

AGENȚIA ROMÂNĂ
DE ASIGURARE A CALITĂȚII ÎN
ȘCOALA ÎN ÎNVĂȚĂMÎNTUL SUPERIOR
REGISTRATURĂ

**EXTERNAL EVALUATOR'S REPORT FOR ARACIS
OF ECOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY OF BUCHAREST**

Bucharest, 2015

Introduction

I was appointed as a Foreign External Evaluator for the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ARACIS) and was consequently invited to join the evaluation team for the institutional accreditation process of Ecological University of Bucharest (EUB). The audit took place between Wednesday 28 October and Friday 30 October 2015.

The evaluation team consisted of the following members, in addition to myself:

Prof. univ. dr. Luca Iamandi (Danubius University of Galati) – Mission Director

Prof. univ. dr. ing. Marius Bulgaru (Technical University of Cluj-Napoca) – Coordinator of the Experts Evaluator Team

Prof. univ. dr. Viorel Lefter (Bucharest University of Economic Studies) – Advisory Commission Expert

Prof. univ. dr. Nicolae Todea ("1 Decembrie 1918" University of Alba Iulia) – Institutional Commission Expert

Assoc. Prof. dr. Lucica Tofan (Ovidius University of Constanta) – Program Expert

Assoc. Prof. dr. Constantin Marta (University "Eftimie Murgu" of Resita) – Program Expert

Prof. univ. dr. Rusu Marcel (Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu) – Program Expert

Prof. univ. dr. Ovidiu Stoica (Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iasi) – Program Expert

Oana Sarbu – Technical Secretary

Iulia Pop („Babeș-Bolyai" University of Cluj-Napoca) – Student Evaluator

Giurconiu Bogdan (West University of Timisoara) – Student Evaluator

The evaluation process began on Wednesday 28th October at 9 a.m. in the Senate Room with the welcoming speech of Prof. univ. dr. Alexandru Ticlea the Rector of EUB. He also introduced the management of the university. Then Prof. univ. dr. Marius Bulgaru presented the introductory statements of the mission and he asked the members of the evaluation team to introduce themselves. This was followed by a tour of the university to see the infrastructure of EUB.

Between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m. the group of experts was working on different aspects of the evaluation. In my role as Foreign Expert, I was responsible for establishing an overview of the whole university and was allowed to move freely, talking to members of staff and students of the university.

At 5 p.m. we had an appointment with a group of about 120 undergraduate students of EUB. At 6 p.m. we had another meeting with 60 graduate students. At 7 p.m. there was one hour appointment with 30 graduates' employers.

The first day ended with a meeting of the evaluators.

The team continued the evaluation process on Thursday the 29th of October starting at 9 a.m. and lasted until 7.30 p.m.

The evaluation process was finished on Friday, 30th of October at 1 p.m. when the team of experts prepared the final report. The evaluation process was conducted in open and collegial manner. The colleagues of EUB let me have all the materials I asked for during the evaluation process.

General Statements

EUB operates according to the laws that govern the Romanian higher education system and it is the first private higher education institute in Romania. It has been operating since 1990. It was accredited as an institution by the Law no. 282/2003.

Currently EUB has the following faculties:

- Faculty of Law and Administrative Science
- Faculty of Economics
- Faculty of Engineering and Environmental Management
- Faculty of Physical education and Sport
- Faculty of Ecology and Environmental Protection
- Faculty of Psychology
- Faculty of Communication sciences

EUB offering 11 programmes of bachelor degree studies that are accredited or have a temporary authorization. EUB also provides 22 master study programmes and the university also offers 33 postgraduate training in the areas of environmental science, law, economics, physical education and sports, social and political sciences, engineering sciences. Study programmes in foreign languages and doctoral education are missing at EUB.

I did not have the possibility to visit the campus of EUB in the centre of Bucharest but I experienced that the material infrastructure at the main campus nearly reaches the level of the optimal requirements.

Also a lot of wishes were formulated in the self-evaluation report but I experienced the realization only some of them.

Managerial Structure

The management of the university seems to be organised in accordance with its legal obligations, which are stated in the university's charter.

Within EUB the managing activity functions on different decision levels.

The managing structures at EUB are

- a) The University Senate and the Board of Directors at the level of the institution;
- b) The Faculty's Council;
- c) The Department's Council.

