission competition (based on criteria set by each university). The categories of youth who benefit from separately set budgeted places are:

- **Roma Youth** [26] (in the 2012/2013 university year approximately 548 spots were allocated for the first year of undergraduate studies);
- At least one state financed study place is granted to high school graduates with a baccalaureate diploma from **placement centers,** in conditions set by the university senate;
- **Ethnic Romanian students** from abroad, based on a methodology approved by a Government Decision (in the 2012/2013 university year, at the national level, 500 de budgeted study places were approved - 300 with scholarships and 200 without scholarships).

The Education Law states that „Candidates from environments with high socio-economic risks or socially marginalized - Roma, graduated from rural high-schools or cities with less than 10000 inhabitants - may benefit from a number of guaranteed state subsidized study places, as specified by the law" but this article has not yet been operationalized in the funding methodology or the methodology regarding the general admission framework.

In most universities, following the first year of undergraduate studies, the state financed study places are redistributed annually based on academic results obtained in the previous university year.

As far as **tuition fees** are concerned, we can observe a difference between the value of the study grant allocated by the Ministry of Education and the amount of tuition fees. We can also see a difference between the tuition fees perceived by the public universities and those perceived by the private ones. Since the level of tuition fees is set by universities themselves, without any national standard or regulation, the value of the fees does not necessarily represent the cost of education but rather the student's ability to pay or the "market price" of education.

Table 27 Values of study grants and tuition fees

Field of study	The value of study grant, for studies in Romanian, bachelor level (euro)	Average tuition fees in public univ. (euro)	Average tuition fees in private univ. (euro)
Engineering sciences	850	740	508
Economy	483	620	500
Medicine	1090	1450	522

According to a study on the perception regarding the social needs of students conducted by ANOSR[27], 30.5% of interviewed students said that tuition fees are an obstacle in their academic path and that they are deeply affected by them, while 39.6% of students stated that tuition fees have little effect on them and

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[26] Reference: Order no. 4334/2012 on the Distribution of the Tuition Number for University Undergraduate Studies for Admission in the 2012-2013 University Year
http://www.dreptonline.ro/legislatie/ordin_4334_2012_repartizarea_cifrei_scolarizare_studii_universitare_licenta_admitere_studi i_anul_universitar_2012_2013.php
[27] Reference: http://www.anosr.ro/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/2011-Studiu-Nevoile-sociale-ale-studentilor-din-Romania.pdf

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almost 6% stated tuition fees are a determinant factor for dropping out of higher education studies. Concerning the amount of the tuition fee, 46.2% said they considered them high, 24.7% believed them to be were very high, while only 2.4% stated that tuition fees were low.

5.1.2. Direct Financial Support for covering other costs (scholarships etc.)

According to the Education Law, direct financial support consists in **scholarships or** study **loans** for students. The national legislation states that a study loan system is to be established for certain categories of students: "Students coming from low income families benefit from a bank loans system for their studies, guaranteed by the state, under the conditions of the law, through the Agency for Study Credits and Scholarships (ACBS). Loans may cover tuition taxes and the cost of living for the duration of the studies." At the moment this system is not functional. Furthermore, according to the law, graduates that will practice their profession for a minimum of 5 years in rural areas will be exempted from paying back 75% of the loan, that part being taken over by the state, with a maximum threshold of 5000 RON (around 1200 Euros). In this context, the document will only detail the types of scholarships that have equity as an objective and the methodologies used for their disbursement.

According to the law „Students benefit from merit or performance scholarships, for stimulating excellence, as well as social scholarships, for the financial support of students with low incomes. The minimum sum for social scholarships is proposed annually by the National Council for Higher Education Financing, taking into account the fact that these have to ensure the minimal living expenses (." For all types of scholarships, the state, through the Ministry of Education, gives each university a sum of 69RON (15.3 EUR) multiplied by the number of state financed study places at that particular university. Then each university distributes this amount in funds for social, merit, study or achievement scholarships. The financial distribution is based either on a clearly set regulation (based on calculus formulas), either as a result of negotiations between students and faculty leadership. According to data obtained from CNFIS, on average, a university sets aside approx. 10% of the total sum to the social scholarship fund and the rest of the scholarship amount are distributed based on merit-based criteria.

Also, according to the data gathered in the institutional evaluation conducted by ARACIS[28] in 2008, analyzing the data from 29 state universities, we can see that 10953 scholarships were distributed on social criteria at Bachelor level, while 36412 scholarships are distributed on academic criteria.

Table 28 Distribution of scholarship fund, ARACIS 2008

Type of scholarship	Performance	Merit	Study	Total-Merit based (Performance+Merit+Study)	Social
BA	385	4168	31859	36412	10953
MA	52	687	4533	5272	370

At the same time, although the Education Law mentions that the **social scholarship** needs to provide for the minimum expenses of meals and housing, according to CNFIS data the medium national amount of a

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[28] Reference: http://db.aracis.ro/

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social scholarship is 192 lei (42 EUR) while the estimated national average sum for minimum costs of meals (lunch and dinner) is 566 lei (125.7 EUR).

As far as the criteria for giving scholarships is concerned, social scholarships are awarded based on general criteria approved through Government Resolution[29], mainly to the following categories: orphan students, students from state or family placement centers that do not have their own income, students sick with tuberculosis (TBC) and students whose families do not earn, within the past three months, an income higher than the minimum income. The Education law mentions the fact that social scholarships may be cumulated with other types of scholarships, but at the moment this is not implemented in most universities.

Regarding the universities opinion on the fact that the scholarship should provide for the expenses of meals and housing, according to the data gathered by ARACIS in the process of institutional evaluation, from a total number of 39 state universities that have reported the data, 21 think that the scholarship covers the costs for meals and housing while 16 think the opposite.

Even if the funds for scholarships are provided from the state budget, the universities should contribute from their own income. According to the data from ARACIS, the medium percentage with which universities contributed in 2008 to the scholarship fund is 10.88% (from the total scholarship fund), the minimum was 0.15%, the maximum was 33.2% and ten universities contributed with a percentage less than 0,5% from the total.

At the same time MEN awards annually, a number of scholarships to students **from a rural background,** who after graduation, are obligated to work in rural education system, in the field they prepared for, at least for a period of time equal to the duration of their scholarship.[30] There are no available data on the number of people benefiting from this type of scholarships.

5.2. National Policies for Direct Support for Students
5.2.1. Social Services and Subsidies: housing, canteens, transportation etc.

The Government provides three types of social services and subsidies:

- Social services or facilities for all students;
- Social services or facilities for students in state universities;
- Social services or facilities for certain categories of students.

The services available to all students regardless of the type of university they attend (state or private) are, according to the Education Law:

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[29] Reference: Government Resolution no. 558/ 1998 on the modifications of annexes 1 and 2 to Government Resolution no. 455/ 1997 on the setting of general criteria to award scholarships and other forms of financial support for pupils, students and those taking classes in the state education system, day classes http://www.edu.ro/index.php/legaldocs/4769

[30] Reference: Government Resolution 769/14 July 2005 on the giving of study scholarships to students living in rural areas http://www.cnfis.ro/documente/pdf/HG769-2005.pdf

- Free medical and psychological assistance in medical and psychological university cabinets or in state clinics and hospitals. According to the data gathered by ARACIS in 2008, from a total number of 46 universities, 35 had a medical cabinet while 11 didn't.
- During the school year students benefit from a reduced fee (by minimum 50%) for local public transportation or national transportation- auto, railway and naval.
- Students benefit of fees reduced by 75% for access to museums, concerts, theatre, opera, movies or other cultural and sports events organized by public institutions, within the limits of approved budgets.
- The release of study certificates or documents attesting that one is a student (including the schooling situation/grade situation, graduate diplomas, engineering, MA and PhD Diplomas and diploma supplements, receipts, student licenses and ID cards, including for library access).
A second category of services is provided only to students enrolled in state universities.

The State gives subsidies for dorms and canteens that partially cover the living costs, the difference being paid for through taxes by students. The dorm places are distributed to students that do not live in the city where they study based on criteria approved by university senates. In most universities social cases are given priority. According to a perception study in 2011[31], students noticed an improvement in the accommodation facilities, but also significant barriers in accessing them, either because of grade-related criteria or because of high fees. As far as student canteens are concerned the ANOSR study mentions the following: „questioned on the frequency with which they use the canteen, only 13.7% of the students eat there daily, 22% eat there once or twice a week and 26.5% eat there once a month. Given this situation it is worrisome that the highest percentage of students said that they never eat at the university - 30.7%".

According to data from the university classification process and data presented in the ANOSR study *Equity in education,* the situation of dorm places is the following:

Table 29 The situation of dorm places, university classification process

Year	2006 - 2007	2007 - 2008	2008 - 2009	2009 - 2010
Number of places in dorms	103723	106677	106198	108189
Number of places allocated to students	103018	106288	105951	106808

Moreover, according to the Education Law, subsidies for accommodations may be granted to students who chose another accommodation, other than dorms of higher education institutions. In this case, the subsidies can be granted to students according to social criteria.

According to the law, higher education state institutions ensure expenses for meals, accommodation and transportation for students, within the limits of financial resources allocated for the practice internship of students, for the period set in study plans, if the internship takes place outside the university center. There are no data on universities that offer such services to students.

