

A R A C I S

Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education

E x t e r n a l I n s t i t u t i o n a l E v a l u a t i o n **Universitatea Spiru Haret din Bucuresti (SHU), Romania**

REPORT of the foreign external evaluator

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INTRODUCTION

Having been appointed as Foreign Expert by ARACIS, I wrote this report on the basis of

- the “Institutional Self-Evaluation Report of Academic Quality for the Purpose of Rating Change”,
- the Foreign Expert Report for the institutional Evaluation of Spiru Haret University from 22nd November 2014,
- the evaluation visit at Spiru Haret University Bucharest from 28th to 30th of March 2018,
- discussions with members of the university during that evaluation visit and other received supporting documentation (in English only).

I also put into consideration European rules and criteria:

- the “European Qualifications Framework, EQF”,
- the “Dublin Descriptors, DD” and
- the “Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education area”,
- “A Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area”

Additional basis were documents from the European Commission

- “Supporting growth and jobs – an agenda for the modernisation of Europe's higher education systems”, COM(2011) 567 final
- “Rethinking Education: Investing in skills for better socio-economic outcomes”, COM(2012) 669 final
- “European higher education in the world”, COM(2013) 499 final
- “Renewed EU agenda for higher education”, COM(2017) 247 final
- EUA's Response to the “Renewed EU Agenda for Higher Education”

No restrictions were placed on my activities during my visit and I was able to observe all aspects of the evaluation process, to ask questions of clarification, and to make comments if appropriate.

I like to thanks the Spiru Haret University, Bucharest for their hospitality throughout the visit, and for their helpful and constructive replies to queries.

My visit was facilitated by the assistance provided by Ramona O. Mihăilă-Ștefănescu, Associate Professor of Marketing & Neuromarketing and Vice Rector Spiru Haret University, Romania. I like to express my gratitude to her for their kindness, availability, and unfailing efficiency.

PRELIMINARY WORK

- I. The (English) **university self-evaluation report** of Spiru Haret University (SHU) is an 166-pages document. It gives a synthetic overview of the institution with pointers to extensive annexes (written in Romanian). The self-evaluation is grouped in 4 parts,

- PART I. ASSURING THE QUALITY OF THE PROCESS OF MEETING THE COMPULSORY NORMATIVE REQUIREMENTS
- PART II . PERFORMANCE STANDARDS AND INDICATORS for institutional evaluation for external evaluation and the quality of education (longest part)
- PART III. SWOT ANALYSIS
- PART IV. CONCLUSIONS

The SWOT Analysis focused on the topic Education and on the topic Research.

- II. The (English) **institutional self-evaluation report based on students' views** is the result of the analysis of the documents provided by the university management, of the public documents posted on the institution's website, as well as a synthesis of the discussions with various categories of students (full-time students, as well as students enrolled at other modes of study, from different specializations, etc.).
- III. Information that are at the universities website in English

SPIRU HARET UNIVERSITY

Spiru Haret University was founded in 1991 within the "România de Măine" Foundation and accredited by law in 2002. The university is a private education and research institution having legal personality, a legal person of private law and part of the national educational system, which includes faculties, departments, research centres and institutes as well as other structures holding the education and research processes, inter-institutional collaboration, human resources and financial and accounting, technical, social and cultural activities.

The overall mission of the University is 'to generate and transfer knowledge to society by:

- a) initial and continuing training at the university, non-university tertiary and post-university education levels for the personal development of the beneficiaries of the educational process, for their integration into the labour market as well as for meeting the need for competence of the social and economic environment;
- b) scientific research; development; innovation and technological transfer; individual and collective creative endeavours in sciences, engineering, arts, letters; physical and sports performance and development; as well as turning to good account and dissemination of the outcomes'.

The University's headquarter and four modern campuses are located in Bucharest and four other campuses in Brasov, Constanta, Craiova and Campulung Muscel.

All together the university has 14 faculties offering 40 Master programmes and 50 Bachelor's's programmes.

For the academic year 2017-2018, Spiru Hare I University employs 432 teachers. There are 7967 undergraduate students enrolled in the university and 1582 in master programs. The ratio of among all teachers and students is 1 to 22.

SHU foster student-centred learning principles, by addressing knowledge as a process, teachers aim to focus on student thinking, on their involvement in projects development, on solving problems related to practical life (by finding new, original solutions), on scientific research and Jeaming new research techniques, stimulating the learner's thinking, imagination, creativity and originality.

The Pro-Market project carried out by the University, aimed at facilitating the transition from school to the professional life by increasing the relevance of university education for the labour market and the efficiency of internships for 400 students enrolled at Management, Accounting and Business Data Processing, Marketing, Finance and Banking and Sociology programmes.

The university is concerned with the integration of its graduates into the labour market, monitoring their progress after completing their studies through its own means (interviews, surveys) and by engaging in national exercises and programmes that aim at tracking the professional path of university graduates. The general essential objective of Spiru Hare/ University in the scientific research area consists is strengthening its position as an academic and research organisation in order to join the ranks of advanced research universities.

The Spiru Haret University has entities as distinct legal personality, which are part of the academic space of SHU and which, according to their object of activity, can be and are involved in education, implementing scientific research activities, contributing to increasing the national/international visibility of results achieved, and brings together students and staff with professional.

