

ARACIS

Romanian Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education

External Institutional Evaluation

Foreign Expert Report

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“Danubius” University of Galati

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1. Introduction

This report summarizes my impressions as Foreign Expert from the visit for an institutional evaluation by ARACIS to the "Danubis" University of Galati (DUG) from 6th to 8th November 2013. This was a follow-up ARACIS visit to DUG after the institution had performed already an institutional evaluation in 2009.

Besides my experience over thirty years of pedagogical, scientific and business career I have participated in ARACIS external evaluation procedures first time. Hence the following observations and comments will not only reflect my experiences with the ARACIS-procedure in Romania but also my IEP-background and European perspectives and from the point of view of Polish experiences that are very similar to the Romanian experience in the area of conditions for higher education in the European Union. The self-evaluation process, international perspectives as well as governance and quality assurance are important core elements of my considerations.

I am very grateful to the Mission Director Prof. univ. dr. Vasilica Stan and the Team Scientific Coordinator Prof. univ. dr. Calin Rosca for conducting the evaluation process in a very efficient way and to all members of the ARACIS team for many constructive and fruitful discussions during the visit.

My special thank goes to the Technical Secretary Mrs. Mihaela Bajenaru from ARACIS for his friendly way of holding contact with me, for preparing the visit, in a perfect way and assisting me with translations during all plenary meetings. My thank also goes to Associate Professor Ph.D. Andy Pusca from the DUG for the great hospitality and to Univesity Lecturer Emanuel-Stefan Marinescu, Ph.D. for meeting me at the airport and organizing my transportation to and from the University. I want to express my appreciation to the various representatives of



DUG, who have actively participated in the meetings and considerably contributed by their open discussions to a good view of the institution.

2. Organizational Details of the Danubis Univesity of Galati

First of all I would like to notice that authority of the Daniubius University in Galati provide me with English and French spoken team that help me willingly to collect all necessary information I needed for the evaluation and guide me without any restrictions, through all places at the University those can be interested to me from the didactic and scientific aims achievements. Those activities allow me to state clear and impartial evaluation.

Universytet Daniubius in Galati is located in a modern building designed in relation to education and scientific activities. It is worth to notice, that among the lecture rooms, there are: "Aula Magna ", a beautiful well-equipped auditorium with a capacity of more than 250 people, auditorium called "Amfiteatrul 1" – capacity also more than 250 people and two smaller lecture rooms - each capacity more than 100 students. All lecture rooms are well-equipped with high tech education tools e.g. large screen MacIntosh computers and enough comfortable that allow to meet modern education requirements.

In addition, the university has a dedicated forensic laboratory for students of law course and the modern professional television studio equipped with the latest technical and technological solutions. One of the lecture room at the Faculty of Law is designed as a professional courtroom where students can prepare for work in real circumstances. I must point out that this adaptation of the lecture room raises very positive feelings about the commitment to effective education. At the University buildings are also smaller rooms for lectures for small groups of students with about 50 people, and smaller rooms for classes in groups. All rooms are well-equipped with specific items or audiovisual, computer, etc. regarding to educated subject.



Moreover, a positive surprise for me was the fact that seven-floors building are built as a hotel student in the campus, in "Danubius" Univesity of Galati.

The bachelor's degree program at the University educates over 2,000 students of which 870 full-time, 438 part-time in college and nearly 800 student at distance learning system.

The University has three faculties: law, economics, and communication and social relations.

Two courses „Law” and “Trade, services and tourism” at bachelor level are dominant in terms of number of students. On these two courses, more than 1,400 students have been educating. On the master level there are more than 660 students

There are 14 professors and 67 other teaching-research staff are employed in the "Danubius" University of Galati. It seems to me an insufficient number relating to so many areas of education.

3. Outline of the Visit

The 57 pages Institutional Evaluation Report (IER) plus 115 Annexes provided by DUG gives a description of the development of the institution since its foundation. Informative data on the institutional structure, number of students and teaching staff as well as the financial situation of the institution is provided. Special focus is taken on the area of teaching, listing educational spaces in detail and describing actions to assure the quality of teaching. The Institutinal Self-evaluation Report was helpful in preparing the visit and getting an initial good understanding of the teaching at DUG, and was satisfying with respect to the data concerning research and governance. It includes a self-evaluation process involving a bigger group and the whole institution. Hence the University did not miss the opportunity to use the evaluation as a starting point for an internal



analysis of its problems and a general discussion of DUG future. The report contains important information on the governance of the institution, gives gender data and refers to the challenges of the institution mentioned above. The report has an appropriate length and all parts are described clearly. English translation of the IER does not contain any misprints or bad translations; what caused that the report is easy to understand. It seems that the report should be enriched with a few charts presenting data such as the number of students and an upward trend in recent years, or lack of them, or the dynamics of employment or academic development of employees. It would allow noticing the trend of the data in particular education courses, or interest trend for the courses: is increasing or decreases which would be very useful for making suitable activities for academic staff would know whether the employees care about their academic development or growth of staff is done on a hiring new employees.