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[31] Reference: http://www.anosr.ro/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/2010-Studiu-ANOSR-cu-privire-la-Statutul-Social-al-Studentului-din-Romania.pdf

The last category of subsidies is the one distributed to student groups with certain characteristics:

- Students from disadvantaged backgrounds or those with outstanding results in their education and professional, cultural or sports training benefit from places in relevant camps in the limit of the allocated budget;
- Orphan students or those coming from placement centers have free transportation set through an;
- Ethnic Romanian students from abroad, receiving scholarships from the Romanian state, benefit from free fees to all events organized by public institutions, that take place on Romanian territory;
- Children of active teaching staff receive free accommodations in dorms and boarding schools;
- Students with physical disabilities have the right to access facilities adapted to their needs in all university spaces and conditions must be met for a normal course of academic, social or cultural activities in higher education institutions.

According with the law, universities should be equipped with ramps and lifts to ensure the access of students with physic disabilities. The study from ARACIS shows that, from a total number of 39 universities, 16 of them don't have this type of equipment.

5.2.2. Career counseling services, recognition and flexible learning paths

As far as **career counseling services** are concerned, according to Art. 202 (b) from Law no. 1/2011, students benefit from free assistance or complementary services including counseling for professional orientation. The quality of the services is included in the ARACIS[32] evaluation methodology. According to O.M. 3235 of 2005, universities must establish Centers for Counseling and Career Orientation to support students in making the best decisions for their careers and training paths. .

A study implemented by the National Alliance of Student Organization (ANOSR) in 2011, states "In only one university from the universities where the questionnaire was applied the percentage of students happy with the activity of the Center for Professional Counseling and Orientation is above 30 %. In all the other universities this percentage is under 20%. In only 7 universities the percentage of students who have at least heard of a Center for Professional Counseling and Orientation is above 20%."

Moreover, according to data from the process of university classification, the percentage of students using counseling and orientation services has reaches 3.68% in 2009/2010.

Regarding the **flexibility of learning paths,** the Education Law defines the educational/study forms: with attendance, no attendance and distance learning. Even more, flexibility is realized at the level of universities/faculties through the offer of optional or facultative disciplines, with their number and type differing for each university, study domain, study program or institutional resources.

Concerning alternative access routes, at this moment access to higher education can only be gained in the formal academic manner (via graduating a Baccalaureate exam).

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[32] Reference: Government Resolution 1418/2006 for the Approval of Methodology for External Evaluation
http://www.aracis.ro/uploads/media/Metodologie_aprobata_HG_1418_-_2006.pdf

Recognizing competences from other than formal education routes is done according to Order No. 4543/468 from 2004[33]. Thus, currently no transferable credits are awarded for competences obtained otherwise than through formal ways. Yet, according to the law "Initial or continuous professional training programs, as well as the system for evaluating the results of learning in non-formal and informal contexts will respect the need for assuring occupational mobility horizontally and vertically through the use of the transferable credit system for professional education and training". The law also mentions the adoption of a Ministry Order outlining a methodology in this regard. A discrepancy was noticed between the National Education Law and Order 4543/2004, regulating the recognition of competencies not obtained in formal context, in the sense that Order 4543 does not allow recognition of competencies acquired in informal or non-formal ways, while the more recent Education Law leaves this possibility open.

The Education Law also offers the possibility for universities to use study credits for recognizing non-formal activities. Thus according to art 203:"Students may participate in volunteering activities, for which they may receive a certain number of transferable credits, under the conditions set by the University Charter"

5.3. National Policies for Quality Assurance

As far as the national policies for quality assurance are concerned, we underline two of the most relevant policies and examine how they address issues influencing equity in education.

Accrediting higher education institutions in Romania and periodical evaluation is done on the basis of reference standards and common performance indicators adopted through a Government Ordinance. These indicators have a real impact in influencing institutional behavior and policies on this level. In this context, within the methodology, the indicators and standards that deal with equity are:

- One performance indicator is related to the scholarship system and other forms of financial support for students. This indicator has, as a minimum standard, the existence of a formalized allocation procedure. Another standard expects that the university supplements the scholarships public fund, from its own funds, with a minimum 10% (20% respectively for the higher standard, the so-called 'performance standard'). According to data obtained from the CNFIS, the medium percentage of contributions from universities to the scholarship fund from their own income is aprox. 7.29% (even though the ARACIS indicator requires a minimum of 10%).
- Concerning admission policies, one standard mentions that admission is based exclusively on academic competences of candidates and no discriminatory criteria should be applied.
- Within the description of the performance indicator concerning student centered teaching methods, it is indicated that the teaching strategy should take into consideration the needs of students with disabilities.
- A performance indicator that has as a minimum standard the obligation that the university should have remedial programs for those with difficulties in learning.

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[33] Reference: Order no. 4543/468 in 2004 for approving the Procedure for the Evaluation and Certification of Professional Competences Obtained through Other Ways apart from Formal ones
http://www.anc.gov.ro/uploads/Registrul%20National%20al%20Centrelor/Procedura_evaluare_4543/ordin%204543%20privind%20procedura%20de%20evaluare%20si%20certificare.pdf

- A performance indicator regarding student services that has as a minimum standard the existence of housing spaces for at least 10% of students.

5.4. National Policies for Distance Education and ICT for teaching and learning in Higher Education

The appreciation of the potential of distance education to increase access to Higher Education has been the basis for the development, in the 1970s and in several EU countries (the UK, the Netherlands, Germany and Spain), of large so-called 'Open Universities', commonly perceived as public institutions addressing people who could not attend (or complete) face-to-face higher education programmes due to organizational, economic, or physical barriers.

These institutions have progressively adapted to the growing mainstreaming of ICT tools and to the equity-led Open Educational Resources movement. Many other "conventional" Universities have joined the same movement and participate in the "Opening Up Education"[34] Agenda promoted by the European Union.

In Romania – like in other countries where private HE institutions have quickly developed - Distance Education has a rather negative connotation because it is associated with low quality and a pure business oriented approach to education, which is to a large extent caused by previous bad experiences in the past, with a large degree of media visibility.

The Law of National Education defines Distance Education as being characterized by "the use of communication and information electronic resources, specific self-learning and self-assessment activities, and tutoring activities" (Art. 139, c)). Moreover, Distance Education is legally allowed only for bachelor programmes. According to the law, the tutoring system implies the organization of courses and groups that comprise up to 25 students. The maximum number of students that can be enrolled in a Distance Education programme is set by ARACIS and approved through a Governmental Order (the procedure is the same for all Romanian study programmes).

The issue of quality and, specifically, Quality Assurance is certainly critical to future development of Distance Education, eLearning and Open Educational Resources in Higher Education: current measures are sometimes perceived as more oriented to "protect" learners than to "inspire" innovation in education by using ICT. Both are important but the role of these new ways of teaching and learning in fostering equity and widening participation in higher education in an innovative manner needs to be given more attention.

Two important questions should lead the re-positioning of Distance Education in the Romanian Equity Policy Agenda:
- Foreign Universities, not only commercial and low-ranking ones, are already offering on-line study programmes to Romanian students and might absorb a significant number of the already decreasing students;
- Distance education can specifically address several target groups defined within the equity policy, namely students living in rural areas, physically disabled people, and generally people who work or have family commitments which do not allow normal full attendance to classroom courses.

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[34] Reference: http://ec.europa.eu/education/news/20130925_en.htm

A renewed national policy in this domain is probably necessary to address the equity issue with the full range of available instruments.

6. Challenges and opportunities

Challenges

- Clash between the notions of merit-based participation in higher education and tapping into the full talent potential of the Romanian population;
- The attitude towards equity is influenced by the nostalgia of the past times when universities were elitist and selective;
- Mismatch between the level of public funding and the rapid expansion of the system;
- Share of Romanian population aged 30-34 with tertiary education that in 2011 was 20.4%, in the context of the EU2020 target of 40%. Romania is situated, according to Eurostat, among the least well performing countries in Europe (only Italy and Turkey after Romania, with 20.3% and 16.3%);
- Continuous decrease in the number of young people within the school age bracket and in the proportion of high school graduates with baccalaureate diploma, which has a great impact on the total number of students;
- As a Ministry of Education study[35] mentions: "the main challenge for education system in terms of risk of poverty and social exclusion is the significant gap between the situation of children and young people in Romania compared to average EU rates of poverty and social exclusion of children and young people. Romanian rates of poverty and social exclusion are consistently higher (almost double) compared to the EU average having direct effects on access and participation in education";
- Even though the number of high school graduates had not started to drop, the number of students enrolled for their first academic year started to drop in 2008, due partially to the decreasing rate of high school students passing the national exam (baccalaureate);
- Gap between the participation of students with rural background compared with those coming from urban areas;
- Gap between the participation of students from low income families compared with those from medium and high income families;
- Limited access to higher education of Roma people and disabled youth;
- Lack of a national strategy on equity that includes a definition of underrepresented groups in higher education together with the associated policies, instruments and budget;
- Lack of reliable data regarding equity in higher education, especially the number and characteristics of high school students, students and graduates for evidence based policy making;
- Increase in the number of high school graduates going abroad for studies;
- Flexibility in the organization of studies associated with economic reasons (the need for flexibility comes often from the fear of losing students and money not from equity reasons). This flexibility comes often with relaxed academic standards having impact on the quality of education.

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[35] Needs analysis on education and training in Romania , 2012 http://administraresite.edu.ro/index.php/articles/18802

Opportunities

- The Government Strategy for 2013-2016 that includes as its main priority ensuring social equity policies, strengthening social cohesion an the improvement of Roma participation in higher education and other under representative groups;
- Changes in the legislative framework - the need for further development of legal rules and procedures with impact on equity such the procedures for the allocation of inclusion fund, procedure for allocating the loan scheme for students etc.;
- The international commitments of Romania to the Bologna Process - setting quantifiable targets for enlarging access to higher education and adopting the necessary measures for reaching these objectives, raising graduation and participation rates in higher education, increasing the participation of under-represented groups in higher education, reporting national strategies, action plans and measures for efficacy evaluation.