The Senate is the highest management level of the academic activities. There are 47 persons in the Senate at EUB (37 teaching staff, 10 students). It means that the participation rate of the students does not reach a percentage of 25%.

The Commissions of the Senate are: the commission of strategy and institutional development; the commission for internal regulations; the commission for scientific research; the commission for quality assurance and assessment; the commission of ethics and university deontology; the commission for academic relations; the commission for student problems; the commission for the recognition of study periods.

I could not find the Board of Directors in the organogram of EUB although it stated in the self-evaluation report: 'All the constitutive elements of the academic structure of the university are organized upon the proposal of the University Senate, with the approval of the Board of Directors, as to ensure the fulfilment of quality standards and criteria and to efficiently manage the educational and research activities. The technical-administrative structures are organized with the approval of the Board of Directors in order to ensure the logistic support corresponding to all activities.' (Probably the translator meant the Council of Administration which body is the only link between the two structures: academic management organizations and administrative organizations.)

The Board of Directors is selected by the founders and applies the strategic decisions of EUB and the Chairman of this body is appointed by the founders too, who is also the Chairman of the university.

The university is led by the Rector, who is supported by the Vice-Rectors. The Rector's duties include the strategic leadership of the university, representing the university at judicial and public bodies and he is in charge of the executive operational administration.

The faculties are the functional units drafting and managing study programs. EUB is divided into seven faculties, which are further subdivided into departments. Each faculty is led by a Dean and also has a faculty council.

The management system uses information and communication systems such as Internet and Intranet.

Comment: The existence of the above mentioned dual governance structure also implies some specific challenges to an effective and consistent strategic management.

Probably there is not enough human resource at EUB who could complete all the tasks which are attached to this structure.

Teaching Staff

The human resource of EUB is made of academic subjects and administrative staff.

The number of academic staff at EUB is 132 in the academic year of 2015/16. There are 104 employees in the academic staff who are employed full-time by the university and 44 (42,3%) of them are professors and associate professors. There are 28 part-time employees in the academic staff (3 of them are pensioner). Nearly everybody of the academic staff members at EUB is PhD holder (97,11%).

The ratio of teaching staff to the number of students is sufficient (1/31). The academic staff is overwhelmed at EUB.

Although the structure of HR seems balanced I did not see the HRD plan of EUB.

Comment:

The scientific potential and quality of human capital at EUB seems to be on a good level but the quantity of human capacity should be strengthened at EUB. The ratio of students to the teaching staff is quite far from the OECD and European average level. The proportions need to be improved. The human resource development plans for the future should be realized.

Facilities

EUB has two Campuses which are situated rather far from each other.

Most but not all the educational spaces fulfil every requirement of the European standards. There is no students' hostel. Regarding to the accommodation of students, EUB has proper leased places in the dormitories of Artifex University which based on contracts. The facilities of the sport activities are very limited. There is a small outdoor multipurpose sport field and also a small gym inside the building.

EUB has a small library with little space. In the library the computers are very few. I could not find exact figures in the self-assessment report about the collection of the

library. Although it is mentioned in the evaluation report that there was a number of subscriptions to foreign publications and periodicals in the library, I experienced that foreign literature was very little and out of date.

There are differences among the laboratories. There are modern tools and also other equipment which are out of date. Those laboratories need new equipment too.

Comment: EUB is relatively well equipped; the university has made important progress concerning the material resources and investments. It is important to continue this procedure. I also suggest enlarging the collection of the library with more international publications.

Students

EUB had 4142 (3326 BA + 816 MA) enrolled students in this academic year (2015/2016) and 4497 (3499 BA + 998 MA) students in the last academic year. It can be said that the total number of students is decreasing comparing the data of the past five years. It means that EUB has lost around 6000 students since 2010.

(I was also informed that the dropping out rate of the students is around 30% every year. The reasons are very different.)

Besides the organized appointments I also had the possibility to talk with students who are taking part in different programmes at EUB. As it turned out the students self-governance is very weak at EUB. There is neither Students' Association nor ALUMNI Graduates' Association at the university. The election of the students' representatives are not organised very well.

I also had some conversations with students who took part in Erasmus Programme in the last academic year. Most of them participated in the traineeship programme. They told me that it was very useful for them. Currently they have 11 Erasmus Agreement with 6 different countries.