The visit to „Danubius” University of Galati in the evening of 5th November 2013 at local Vega hotel. During the evaluation visit I participated in the meetings of the main ARACIS team, but did also arrange my own interviews and examinations.

Wednesday of 6th November 2013

The procedure of evaluation started at 9.00 a.m. by a meeting with the management “Danubius” University of Galati. After this meeting at 9.30 a.m. ARACIS experts meet with organizationa team.

Next from 11.30 to 13.30 was time of activity of ARACIS experts in two areas: institutional level and programme level.

At 2.00 p.m. evaluation team visited “Danubius” University of Galati. After this visit since 3.30 p.m. to 5.00 p.m team worked on institutional and programme level evaluation.



From 5.00 p.m. until 6.30 team meet graduates and next employers of the students of “Danubius” University of Galati.

During the meeting with alumni, there were discussed needs for more efficient work on students’ practices organization. Graduates mentioned that there were bad examples of the students practice in field not related to study course.

The meeting conclusion was the proposal to the University authority to organize students practice more carefully to achieved students practice at the position corresponding to the study course.

The Evaluation Commission also held the meeting with representatives of employers during that employers were generally satisfied with the employment of graduates Danubius University in Galati. They pointed on good graduates’ skills and competencies. In the employers statements there were some comparison of DUG graduates with graduates of other universities. The results of comparison can be satisfied for DUG graduates.

In order to complete realization of educational program, and continuously respond to the needs of the local labor market, it should be necessary to set up a Council of Business at the University comprised of employers from the city and region. The Council as a social body could be very helpful for updating the content of the curriculum regarding the changes in enterprises and changes in the profiles of graduates to be more suitable employees.

After meetings team make conclusions and remarks for the following day

Thursday 7th November, 2013

At 9.00 a.m. ARACI team meet with students of “Danubius” University of Galati.

During the meeting with the students it seemed that students accept the rebate scheme of study fees, depending on the average estimates. There was no cases



reported of any other problems arising from the implementation of the educational process and study circumstances.

Estimating activities Danubius University in Galati, it is possible to conclude that it performs well its tasks.

However, there are some shortcomings in this activity. They result mainly not because of errors in the program documentation or the organizational structure but because of procedures used in the management of the University.

Since 10.00 a.m. until 7.30 p.m.

The ARACIS team work on evaluation at institutional and programme level

Friday 8th November, 2013

5. Teaching and Learning

From 8.30 a.m. ARACIS team finalizing documents regarding the external evaluation of “Danubius” University of Galati to 12.00 a.m.

At 12.00 ARACIS experts meet the management of “Danubius” university of Galati. For closing the visit for external evaluations.

4. Governance and Institution

The university is in a difficult situation due to the socio - economic and demographic surroundings. This is due to the low level of demographic which means that in each year the number of high school graduates decrease so the number of potential students is also smaller.

On the other hand, the university should think about the possibilities of flexible selection of specialties in a different fields of study.

The organizational structure is appropriate for the existing three faculties.



It should be noted that only the high level quality of training and meet the demand for professionals in the industry in the region and neighboring regions, warrants further intakes of students.

Recommendations:

- DUG should focus on a, limited number of goals that can be realistically reached within the given constraints.
- Define performance indicators against, all goals and objectives included in the strategic plan.
- React to the challenges of a modern university management and simplify your organizational structure (size of Senate, number of Faculties; decision and reporting procedures etc.).
- Prioritize the -renovation/construction of lecture rooms and laboratory equipment and provide facilities for multi-media teaching.
- The activities of the Department for International Relations have to be improved and expanded.
- The financial resources of DUG should be more diversified. Try to open other sources by projects and agreements with outside partners and lifelong learning activities.
- As regional university should formalize its excellent relations with the local city council and the regional government and try to sign contracts of co-operation.
- Strengthen relations and information flow with graduates and employers. These groups have mentioned their- high appreciation for the institution. The University should make more use of this advantage.
- Increase the cultural role and influence of DUG in the region by supporting and extending student and staff cultural activities



5. Teaching and Learning

All study programmes of DUG have changed to the three cycle Bologna system. The quality of the formation is generally recognized by employers and graduates. The University has reacted on the ARACIS visit four years ago and closed study offers with limited or no accreditation. The fragmentation especially of the License study programmes together with many vacant positions for teachers results in very high teaching loads and a lack of time for research. In order to respond to the strong competition for students the most important action is strengthening the quality of education. It seems me it need The problem of Danubius University of Galati is the fact that a significant proportion of students in relation to the small number of teaching staff which is especially revealed in the case of professors. This situation forces conducting a variety of topics from different areas of activities by the same professors. Most likely, the indicator has been exceeded allowable amount of students per professor.