Part B – Institutional level

1. Institutional Policies Regarding Equity - General Issues

Following the collection of the data presented and analysed in Part A of the present report, and in order to develop a multi-dimensional analysis of Romanian higher education institutions, an open call was launched for universities to be part of an exercise aimed at analysing the extent to which issues of equity were reflected in the policies and practices in the Romanian higher education system and making recommendations for both the institutional and national levels.

In parallel to the collection of data and information on the policies and measures in place at the national level to promote equity in access and success as means to contribute to social cohesion (presented in the Part A of this document), the approach taken for the institutional case studies involved the preparation of institutional reports by each university and subsequent site visits to these universities by teams of international and national experts. Finally, reports for each university were developed containing the main findings and recommendations for enhancing the institutional policies regarding equity.

In early 2013, a self-study guide was provided for this purpose to all institutions taking part in the study. This guide was based on an instrument developed by the IAU in 2010 in the framework of a special project aiming to learn more about HEIs policies and activities in regards to the twin issues of equitable access and success in a select number of universities.

The programme for the site visits to universities consisted of a number of half-hour to forty-five minutes meetings with a broad range of individuals from across the academic community. Each session included an open discussion and a question and answer session between the university's representatives and the Expert Panel members to gather a comprehensive picture of current developments and challenges at the university level.

Structure of the institutional self-study instrument

In responding to the multiple imperatives that drive our global knowledge-based economy and society, national governments recognize the need for high quality higher education for all. Preparing its citizens for the 21st century by sustaining or developing a globally competitive research/innovation base and raising employability skills are goals pursued by most, despite different national contexts. Gaining access to learning, and successful participation in higher education is becoming essential for all.

It was against this backdrop that IAU began to focus on equitable access and success in Higher Education and developed a self-study instrument to help institutions to conduct in-depth self-reviews of their practices and policies in regards with the twin issues of equitable access and success in HE.

The self-study instrument has been slightly modified in order to better fit the Romanian context. It is divided into the following 9 sections:
- **Institutional information and profile** (to gather general information about the institution);
- **Financial considerations** (to address the issue of the tuition fees and various financial support provided);

- **Equitable access in institutional mission** (to learn more about the place allocated to the issue at the institutional level);
- **Equitable access in admission policies** (to learn if special attention is given to students from under-represented groups if any are identified);
- **Successful participation, retention and graduation** (to learn more about how special needs are tackled);
- **Rewards/incentives for quality teaching and curricular innovation to improve retention and success** (to learn if faculty and staff are encouraged to put in place curricular innovation improving equitable access);
- **Faculty development to promote retention and success** (to learn if the institution provides faculty and staff development opportunities to enhance their understanding and readiness to work on improving equitable access and success);
- **Education delivery modes and outreach** (to learn more about the special measures introduced to facilitate access by a larger number of learners);
- **Success stories and failures** (to learn more about good practices in increasing equitable access and success in higher education).

2. A multi-dimensional analysis of Romanian higher education institutions

The study visits were completed in June 2013. Each institution charged a small "team" with collecting the data and responding to the questions. It was recommended that the teams be composed of leaders of the institutions, representatives of the student unions, as well as of staff members working at counselling services.

a. Who completed the self-study?

Four universities accepted to take part as case studies on the dimension of equity/ social cohesion, answering the 40 questions of the self-study questionnaire/ guidelines.

Of the four institutions involved in the project and listed below, three are public and one is private:
- Titu Maiorescu University (TMU), (private institution);
- "Politehnica" University of Timişoara (UPT), (public institution);
- "Carol I" National Defence University (NDU), (public institution);
- University Stefan cel Mare from Suceava (USMS), (public institution).

These four institutions are quite different in terms of size, major fields of activity and/or research, geographical location in the country (two are located in Bucharest, one is located in Suceava and one in Timisoara). The four institutions are also quite different as well in the way they understand and address the issues of equitable access and success.

The composition of these groups varied from institution to institution in terms of who was involved in the completion of the questionnaire. Generally speaking, it appears that there is no specific position at any of the institutions that has been assigned the responsibility for issues of (equitable) access to higher

education. On the other hand, there is recognition that access and success is a shared institutional responsibility that may involve a broad spectrum of institutional actors.

The involvement of very senior institutional representatives can imply either a high level of importance given to the issue or a perceived need to supervise and approve replies provided or both.

b. Institutional Information and Profile

Language of instruction: three institutions offer courses in Romanian only, while one also offers courses in French and in German.

Student enrolment: the 4 institutions have quite a different profile in terms of student enrolment. However, with one exception where all students pay tuition fees, in the other universities, the students enrolled are either financed by the state or paying fees.

Location: in addition to the public/private status of each institution, they were also asked whether or not they had branches outside their primary location as this can at times be the case in order to provide easier access for learners. All of the case study institutions are located in an urban area, and all of them also offer programs in another part of Romania.

3. Institutional Mission: strategic approach to access and equity

a. The concept of equity from the universities' perspectives

Clearly, for Romanian institutions, the law on education that imposes non-discrimination in terms of access to higher education is the basis (and at times the only) commitment made at the institutional policy level with regard to equitable access. While in some cases data is collected about enrolment of specific target groups, this has more to do with compliance (and accreditation requirements) than with a genuine commitment to seeing a wider societal participation in HE or a social responsibility of HE to address social cohesion issues. HEIs appear to assume that applying no discrimination in the process of student recruitment and admission means having equitable policies. More than that, there seems to be a perception that developing special support measures for those who have some special needs might undermine the principle of equality and impartiality.

The study visits in the universities showed a common characteristic that can define the institutional approach to equity in the Romanian higher education system. It is first of all a reactive/responsive approach, HEIs not addressing the issue of equity in access to higher education on their own initiative. In the same vein, it is not a strategic approach, but rather an ad hoc one, even if in all the universities some measures and instruments are put in place for enhancing equity. None of the institutions had identified a strategy or developed a plan to improve equity.

Thus, the universities have a responsive approach to student's needs, instead of developing strategies which encompass objectives (equity goals and targets), resource pooling, an action plan with a dedicated budget to achieve the proposed objectives and the definition of monitoring indicators and mechanisms to see if the objectives are being met. The reasons for this ad hoc approach could be the absence of a national strategy and/or specific guidelines in this area, a lack of awareness of the benefits of equity policies and a

frequent approach to policy making in which decisions are taken when a problem occurs rather than developing a strategic framework. It may also be possible that there is a fairly different understanding of equity issues and the institutional responsibilities in this regard. The equity concept appears to be understood in different ways ranging from being the same as equality and non-discrimination to being related to the university's role in society or to employing marketing instruments for attracting new categories of students.

At the same time, institutions recognize the need to consider the diversity of the population in the region as a factor to be considered when analysing their approach to improving equity. In this regard, universities were very aware of the different categories of youth in their respective regions, even if they did not have targets for attracting them to their institutions. They noted, for example, the ethnic diversity of one region, and the poor economic level of development of another.

b. Underrepresented groups of learners

Regarding under-represented or vulnerable groups of students, in the majority of the case-study universities the group whose needs are addressed most frequently are *students from low-income families* defined as students coming from families whose total income per family member falls below the national minimum wage.

Students from certain under-represented groups (such as *Roma students* or *students with disabilities*) benefit from different facilities, but still the number of students from these categories is very small compared with the general need to integrate them more fully into higher education.

It has been commonly observed that the special needs of students with disabilities such as physical ones and/ or learning difficulties are not addressed properly.

Certain universities have also identified groups of *students with special needs in accordance to their very special regional context or field of activity*. For example, in one university from an area with a high percentage of the population working outside the country, students working outside the country represent an important group. Because of the economic conditions of the region and the financial needs of students, some of them choose to work outside the country and to come back only to take exams. The institution has developed an approach to assist the individual needs of these students, but here again, this is done on an ad hoc basis; there are no institutional instruments to address this special group of students collectively (assuring equitable access to all eligible students and quality assurance instruments – for example organizing distance learning programs). In another university, reflecting its specificity as a military education institution, the group of students with special needs are mature students with families. In this regard, the university has several facilities to help them progress in their education.

Working students constitute another group of students with special needs to be found in all the universities (except the military education institution). The fact that at present increasing numbers of students (in some cases the majority) are working and consequently do not have time to attend classes and seminars is becoming one of the most important challenge for the Romanian HEIs with a major impact on the quality of education and on the issues of equity. In general, it seems that the current university response to this trend is to make the class schedule more flexible for students to attend (offering classes in evenings or during

lunch breaks). In other cases, the need for practical experience is the reason for the university to encourage students to work. In all of these cases, the need for finding the best approach and sharing good practice examples is felt.

At the national level, *students coming from rural areas* represent a group considered under-represented in the official documents, including the Romanian Government strategy for 2013-2016 and other policy documents. When analysing the actions taken by universities, students from rural areas were not found among the priority groups, nor were there special measures or instruments available in the institutions to especially promote their academic offers in rural areas.