Although EUB is taking part in few international or European projects with different universities and the participation of the students in internationalisation actions is very limited.

The **undergraduate students** at the **appointment** were fairly active. They were pleased with the quality of education and the circumstances but it was also mentioned that the labs are too small. The lack of social spaces (e.g. canteen) for the students was mentioned.

The students' choices were most influenced by the fact that getting in to a private higher education institute is easier comparing to a university maintained by the state. EUB offers a flexible learning possibility (e.g. classes in the evenings) and the admissions are relatively low. They also pointed out that the relationship between students and teachers is very good. The members of the academic staff are very helpful.

Only few students are living in the dorms of Artifex University.

EUB regularly reviews its courses and gathers student feedback. About 50% of the students fill in the questionnaire.

Comment: It is recommended to extend the students international activity of EUB and enter into other European Higher Education Programmes (e. g. CEEPUS etc.) They also should increase the number of students taking part in mobility activities.

At the meeting with the **graduate students** one of them underlined that she liked that their training based on a lot of practice although there were not enough labs at EUB. The majority of them would recommend EUB not only to friends but their own children. It was emphasised that the ecological studies are very important nowadays and it could be an advantage for EUB among the competition of universities. Quite a number of them are working at organizations which are dealing with environmental issues (e.g. Ministry of Environment and Forests or linked organizations).

Most of the **representatives of the employers** were from the public sector. It was also mentioned that because of the low salaries in the public sector well qualified

employees often leave their jobs. Also the lack of a master programme in environmental law was mentioned.

Research

The academic staff develops scientific research activities, capitalized through didactic materials, publications in specific magazines in the country, through scientific communications, presented within sessions, conferences and symposiums organized by EUB or within other universities in the country.

The students' involvement in scientific activity is limited although there are some good examples also at EUB but it should not only be the result of individual initiatives.

The participation of the academic staff in international projects is fairly rare. EUB should strengthen the international research activities.

The research activity seems to be not satisfactory at EUB.

Comment: I would also encourage the university to develop its international collaborative links, as there is much to be learned from the experience of colleagues across Europe and elsewhere.

Quality Management

EUB seems to pay a special attention to the quality assurance. EUB has structures, strategies, policies and procedures for quality assurance of the teaching and research process.

A central committee (Quality Assurance and Evaluation Commission) of quality assurance supervises all activities at university level and Quality Assurance and Evaluation Department develops and coordinates the evaluation procedures and quality assurance.

EUB has made efforts to improve its quality assurance system in the past few years. Besides the transparent quality assurance structure of EUB, the university

concentrate on the different fields of the quality assurance: quality assurance for management processes, quality assurance in teaching and scientific research.

Comment: EUB has improved several aspects of quality assurance though there is great opportunity for improvement. The structure and the procedures of quality assurance at EUB are fairly well organized. There is also internal and external control of quality assurance.

Conclusion

My report is based on what I have experienced; seen, read and heard. I hope that some of the comments which I made will help the EUB management in the process of continual improvement.

I emphasize the following:

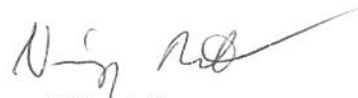
- To continue to invest in the physical infrastructure and facilities, as and when funds allow.
- I strongly suggest developing international links and collaborations to support international research activities and encourage students and academic staff taking part in exchange and mobility programmes. EUB should make a clear action plan for internationalisation.
- To involve the student's representatives much more in the decision-making processes and into management.
- I understand that budgetary pressures are such that it is becoming increasingly difficult to invest in human resources; but it is very important to provide to the academic staff the opportunities for development and retain a highly qualified staff, but it is worth the university's being cognizant of this as an on-going issue.

To summarize my remarks and observations I think that the activity of EUB does not reach totally the requirement of the European standards of education and scientific research. In the present situation EUB is bit over the level of limited confidence but I could not declare my full and complete confidence.

Finally I would like to express my thanks to the President, the Rector and all the EUB staff for the pleasant atmosphere and the support during my stay in Bucharest. Also much gratitude to my colleagues of the evaluation team for the professional, open and gentle way in which the audit was conducted.

Last but not least I would like to express my special thanks to ARACIS for giving me the opportunity to participate in this evaluation process in Romania.

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