Specificity of the education in the "Danubius" University of Galati needs to be strengthened in terms of scientific and didactic publications, especially in the case of lecturing on the subject. Because there are examples of lecturers in particular subject who had no single publications in educated area or had just a few publication linked to the subject.

Recommendation:

- Staff vacant teaching positions and do not give teaching hours of vacant positions to employed staff for extra remuneration.
- Extend staff development activities.
- Take appropriate measures against plagiarism in student papers.
- Ensure that the results of the evaluation of courses are known and serve for further improvement of teaching



- Increase autonomous student work and self learning- parts. Strengthen practical parts of undergraduate education. Enforce contacts between the University and enterprises in order to integrate students into project work.
- Increase assistance for mobility programmes and extend foreign language practice.
- Include stakeholders and employers into the discussion on curricula.

6. Research and Service to Society:

Many activities are devoted to projects supporting the material and teaching base of the university the example are: the great television studio, lecture rooms with large screens Apple computers, and many other examples that could be seen during the visit. However, there is a strong need for intensification of efforts to participate in projects and coordination of research projects with emphasis on international projects or EU funded projects such as Tempus and others. Special attention should be given research projects involving students, the best, the project be implemented in other languages that allow for strengthen the competences of graduates and improving the quality of education.

Recommendations:

- Proceed moving from a, teaching university to a, teaching university with research.
- Focus research where possible in order to make research more visible. Enforce interdisciplinary research. Create critical masses by enforcing co-operations with other institutions. Support publications in English language.
- Support young research staff by reduction of their teaching load and give financial support for teaching staff to participate in national and



international conferences, in research collaborations and advanced training courses.

- Strengthen and make more visible services to society and consider the creation of a science and research park linked to the University and the provision of support for entrepreneurship.
- Quality and plagiarism in research should be made subjects of discussion and observation within DUG

7. Quality Culture

The University should strengthen quality assurance on a scale of whole college. These actions should include all aspects of the environment in which it operates: in teaching, research, as well as as governance and administration.

University should take special care for problem of plagiarism and scientific rules and honesty and inform about it students and staff.

Recommendations:

- Define clear procedures how to improve teaching, research, governance and administration by the extensively collected information and the results of different evaluations.
- Use the collected data for strategic planning and in order to provide advice. Develop mechanisms to support academic staff in their teaching and research missions.
- Make results and consequences of student evaluations transparent so that students and staff are informed.
- Take special care regarding the quality of student papers and research results in order to avoid cases of plagiarism

8. Final Remarks



The ARACIS external institutional evaluation, is an important step for quality assurance in higher education in Romania. The procedure is well designed and works with excellent peers. Nevertheless, institutions should be aware that the process is not only focused on the accreditation of study programmes. The institution as a whole is another important part of the review. Hence institutions should be encouraged to cover governance and management facts as well in their evaluation report. In order to make better use of the evaluation process institutions should be more self-critical by not looking only into the past and continuing traditional additive planning. The view should be more directed into the future trying to find solutions for the existing constraints and problems. This report should motivate DUG to go into this direction and enforce its process of internal discussion leading to further improvement and reflection about priorities.

DUG plays an important educational and socio-economical role for the region. The institution is highly appreciated by employers, stakeholders, graduates and students. With its motivated and very professional leadership DUG has the capacity to react adequately to the current challenges of higher education in Romania and Europe. Hence DUG should be optimistic about its future.


As we recall management rule “we cannot manage effectively what we cannot measure”, I estimate the ARACIS external institutional evaluation as crucial element for education quality international benchmark that allows for Romanian higher education development. The procedures are clear and efficient in my opinion. And I find it very useful for University management to create or modify functioning strategy and operational plans.

I hope that the DUG authority treat this report not only as an accreditation of study programmes but as a roadmap for future success of the institution they represent and success of alumni on the employment market they have educated.



It should be noticed that DUG is very important center of regional education, science, development as well as culture. So it the authority is much more responsible then responsibility on the financial balance of DUG and students successful enrolment.

Analyzing DUG situation on all above mentioned areas, I must state that perspectives are very promising. DUG is a fast developing higher education center not only in education but in science and culture as well. In nearest future strengthening international links DUG can become one of the high european educational level.



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