Another group of students mentioned by the universities (especially in the state universities) are *ethnic Romanian students coming from abroad*, mainly from the Republic of Moldavia. They benefit from certain specific support, scholarships and facilities granted by the Government.

c. Admission policies

Even if some universities have a policy to identify target groups and collect applicant/enrolment data, they do not apply any specific measures in their admission policy. The admission process is organized in various forms, competitive and based on student performance (grades at the university admission exam, Baccalaureate exam and/or high school performance). Special quota places for Roma or Romanian ethnics coming from abroad could be found in all visited state universities (as they are allocated from the Ministry of Education). One important remark is that even if special places for Roma students can be found in all the state universities, there is no data regarding the number of occupied places and no policy on their promotion within the Roma communities.

In order to promote their academic programmes, almost all institutions undertake a number of actions such as outreach to nearby secondary schools, career counselling and special courses to help high school students pass the admission exam. Prior and experiential learning is not recognised for admission purposes.

d. Successful retention and graduation

To promote successful participation, retention and graduation of learners from different groups of students, social services are in place at all universities. These include financial support, student accommodation, canteens and others. Similarly, there are academic services which offer tutoring, career counselling, and others. These services are designed either following a national policy or law or at the university initiative as means to contribute to their goals or a certain objective.

(i) Financial considerations

All case study institutions charge tuition fees and waive or reduce them for different categories of students, in addition to the state subsidised places that they have, but the approach for waiving or reducing fees is done case by case without a specific policy

State universities distribute the scholarship funds received from the Ministry of Education in two broad categories: merit based scholarships and social scholarships. Universities set the value, number and criteria of the different types of scholarships in line with the national regulations. Merit based scholarships are deemed more important than social scholarships (according to the monthly amount provided to each student and to their overall proportion in the total number of scholarships disbursed) in all universities.

Even if the National Education Law (Law 1/2011) permits cumulating merit based and social scholarships, there are cases where university regulations make this solution impossible, as they are still not in line with the existing legal provisions.

Some universities offer additional social scholarships from their own revenues and there are other cases in which no scholarship system is in place (especially in private universities).

(ii) *Services offered*

Some of the common characteristics of these types of services include:

- According to the law, all universities should have a *structure for guidance and counselling* but in some universities the structure is complex and deals with highly diverse activities while in others this service is less active and needs more human and financial resources to properly function. In general, in all universities, the main focus of the structure is on graduates' employability (career counselling, networking with employers, developing students' soft skills, finding jobs or internships for students) and less on accompanying students towards graduation, providing academic guidance or facilitating the participation of students from different disadvantaged groups. In some universities studies are developed to learn more about students' needs especially addressing the need for personal development.
- The *career counselling centres* also play an important role: two of the case study institutions mentioned that over the last three academic years, the number of students being advised in the career counselling centre has massively increased and that the largest share of students taking advantage of this service are from underrepresented groups.
- Two of the four case study institutions indicated that they have an *Alumni association*, but their roles and functions were unclear with regard to encouraging equity in higher education.
- *Distance education* is also an option chosen by the majority of the case study universities as a means to increase access to higher education for different groups of students (excepting the technical field of study due to the need of students' attendance).

No monitoring appears to be undertaken of these measures and activities and often they are available for all students and not specifically tailored to groups identified as under-represented or with special needs.

(iii) *Rewards/Incentives for quality teaching and curricular innovation to improve retention and success*

Two case study institutions reported that faculty and staff members are recognized for their contribution(s) to improving equitable access and success of learners from underrepresented groups. One of them reported that faculty members are evaluated annually (self-evaluation, bottom-up evaluation and top-down evaluation), and that their salaries fluctuate from year-to-year according to their evaluation results. No incentives are built-in within the national financing methodology with a specific reference to improving equity in higher education, even though the law leaves this possibility open.

In regards with the delivery modes and outreach, and as far as curricular innovation is concerned, three of the four case study institutions have introduced e-learning structures in order to respond to the diverse learning needs of students. The e-learning platforms and evening classes were emphasized as a means to provide working students, mature students and students from rural areas with a chance to study from distance or as innovative teaching methods.

(iv) Faculty development to promote retention and success

Some case study institutions appear to encourage faculty and staff innovation and improvement in terms of curriculum and pedagogy in order to enhance the success of learners from various targeted groups. It is difficult to ascertain whether these encouragements are transposed into formal instruments or whether these efforts are focused on specific target groups or of a more general nature to improve overall student performance. The measures are taken mainly as a response to the issue of high dropout rate. Two public universities mentioned the dropout rate as a challenge nowadays and one of them has developed a clear target and measures for reducing the overall university dropout rate. The common reasons for the dropout rate were the financial situation of students (in some areas pushing them to have a job or to work abroad) or academic difficulties.

e. Success Stories and Failures

The descriptions of various institutional projects initiatives in the site visits indicate a certain level of disconnectedness between the understanding by the expert teams of the focus of this study (and related concepts of equitable access and success) and the interpretation of these concepts by the Romanian universities.

During the study visits, several success stories and failures were identified. For example, for one university, located in a less economically developed region, a constant concern for helping students from low-income families to participate and graduate from the university was expressed frequently. Furthermore, the university has set a target for reducing the dropout rate and put in place specific measures for reaching the target.

In regards to failures or challenges, it has been observed that some regulations from the national law of education are still not implemented in all the universities, (for example the possibility for students to receive both types of scholarships - merit based and social).

It is clear that more discussion on these policy goals is required so that institutions consider their responsibilities beyond simply complying with the principle of non-discrimination in the National Education Law, and in fact become pro-active in pursuing access and success on the part of the disadvantaged target populations.

Some of the good practices (such as programmes for instance) put in place by the visited institutions are mentioned below:

Facilities offered
-   One of the universities is offering accommodation to all students who require this service, for a very low price: this is quite unusual and almost an exception in Romania;
-   The same university offers a *special social scholarship from own revenues* – for 64 students (for the academic year 2012-2013) coming from low income families. This is a well appreciated support for students with financial needs;
-   An example of policy aimed at reducing dropout rates for economic reasons is used reducing fees up to 100% for students who volunteer to work on campus. For every working hour their tuition fee is reduced with 1 euro. This solution was successful taking into consideration that

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students currently compete in order to participate at the college activities for this financial support
- One university gives financial support through fee waivers to at least 9 different categories of students

Academic support
- The Centre for Career Counseling and Orientation (CCOC) develops surveys among the students focusing on their special needs and difficulties, and then share the results with the head of the institution. The CCOC offers many activities, working with students with special needs mostly (psychological evaluation, personality tests, cognitivist tests), by offering special training and organizing workshops and social events involving professionals. On top of this, the center runs studies requested by the university staff: satisfaction surveys regarding social services, campus, canteen/ restaurant, fairness of the teachers; four to five surveys are carried out each year.

Distance education
- In one university distance education (available for three faculties) is seen as a way to encourage tertiary education. A very complex online platform has been developed thanks to European funds. Many study modules are accessible from this platform: (i) the first one focuses on the "management" of the students - all educational paths are presented on the platform, including the fees to be paid, student grades etc.; (ii) distance learning education module - teachers upload the courses on the platform (these courses are specially designed for e-learning); (iii) module focusing on research - all teachers can download their research projects; (iv) module focusing on alumni; (v) online library.

Working students
- Some classes are scheduled to start at 6:00pm or sometime even later, but, according to the universities representatives this solution remains unsatisfactory for solving the problem.
- Working students can benefit from certain flexibility in scheduling meetings with the academics.
- In the case of the technical studies the programme is flexible: 2 days are free (which means no classes during these days) and the 3 other days are full ones. Students plan their professional activities according to this schedule

Faculty and Staff commitment
- The activities aimed at improving equitable access and successes of learners from under-represented groups are encouraged by taking them into consideration for the promotion of the teaching staff and for awarding merit salaries. There are institutions such as the departments, Committee for Curriculum, or ethics committees that are involved in the policy of encouraging the faculty and staff members' activities to increase equitable access in the university.

Mentoring and tutoring
- Through the university *mentoring programme*, all students from the 1st year can benefit from the assistance of a Mentor who helps them to address the difficulties they can encounter while adapting to their student life.

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Links with secondary education level

- During the March – June timeframe, every Saturday, the university offers free mathematics classes that are open to all interested high school students. These classes are de facto tutoring activities to prepare potential candidates for the admission exam. The Department of Mathematics is responsible for preparatory courses for the entrance examinations.

4. Challenges and opportunities

One of the main challenges for the Romanian higher education system, as identified in the Part A of the present report (see p. 3-4 and p. 18) as well as during the study visits, is the *continuous decrease in number of youth* and the *decrease in the number of high school students with a baccalaureate diploma*. Both of these trends have a great impact on the total number of students enrolling in higher education.

The *cost of living* for students represents another challenge as it impacts the dropout rates, causes a decrease in the number of students and pushes students to work and have less time to dedicate to learning.

More attention needs to be paid to the high *dropout rates* to improve the understanding of the causes and to identify solutions that can be developed (this was also addressed in Part A, please see p.20).
Apart from the special groups of students mentioned in the national policy documents (students from low-income families, from rural areas, Roma students and others), the needs of working students, including those working abroad, should also be addressed in the institutional and national strategies.

These challenges could also serve as opportunities and incentives for the institution to build awareness and stimulate rethinking and reshaping the role of the university at the community level and redefining its social responsibilities. At the same time, acknowledging and developing an institutional strategy to address access and equity issues can help build a powerful brand for the university as a whole.

Romanian universities may have an important opportunity to take up these challenges as the Government Strategy for 2013-2016 (please see p. 46) includes, as a main priority, ensuring social equity policies, strengthening social cohesion and the improvement of Roma participation in higher education along with other under-represented groups.

There are also the changes in the legislative framework (adopted with the new law of education, no. 1/2011 – please see p. 44 and 54) with impact on equity even if there is a need for further development of procedures such as the procedures for the allocation of the inclusion fund, procedure for allocating the loan scheme for students and others.

The international commitments of Romania in the Bologna Process also represents opportunities to set quantifiable targets for increasing access to higher education and adopting necessary measures to achieve these objectives, raising graduation and participation rates in higher education, increasing the participation of under-represented groups in higher education, reporting national strategies, action plans and measures for efficacy evaluation.

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Due to these opportunities, important efforts are required to stimulate a discussion among all higher education stakeholders about the value and indeed the long-term necessity of elaborating policies and programs that will help make higher education a pillar of improved economic and social conditions for all members of society in Romania.

Another challenge for Romanian universities is represented by the globalization of the learning environment, reflected in the development of e-learning programs and online education platforms and tools. This process had as a consequence until now the opening of prestigious foreign universities for Romanian (or other countries in development) students, by e-learning master programs. Potential students might be attracted by the offer of these universities, since they could obtain a diploma without moving temporary abroad. This is a challenge for Romanian universities, since they are exposed to direct competition with American and Western-European universities with a strong tradition and reputation. In order to face this competition, Romanian universities should meet all the requirements of quality in higher education and align their standards with European educational standards.

Finally, it was obvious that the conceptual framework of "equity and social cohesion" used within the project is not a familiar framework for most of the people interviewed: in several occasions the issues of positive role of university in society, relationship with local industry, quality higher education provision for students with an affordable financing scheme, dominated the conversation, leading the visiting team to think that the broader "social role of higher education" concept may be a much more familiar framework in which to organise future activities. If we keep the "equity" focus we risk obtaining replies that mostly refer to the universities' attempts to comply with the existing non-discrimination related legislation, but with no real autonomous policy making on this topic. By contrast, in a "social role of university" perspective we might be able to see a university policy and a way to relate to societal needs in a broader perspective, which may or may not include equity and social cohesion.

In addition to this, all considerations of equity in access should include the relationship with secondary schools, which is recognised to be the area in which effective equity, access and social cohesion focused education policies should be developed simultaneously.

We therefore recommend that, in a possible future development of the work, the equity in higher education analysis is placed in the broader context of the social role of universities, which is more easily understood by most academic interlocutors. This will not mean losing focus but using a concept that is an object of "policy attention" by university leaders rather that imposing a particular way of reasoning about equity and social cohesion.

Part C – Recommendations

Following the analysis conducted by a team of international and national experts within the project "Higher Education Evidence Based Policy Making: a necessary premise for progress in Romania" developed by UEFISCDI, recommendations have been developed with the aim of enhancing the equity policy framework in higher education. The first set of recommendations target the national level, addressing decision makers in organizations and institutions dealing with policies which impact on equity in higher education (Ministry of Education, the Council for Financing, the National Quality Assurance Agency and others). Other recommendations are targeting the institutional (university) level, addressing mainly decision-makers within Romanian universities and academic community members dealing with issues related to equity and access (members of departments/commissions for admission, social affairs, scholarships, counselling and others).

The national recommendations were developed as a result of a detailed study, which included an analysis of the current policies regarding equity, the available data and the relevant official international and national documents. The recommendations were also developed as a result of mutual learning workshops and debates between international and national experts during their site visits to institutions.

Institutional recommendations were developed as a result of data analysis submitted by the case-study universities (as guided by the IAU self-study guide) and site visit findings. The recommendations listed below are based on issues and situations found in the majority of the universities visited. Even though the analysed sample was not extensive, due to the diversity of the study cases (institutions that were state and private; technical, humanist and military; located in different regions of Romania etc.), the institutional recommendations could be applicable to all universities interested in developing policies regarding equity and the social dimension of higher education.

At both levels, and as an overall suggestion for the further development of policies and programs in this field, the experts agreed that it may be useful to shift the scope of reflection towards a more comprehensive focus on the social role and responsibilities of higher education, which also includes equity in access and success/participation.

It is thus recommended that actions be taken at national and institutional level to promote a shared understanding of the social role and responsibilities of universities, which include the institutional role in promoting equity in access and success.

This is needed because the conceptual framework of "equity and social cohesion" used in the international and regional policy discourse is not a familiar framework for most of the institutional representatives: on several occasions the positive role of university in society, relationship with local industry, quality services to students were underlined, whereas the notion of equity did not seem to be understood with all its multi-faceted implications. A narrow focus on "equity" leads universities to demonstrate compliance with existing legislation, but does not prompt them to think about autonomous policies in this field. A "social role of higher education" perspective might therefore stimulate a more comprehensive reflection on societal needs in a broader perspective that is most likely to include equity in higher education as a broader concept than mere non-discrimination as it is outlined on page 6. Similarly, the social dimension of higher

education should also encompass the relationships with secondary schools and local communities, which are essential for effective access, retention and success policies in higher education as well as increasing retention in educational pathways of young Romanians from all walks of life.

While the following set of recommendations focus on and address the issue of equity in higher education, measures to support high school students, outreach and partnerships with secondary education are also very important when tackling the issue of equity in higher education in the Romanian context. They must form part of any future strategy as well.

I.   National level Recommendations

1. It is recommended that the Romanian government, in consultation with higher education stakeholders and representatives of various civil society groups, develops and adopts a national strategy for enhancing the social dimension of higher education, which would include *inter alia:*
   - Identification of the main under-represented and disadvantaged groups in higher education at the national and regional levels;
   - Targets for the access and graduation of under-represented groups;
   - Measures and incentives for universities to reach the targets (financial, legislative, of a voluntary nature and others); the designated measures and incentives can be piloted with a smaller sample of universities;
   - A communication strategy aiming at raising awareness for all stakeholders (including universities) and at providing useful information for prospective students and their families, especially for the under-represented groups (especially regarding the benefits of higher education and the existing support policies), while incentivize universities to develop outreach strategies in collaboration with local authorities.
   - Special incentives for universities with a clear strategy for increasing and diversifying access to higher education of groups deemed under-represented;
   - A clear evaluation/monitoring strategy to assess progress towards the set targets;
   - Possibilities for using distance education in order to reach specific student groups;
   - A strategy for using recognition of prior learning (RPL) as a 'second chance' for access to higher education for those who did not benefit from such an opportunity before.
2. It is recommended that the Ministry of Education mandates an existing department or creates a specialized structure to develop, coordinate and monitor the implementation of all policies regarding the social dimension of higher education with a focus on equitable access, retention and completion.
3. It is recommended that a national data collection system be put in place in order to develop and implement evidence-based policies in the area of widening access and improving equity in higher education. The system should include data elements needed to monitor the effectiveness of an equity agenda, such as, among others information about the socio-economic characteristics of the student body. In this respect, it is important to identify students who suffer from multiple social deprivation factors (e.g. low income, poor housing, minority status, poor health conditions, rural environment, etc.) to be sure that the general provisions intended for large target groups are coordinated and personalized in the most critical cases.
4. It is recommended to assess the current national student support schemes and their impact as follows:

- Review of the current scholarship system to achieve a clearer allocation (or actual separation) of state funds made available to each of the two different scholarship schemes, one targeting performance and the other targeting equity;
- Revision of the instruments put in place for the access to higher education of youth from rural areas in order to ensure their use by the intended beneficiaries (Government Resolution 769/14 July 2005 on the giving of study scholarships to students living in rural areas);
- Review the criteria and process in place to allocate and distribute student dormitory places among different groups of students (especially those subsidized by the state);
- Review the way special subsidized places for Roma students are allocated.

5. It is recommended to make use of the current legal provisions that support equity goals and to develop appropriate secondary legislation for the provisions to be implemented properly (for example operationalizing the provisions in the National Education Law regarding the possibility for universities to have special subsidized places for students from cities with under 10.000 inhabitants – Art. 205 (6) and regarding the distribution of "additional funding" as an incentive for universities to raise the commitment towards equity – Art. 7, (2));

6. It is recommended to analyze the feasibility of the student loan system in the current Romanian higher education context and in line with Romania's international commitments;

7. It is recommended to develop specific policies and tools in order to raise the number of students with disabilities who participate in higher education;

8. It is recommended to develop regulations and expertise for the proper implementation of RPL (recognition of prior learning) as a tool for enhancing the flexibility of studies;

9. Should there be a revision of the current university classification methodology, it is recommended to use benchmarks or introduce specific equity indicators as incentives for universities to develop institutional strategies regarding the social dimension of higher education.

II.   Institutional level recommendations

Increasing access and retention to higher education is a priority in Europe and in Romania. All universities are expected to contribute to the realization of this goal by opening up to all potential students, not only to those from privileged social backgrounds.

As part of their role in society, universities should encourage equitable access to education for all categories of potential students as a way to tap into the full national talent pool; to improve the economic potential of the region/ country; to become a key actor in social programs and become visible in pro-active ways in the socio-economic environment; to build a strong brand for the university. Promoting equity is thus part of the societal role played by universities but it also has an economic rationale. Talented high-school graduates from rural areas, from a low-income family, from a Roma family or a disabled graduates who cannot access higher education because of different barriers, represents a loss for both the individual but also for the society/region leading to under-developed human resources.

Moreover, the continuous demographic decrease and the decrease of the proportion of young people who graduate from high school with a baccalaureate diploma, impact greatly on the existing and future student numbers, requires coherent institutional strategies to attract more students from a far more diverse background.

A. Strategic approach to access and equity

A. 1 It is recommended that more effort be made to raise and improve awareness of all members of the academic community on issues related to the university's social role, which begins with promoting equitable access opportunities.

- o Such efforts could include institution-wide discussions of the rationale for developing a strategy, collecting information about the value-added of a diverse and inclusive student body and identifying ways in which faculty, students and staff could be engaged in specific activities linked to the university equity strategy.

A. 2 The universities at present use an individually tailored system for solving academic and social problems of students, analyzing each specific case. To make this more effective, it is recommended that, in the context of an overall plan of the institutions, a long-term institutional strategy regarding equity in higher education be included. Such a strategy may include[36]:

- Institutional level analysis;
- Objectives (equity goals and targets);
- Specific action plans for identified priority areas;
- Budget to achieve the proposed objectives;
- Definitions of monitoring indicators and mechanisms for collecting relevant data and information;
- Communication strategy/plan to reach and provide useful information for prospective students and their families, especially for the under-represented groups.
- An outreach strategy to be implemented together with the communication strategy;
- Incentives for university staff actively engaged in the implementation of the university equity strategy ;

A. 3 It is recommended that data collection regarding different characteristics of the student body be improved at the institutional level to monitor applications, admissions and registrations of students, in order to learn more about their socio-economic background and their parents' educational background,. It is also recommended that the information collected is actually used to further increase the level of personalization of support measures, particularly when individuals belong to more than one "equity target group" and concentrate several social deprivation factors (e.g. low income, disabled condition, minority status, etc.);

A. 4 It is recommended that institutions monitor all support measures and student services (scholarships or mentoring, for example), in order to analyse their efficiency and effectiveness;

A. 5 It is recommended that institutions enforce the legal possibility for social scholarships to be cumulated with merit-based scholarships (as it is stipulated by the National Education Law).

Recommendations with impact on the financial strategy of universities:

A. 6 It is recommended that universities use the scholarship system for giving more financial assistance to students from a low socio-economic background so as to offer access to all academically qualified students and ensure that they do not leave the country or quit their studies;

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[36] A model of equity plan is attached to the present document. It can be used as guideline for the posible development of institutional equity plans.

A. 7 It is recommended that universities develop the institutional capacity and infrastructure to make access to education of students with disabilities possible (ramps, equipment for deaf or mute students or students with other type of disability);

A. 8 It is recommended that the experience gained by managing European funds be used to attract funds aiming to develop the equity agenda and the social dimension of higher education. Such initiatives could include offering social scholarships, attracting diverse ethnic groups (such as Roma students) or disabled candidates, as well as for developing special services for these students and enhancing the institutional capacity (building new dormitories, providing special equipment for deaf students or with other type of disability).

B. Outreach programs

B.1 It is recommended that institutions seek ways of specifically target potential students from under-represented groups, in order to attract them to enrol into university (e.g. allocating a number of places for special target groups, financial incentives, promoting the university educational offer and others);

B.2 It is recommended that new outreach and bridging instruments be developed for attracting more diverse groups of students, such as free preparatory courses for high school students, academic guidance for students and families, etc.;

B.3 It is recommended that institutions increase their efforts to inform the Roma people about higher education opportunities and benefits, and support them in their studies.

C. Admission procedures

C.1 It is recommended that universities improve their selection mechanisms so that special attention is given to diversifying the student body, in order to reflect the diversity of the national population.

D. Programs for improved retention

D.1 It is recommended that higher education institutions invest more resources into Career Counseling and Orientation structures, so that they can implement the full range of activities needed. These activities may include special attention for students from under-represented groups, targeted counseling services, academic guidance, studies for analyzing students' perspectives related to their academic path or social needs and others;

D.2 It is important that higher education institutions develop a generic and inclusive student support structure to enhance student retention and successful completion. There are many examples of support programs that either support students academically or socially but most importantly that they take the students' social and cultural capital into account with the aim to create a sense of belonging within the institutions;

D.3 It is recommended that the institutions assure the flexibility of studies through proper implementation of the ECTS system based on both effective definition and evaluation of learning outcomes and student workload but also by providing real flexible learning paths, for example through distance learning programs, evening courses, recognition of prior learning.

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ANNEX 1 - Equity Plan at the Institutional Level

1. Identification of Relevant Equity Groups

The plan should consider the following main equity target groups and decide which ones are relevant in the context of the country and region in which the institution operates:

- Individuals from the lower income groups,
- Groups with a minority status linked to their ethnic, linguistic, religious, cultural, age or residence characteristics,
- Females and males;
- People with disabilities.

While the equity plan would focus mainly on the students, it should also address, wherever relevant, equity issues with reference to staff (academic and administrative), organization/management and curriculum.

It should be noted that these categories are not mutually exclusive. The principal dimensions of inequalities often overlap in several ways. For example, ethnic minorities tend to be more predominant in rural areas and are commonly affected by poverty. Disparities in access to tertiary education for children of immigrants are more of an issue in industrial countries than in developing countries.

2. Assessment of the Equity Gaps for Each Relevant Group

The plan should present an assessment of the situation of each relevant equity group in terms of access to the institution and success at the time of completion of studies. Information gaps should also be identified and remedy actions included in the relevant section of the overall Strategic Plan (SP) of the institution.

3. Presentation of Institutional Equity Goals and Targets

The mission and vision statements of the SP should include specific references to the equity dimension.

The equity plan should propose concrete, quantifiable objectives linked measuring progress in terms of access and success of the relevant equity groups.

4. Action Plan and Budget to Achieve the Proposed Objectives

The most important part of the equity plan will be a set of actions to be implemented as part of the SP in order to achieve the proposed objectives. These actions will be a combination of financial and non-financial measures. All actions should be integrated into the institution's overall strategic plan and fully funded.

Financial equity promotion measures may include any of the following:

- Reduced or waived exam fees
- Scholarships / grants
- Student loans

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- Unconditional tuition waivers
- Work for tuition programs
- Credit for prior relevant work or study experience
- Food and accommodation support

Non-financial measures may include any of the following:

- Flexible admission to facilitate access
  - Bridge programs
  - Conditional admission
  - Adult entry program
  - Infrastructure adapted to needs of students with disability

- Preferential Admission to compensate for academic disadvantage:
  - Quotas for designated groups
  - Lower admission requirements for designated groups

- Persistence and retention measures (academic, structural and personal support to facilitate success for disadvantaged groups and students with learning difficulties):
  - Pre-entry summer program
  - Reformed curriculum
  - Office of student affairs
  - First-year senior administrator
  - Induction and first-year seminars
  - Early-warning system
  - Remedial programs
  - Tutoring
  - Academic & career counseling
  - Student groups / social & cultural events
  - Faculty resource handbook for dealing with students with disabilities
  - Professional development of staff in working with underrepresented groups

Appropriate measures for promoting equity among academic and administrative staff should also be considered.

5. Definition of Monitoring Indicators and Mechanisms

The equity plan should include relevant indicators to monitor progress in implementing all these actions and mechanisms for follow up and correction in case of unsuccessful implementation.

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ANNEX 2 – Group of experts

Coordinator:
Eva Egron Polak – is Secretary-General of the International Association of Universities (IAU), an international non-governmental organization based at UNESCO in Paris, France.

Bringing together Higher Education Institutions and Associations from every region, the IAU is committed to strengthening higher education worldwide by providing a global forum for leaders, undertaking research and analysis, disseminating information and taking up advocacy positions in the interest of quality higher education being available to all.

With a long experience in international co-operation in higher education, and now as the Secretary General of the IAU, Eva Egron-Polak is engaged with many of the most pressing issues in current higher education policy debates globally, such as internationalization, cross-border higher education, higher education for sustainable development, and equitable access to higher education, among others. Prior to joining the IAU, she was Vice President (international) of the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada. She was educated in the Czech Republic, Canada and France.

International Experts

- **Mary Tupan-Wenno** - is the executive director of ECHO, Center for Diversity Policy in Utrecht, The Netherlands. Before ECHO she worked for the Dutch Ministry of Education Culture and Science as a policy advisor at the Department of Higher Education. At the ministry she was also responsible for the development of policy regarding the improvement of the participation and success of ethnic minorities in higher education. She was pas part of a team that worked on the establishment of ECHO in 1994.
Mary is a founding member of the European Access Network (1991) and is currently the President of the Executive Board of EAN. EAN provided a network to broaden her focus and expand international collaboration.

- **Claudiu Dondi –** is the President of SCIENTER – a non-profit research organization based in Bologna and active Europe-wide in the field of innovation of education and training systems – since its establishment in 1988. In this position his main activities are the co-ordination of large national and European projects, as well as policy advice and evaluation at regional, national and international level. His other positions include: President of EFQUEL – the European Foundation for Quality in eLearning, Member of the Board of the MENON EEIG (enabling eLearning) in Brussels, Member of the Editorial Board of the British Journal of Educational Technology. From 2001 to 2008 he has been Vice-President of EIfEL – the European Institute for e-learning and from 2001 to 2006 Vice-President of EDEN – the European Distance Education Network.

- **Peter Brown –** is a Programme Manager with the National Office for Equity of Access to Higher Education within the Higher Education Authority (HEA). The HEA is the statutory planning and development body for higher education and research in Ireland, with wide advisory powers throughout the sector. In addition it is the funding authority for the universities, institutes of technology and a number of designated higher education institutions. The National Access Office manages the Springboard Labor Market Activation initiative on behalf of the Department of Education and Skills.

- **Elodie Boisfer –** is a Program Officer working for the International Association of Universities since 2008. Élodie Boisfer was first the Secretary-General's Executive Assistant (2008-2011), before to become one of the IAU Program Officers. Working closely with the Secretary General, Élodie is engaged, since 2010, in developing and managing IAU activities in regards with the twin issues of equitable access and success in higher education. She is also the manager of the LEADHER grant program and she coordinates the organization of the IAU Annual Conferences and GMAs.

- **Jamil Salmi –** was the coordinator of the World Bank's network of tertiary education professionals. Mr. Salmi is the principal author of the Bank's new Tertiary Education Strategy entitled "Constructing Knowledge Societies: New Challenges for Tertiary Education." In the past thirteen years, he has provided policy and technical advice on tertiary education reform to the governments of over 35 countries around the world. Mr. Salmi has also guided the strategic planning efforts of several public and private universities in Colombia, Kenya, Mexico and Peru. Before moving to the Human Development Vice-Presidency in July 2001, Mr. Salmi worked for 7 years in the Bank's Latin America and Caribbean region (as Education Sector Manager among others); in the Education and Social Policy Department of the World Bank (1990-1993) and also prepared the World Bank's first Policy Paper on Higher Education (1994). Prior to joining the World Bank, Mr. Salmi was a professor of education economics at the National Institute of Education Planning in Rabar, Morocco. He also worked as a consultant to various ministries, national professional associations, and international organizations. Mr. Salmi is a graduate of the French Grande Ecole ESSEC. He also holds a Master's degree in Public and International Affairs from the University of Pittsburgh (USA) and a PhD in Development Studies from the University of Sussex (UK). He is the author of five books and numerous articles on education and development issues.

Romanian Experts:

All experts worked together with Remus Pricopie, the Minister of National Ministry of Education, in the various project aimed at studying equity in HE in the past years:

- **Nicoleta Corbu** - Vice-Dean for research of the College of Communication and Public Relations and Executive Director of the Center for Research in Communication, College of Communication and Public Relations, both at the National School of Political Studies and Public Administration (SNSPA), Bucharest. She owns a PHD, in Sociology, Magna cum laude, Doctoral School of Sociology, SNSPA Bucharest.

- **Valeriu Frunzaru** - Lecturer at the College of Communication and Public Relations, National School of Political Sciences and Public Administration, Bucharest. Specialist in Sociology, he is the author of many articles and studies regarding equity and social inclusion, gender balance and social public policies.

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- **Ligia Deca** is a PhD candidate in political science at the University of Luxembourg, focusing on higher education and Europeanisation policy research. She recently published in the Journal of the EHEA and Interntionalisation of HE Handbook (Raabe) and she is now editing a research volume on higher education reforms in Romania (published by Springer), forthcoming. Previously, she was the Head of the Bologna Follow-Up Group Secretariat (2010-2012), and the Chairperson of the European Students' Union (2008-2010).

- **Cezar Hâj** is a public policy expert at the Executive Agency for Higher Education, Research, Development and Innovation Funding (UEFISCDI), where he coordinates the activities within the project "Higher Education Evidence Based Policy Making: a necessary premise for progress in Romania". He is also currently a doctoral researcher at the National School for Political and Administrative Studies. Previously, Cezar Haj was a member of the Bologna Secretariat (2010-2012).

- **Daniela Alexe** is a public policy expert at the Executive Agency for Higher Education, Research, Development and Innovation Funding (UEFISCDI), focusing on Bologna Process implementation and equity in higher education. Previously, she was the president of the National Alliance of Student Organizations in Romania and studied economics at the Academy of Economic Studies and public policies at the National School for Political and Administrative Studies.

ANNEX 3 – IAU Self-Assessment Instrument on Equitable Access and Success in Higher Education

IAU Self-Assessment Instrument on Equitable Access and Success in

Higher Education

Guidelines for Institutional Internal Review and Data Gathering

The questions below are intended to guide the case study universities in conducting a review of institutional equity/social cohesion policies and activities. This review should have the ownership of the entire academic community (i.e. students, teaching and research staff, administrative staff should be part of the self-assessment efforts) and the final report should bear the signature of a representative of the university leadership (Rector or Vice-Rector).

The project experts' team recommends that you follow the structure of the guiding questions below to organize the self-study report. It is important to note that these questions are meant to be a prompt for the institutional committee's work in gathering information and in analyzing the strengths, weaknesses, and gaps in equity/social cohesion. **You may choose not to answer all questions, and there may be additional areas the committee wishes to investigate. You may also want to emphasize some areas more than others**.

This self-assessment instrument has been designed by the International Association of Universities (IAU) to enable each institution to assess the extent to which its policies and practices are equitable and how well they address the needs of students from under-represented groups to ensure, facilitate or encourage their successful participation and graduation. The Self-assessment instrument invites HEIs to measure their level of involvement in issues relating to equitable access and success in higher education, and helps them to evaluate their policy and practice in these domains.

A brief and fairly straightforward **Glossary of Terms** has been included for your reference and to ensure that all institutions undertaking the self-assessment have a shared understanding of the questions and basic concepts (annex).

(Use additional space as needed, in this and other sections)

For the institutional coordinator of the overall information gathering/self-assessment process, please indicate:

Name:

Position:

Full contact details:

For each person participating in the completion of this self-assessment process please indicate:

Name:

Position:

A. Institutional Information and Profile

Name of the Institution:

City:

Country:

Language(s) of Tuition/ Instruction:

1. **How many degree seeking students were enrolled at your institution as of the beginning of the 2012-2013 academic year?**

	Total Number of students	Number of students paying tuition fees	Number of students not paying tuition fees
Part time students (low frequency/distance learning)			
Full time students			

2. **For each degree level offered at your institution, please indicate the number of enrolled students.**

Level	Total number of students	Number of students paying tuition fees	Number of students not paying tuition fees
BA/BSc (1st cycle) level			
MA/MSc (2nd cycle) level			
PhD (3rd cycle) level			
Other, please specify:			

3. **Your institution is:** (Please select <u>one</u>)

   ☐ Public

   ☐ Private

4. **Please indicate if your institution has branches located outside the primary location:** (Please select <u>one</u>)

   ☐ Yes

   ☐ No

If yes, please indicate their locations:

B. Financial Considerations

5. **Does your institution charge tuition fees[37]?** (Please select <u>one</u>)

   ☐ Yes

   ☐ No

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[37]Tuition fees = Taxes for a BA/MA or PHD studies

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6. **Does your institution waive/ reduce fees for any category of students?** (Please select <u>one</u>)

   ☐ Yes

   ☐ No

   i. **If yes, please indicate for which category of students your institution waives/ reduces fees, what type of fees are taken into consideration and for which criteria?** (e.g. students with low family income)

7. **Does your institution provide financial assistance (other than waiving / reducing fees) to any group of students?** (Please select <u>one</u>)

   ☐ Yes

   ☐ No

   i. **If yes, please indicate the kind of financial assistance offered and for which group:** (e.g. scholarships for students with low income).

C. Equitable Access in the Institutional Mission

8. **Is the issue of equitable access for students from under-represented groups mentioned in the mission statement?** (Please select <u>one</u>)

   ☐ Yes

   ☐ No

9. **Is the issue of equitable access for students from under-represented groups mentioned in the university charter or other regulatory document adopted by the Senate?**

   ☐ Yes

   ☐ No

   Please provide the parts of the document where this is specified as an annex.

   i. If so, why did your institution decide to focus on the issue of Equitable Access?

   ii. Do you have quantitative and qualitative targets?

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10. **Does your institution keep enrolment records according to student socio economic, ethnic and/or special needs categories?** (Please select <u>one</u>)

    □ Yes

    □ No

    i. **If yes, please indicate for which of the following groups such information is kept:**

    □ Applicants

    □ Admitted students

    □ Graduated students

    □ Other, please specify:

    ii. **If yes, please indicate what type of information is kept:**

    iii. **Please indicate the criteria according to which students are classified into different categories (special needs categories):**

11. **Does your university have specific action plan(s) to address equitable access?** (Please select <u>one</u>)

    □ Yes

    □ No

    i. **If yes, is the action plan tailored to specific group(s) of students?** (Please select <u>one</u>)

    □ Yes

    □ No

    ii. **If yes, indicate which under-represented group(s)[38] is/are targeted:**

    (Please select all relevant categories)

    □ Chronically ill students

    □ Disabled students

    □ Female students

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[38] All possible underrepresented categories according to Romanian national legislation

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☐ First generation students

☐ Mature students (over 30 years old)

☐ Students from rural areas (who still have a permanent residence in rural areas)

☐ Students from underrepresented ethnic groups (e.g. Roma students)

☐ Students with low socio-economic status (SES)[39]

☐ Working students

☐ Students with children

☐ Orphan students

☐ Students from placement centres or family placement

☐ Students which can prove their quality or of a parent as „Victory fighters in the Romanian Revolution in December 1989" or as „martyr hero"- mentioning: wounded, detained, injured and detained, with a patent signed by the Romania`s President

☐ Students from disadvantaged areas[40]

☐ Students from cities with less than 10.000 inhabitants

☐ Ethnic Romanian students coming from abroad (Ex: Students from Republic of Moldova)

☐ Others, please specify:

12. **Does the action plan include a specific program for students from some categories of under-represented groups?** (Please select <u>one</u>)

    ☐ Yes

    ☐ No

    i.   If yes, please indicate for which category(ies):

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[39] According to HG 558/1998 - Students whose families have a lower average net income per member in the last 3 months than the minimum wage
[40] Areas that are declared disadvantaged areas by a government decision

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13. Please indicate the number of students enrolled in your institution over the last most recent five years from each target group (if identified as such by your institution) :

Year: Under-represented group					
Chronically ill students					
Disabled students					
Female students					
First generation students					
Mature students (over 30 years old)					
Students from rural areas (who still have a permanent residence in rural areas)					
Students from under-represented ethnic groups e.g. Hungarian students, Ukrainian students, Roma students etc.)					
Students with low socio-economic status (SES) (in accordance with the criteria of social scholarships regarding family income)					
Working students					
Students with children					
Orphan students					
Students from placement centres or family placement					
Students which can prove their quality or of a parent as „Victory fighters in the Romanian Revolution in December					

1989" or as „martyr hero"- mentioning: wounded, detained, injured and detained, with a patent signed by the Romania`s President					
Students from disadvantaged areas					
Students from cities with less than 10.000 inhabitants					
Ethnic Romanian students coming from abroad (Ex: Students from Republic of Moldova)					
Roma students					
Roma students over those studding on special budgeted places					
The number of students which applies for social scholarships					
Number of students receiving social scholarships (from the public fund)					
Number of students receiving merit based scholarships (merit, study, performance, from the public fund)					

i. **For the current year, please complete the table below:**

Family Income/month	Below the national minimum wage	Between the minimum and national average wage	Above average
Number of incoming Students			

ii. **For the previous year (indicate), please complete the table below:**

Family Income/month	Below the national minimum wage	Between the minimum and national average wage	Above average
Number of graduated Students			

14. **With regard to institutional Administrative Structures,**

a) **Is there an office or an individual whose main responsibility is to improve equitable access?**
   (Please select <u>one</u>)

   ☐ Yes

   ☐ No

   i. **If yes, is such an office or individual mandated to work at:**

      ☐ Institution level

      ☐ Faculty level

      ☐ Department level

b) **Is there a specific budget allocated to improving equitable access?**

   ☐ Yes

   ☐ No

   i. **If yes, please indicate the main source of the funds**

      ☐ Institutional budget

      ☐ Specific Government Program

      ☐ Foundations

      ☐ Private sector/industry sponsored program

      ☐ Other, please specify:

c) **Is there a monitoring/ evaluation framework to assess progress and impact of access policies?**
   (Please select <u>one</u>)

   ☐ Yes

   ☐ No

   i. **If yes, please describe it:**

D. Equitable Access in the Admission Policies

15. **Does your institution systematically track applicants from under-represented groups at admission?** (Please select underlined one)

    □ Yes

    □ No

16. **Does your institution offer special consideration to applicants from under-represented groups at the time of admission?** (Please select underlined one)

    □ Yes

    □ No

    i.   If yes:

        a.   Please specify for which groups:

        b.   Please describe such special considerations or alternative admission options: (Please select all relevant options)

            □ Interviews

            □ Different weighting of criteria

            □ Quotas or targeted admission numbers

            □ Other, please specify:

17. **Regarding the potential students from target under-represented group, what outreach and academic support activities have been put in place to increase their access to your university programs?** (Please select all relevant activities)

    □ Regular contacts with secondary schools with large numbers of students in target group (s)

    □ Pre-admission counselling

    □ Flexible/ Multiple academic pathways from high school through to postgraduate study

    □ Assistance with application preparation

    □ Pre-enrolment programs offered during long break between academic sessions

    □ Assistance with examinations preparation

☐ Alternate examination arrangements

☐ Counselling or recruitment in schools with large numbers of students from low socio-economic background

☐ Other kind of activities, please specify:

18. **Is there a system for evaluating such admission policy(ies)?** (Please select <u>one</u>)

☐ Yes

☐ No

i. **If yes, please describe it:**

19. **Where is the impetus for choosing to target this/these group(s) coming from?** (Please select all relevant options)

☐ Government policy

☐ Institutional mission

☐ Civil Society (NGOs/ Trade Unions/ Human Rights Organisations/ etc.)

☐ Employers

☐ Other, please specify:

20. **Does your institution recognise prior and experiential learning for admission purposes?**

☐ Yes

☐ No

i. **If yes, please describe how this is done:**

E. Successful participation, retention and graduation

21. Does your institution use a process to identify the specific needs of students from under-represented groups?

    □ Yes

    □ No

    i.   If yes, please describe it, indicating when such screening is applied and by whom, etc:

22. Which services does your institution provide to respond to the specific needs of students from underrepresented groups as identified in question 11.ii? Please list the underrepresented groups(s) to which such services are offered in the space provided below proposed series of services.

    i. Does your institution provide *academic support* ? Please select all that are provided:

    □   Preparation for academic life (i.e List target group(s): writing skills, library use, study methods, etc.)

    List target group(s):

    □ Special orientation sessions

    List target group(s):

    □ Tutoring/ mentoring/ peer mentoring

    List target group(s):

    □ Academic advisors

    List target group(s):

    □ Specific support for students with language needs

    List target group(s):

    □ Specific support for students with other learning needs

    List target group(s):

    □ Tutorial services

    List target group(s):

☐ Other, please specify

List target group(s):

ii. Does your institution provide ***financial support***? Please select all that are provided:

☐ Subsidized accommodation

List target group(s):

☐ Subsidized meal

List target group (s):

☐ Full subsidized (accommodation + meal)

List target group (s):

☐ Equipment or transport support

List target group(s):

☐ Grants and bursaries

List target group(s):

☐ Loans

List target group(s):

☐ Other, please specify

List target group(s):

iii. Does your institution provide ***social support***? Please select all that are provided:

☐ Extra-curricular activities

List target group(s):

☐ Careers counselling

List target group(s):

☐ Specific services for disabled/ chronically ill students

List target group(s):

☐ Psychological counselling service

List target group(s):

□ Peer monitoring

List target group(s):

□ Other, please specify

List target group(s):

23. **Does your institution offer alternative study/learning paths?**

   □ Yes

   □ No

   i.   **If yes, please indicate what kinds of alternative study/learning paths are offered** (Please select all that apply)**:**

   □ Curriculum adapted to needs of disabled/ chronically ill students

   □ Curriculum specifically designed for and about students from underrepresented ethnic groups

   □ Preparatory courses for entrance examinations

   □ Specific programs for women (or men) in non-traditional disciplines

   □ Adjusted schedule for working students

   □ Distance education courses

   □ Extra tutorials

   □ Mentoring

   □ Other, please specify

   ii.   **If yes, is the success of such alternative study/learning paths monitored systematically?**

   □ Yes

   □ No

   iii.   **If yes, please describe the monitoring approach and indicate who is responsible for it:**

24. **Does your institution provide academic and career counselling through specialised centres?**

   □ Yes
   □ No

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i. If yes:

a) Please list the different specialised centres and describe their mission/mandate:

b) Please indicate the staff complement:

c) Please indicate the budget allocated to these centres

F. Rewards/Incentives for quality teaching and curricular innovation to improve retention and success

25. **Are faculty and staff members recognized for their contribution(s)/efforts to improving equitable access and success by learners from under-represented groups?**

    ☐ Yes

    ☐ No

    i. **If yes, how is this done? Please describe the kind of reward offered:**

26. **Does your institution encourage curricular innovation that may improve success among learners from under-represented groups?**

    ☐ Yes

    ☐ No

    i. **If yes, please indicate how this is done:**

27. **Does your institution monitor and assess how curricular innovations impact on the retention/success rates of students from under-represented groups?**

    ☐ Yes

    ☐ No

    i. **If yes, please describe how this is done:**

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G. Faculty development to promote retention and success

28. Does your institution provide faculty and staff development opportunities to enhance their understanding and readiness to work on improving equitable access and success?

    ☐ Yes

    ☐ No

    i. **If yes, please describe how this is done:**

29. How does your institution prepare its faculty and staff to deliver education and services to a diverse student population (with different needs)?

30. Please list any innovative pedagogical approaches that were introduced by your institution to better meet the needs of a diversified student body:

31. Does your institution encourage its faculty to work (as a topic for research and academic interest) on the issue of equitable access and success in higher education?

    ☐ Yes

    ☐ No

    i. **If yes, please describe how this is done:**

H. Education delivery modes and outreach

32. Has your institution introduced special measures and/or new delivery modes to facilitate access to learning by learners from under-represented groups?

☐ Yes

☐ No

i.   If yes, please describe these measures for each target group:

33. Which of the following measures has your institution put in place to respond to the diverse learning needs of students? (Please select all options that apply)

☐ E-learning

☐ Mobile campus(es)

☐ Evening classes

☐ Other, please specify:

34. If your institution has a career counselling centre please provide data on how many students are being advised in the career counselling centre?

Year	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012
Students			
Students from under-represented groups			

35. Does your institution have a policy of alumni involvement in institutional development?

36. Does your institution have a strategy for preparing graduated students to be active citizens (democracy and tolerance classes, community volunteering and community outreach?)

      i.   If yes, please provide some details:

37. Does your institution have a strategy in response to the needs of the regional community?

I. Success Stories and Failures

38. Please describe successful initiatives for increasing equitable access and success in higher education, as an example of good practice. For each, please provide information such as target audience, objective, main actors involved, means, costs, incentives, indicators of success, etc.

39. Please describe an example of an initiative that aimed to improve equitable access or promotion of better success rates that failed and explain why it failed and what the institution has learned from the failure.

Date of completion:

Thank you for completing the questionnaire and sending it to the IAU by email to the attention of

Ms. Élodie Boisfer: e.boisfer@iau-aiu.net and Ms. Daniela Alexe : daniela.alexe@uefiscdi.ro .

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