These entities are:

- The national university-educational TV station "TVH",
- the local university radio station "Radio Seven" (Bucharest)
(both with excellent studios)
- the "Premium Wellness Institute" (featuring a cutting edge clinic for medical recovery, a sport centre, spa, relaxation and entertainment areas combined with stylish hotel and restaurant),
- two Academic Veterinary Clinics,
- a state of the art Printing and Publishing House
- a well arrange Kindergarden, with remarkable education programme.

Students can get here a lot of practical experiences even jobs. And also such

entities supports regional development

EVALUATION

External evaluation procedures are performed regularly for all higher education institutions working in Romania. The Panel of Evaluators is appointed by ARACIS, an independent expert body, to perform an independent peer review based evaluation of the institution and some of its study programmes. The last evaluation visit of the University took place from 12 – 15 November 2013.

The evaluation team 2018 for University of Spiru Haret University, Bucharest, consisted of the following members, in addition to myself :

- Mission Director: Prof. Gheorge Grigoras, University "Al. I. Cuza", Iasi
- Coordinator of the Experts Evaluator Team: Prof. Ioan Calin Rosca, University "Transilvania", Brasov
- Consultative Commission: Prof. Roth Szamoskozi, University "Babes Bolyai", Cluj Napoca
- Institutional Evaluation Commission: Prof. Nicolae Todea. University "1 Decembrie 1918", Alba Iulia
- Technical Secretary – ARACIS: Sorin Alecsa
- Study Program Expert (Physical and Sports): Prof. Mircea Neamtu, University "Transilvania", Brasov
- Study Program Expert (Language and Literature): Prof. Mircea Diaconu, University "Stefan cel Mare", Suceava
- Study Program Expert (Law): Prof. Carmen-Silvia Paraschiv, University "Titu Maiorescu", Bucharest
- Study Program Expert (Psychology, Brasov Branch): Prof. Eugen-Corneliu Havarneanu, University "Alexandru Ioan Cuza", Iasi
- Study Program Expert (Management): Prof. Maria Madela Abrudan, University of Oradea
- Study Program Expert (Computer Science): Prof. Daniela Danciulescu, University of Craiova
- Study Program Expert (Public Administration, Craiova Branch): Prof. Luminita Popescu, Scoala Nationala de Studii Politice si Administrative, Bucharest
- Student Evaluator UNSR: Paula Andra Avasiloaie, Politechnic University, Bucharest
- Student Evaluator ANSOR: Bogdan Petru Crisan, University Timisoara,

The main objective for Spiru Haret University in this evaluation process is that SHU can be given the "high degree of confidence" certificate.

In my role as Foreign Expert Evaluator, I was responsible for establishing an overview of the whole university and was allowed to move freely around, talking to members

of staff and students of the university.

I had the opportunity to visit besides the universities headquarter the Didactica Campus, the Berceni Campus and the Premium Wellness Institute.

The Didactica Campus is hosting study programmes in Economics, Informatics and Psychology. The campus has recent and good learning facilities, modern equipped laboratories, therapy rooms, computer rooms and bigger lecture theaters. On the campus is also the "România de Măine" Foundation Printing and Publishing House located. The Printing House produces by means of offset and up-to-date digital technology, the teaching, promotional and instructive materials, and a weekly newspaper drafted with SHU and its associated structures. The Publishing House with direct correlation to SHU focused on the scholastic books (books, manuals, textbooks, thesis, lecture notes).

A visit at the Kindergarden show the involvement of SHU in education "from the beginning". The spacious facility combined with sport activities (u.a. swimming) and the admirable educational undertakings give the children a very good start in their life. Especially students from Faculty of Psychology and Education Science can acquire practical experiences and even later on jobs.

The Berceni Campus is hosting study programmes in Law, Arts and Sports. The new and modernised buildings offers excellent education and research facilities. In one of the buildings you can find the "TVH" television and "Radio Seven" studios. The studios are sophisticated and offers a broad band of production opportunities. Especially students from Faculty of Social and Human Sciences, Faculty of Economic Sciences and from Faculty of Legal, Political and Administrative Sciences have good opportunities to get here hands-on experiences.

An other visit was at the Premium Wellness Institute. This Medical Center is equipped with state-of-the-art technologies for language, therapy and prevention, to regain health, vitality and mobility. The Medical specialties are Cardiology, Neurology, Orthopedics, Nutrition and Medical recovery. This Premium Wellness Institute embraces a sport centre which includes tennis, basketball, handball, football, swimming pools, fitness centre, and spaces for athletics. And is added by a well designed 3-star hotel and high quality restaurant. Especially students from Faculty of Physical Education and Sports, students from medical directions as well as from Faculty of Economic Science could gain here practical experiences and even jobs.

All the above entities are dedicated to education, research and innovation and students (and even staff) can work together with professionals to get work experiences and learn in real live organisations and supports the regional development as part of social responsibility of SHU for the society.

The meetings that the expert evaluation team had with employers, recent graduates and current students all produced positive statements about the quality and relevance of the programmes, as well as life and study at the university.

The university has a very good Quality Management in place, which is currently equipped with all the instruments and procedures necessary for the achievement of the complete cycle „Plan - Do - Check - Act" in order to assure the quality of education, research and support services for students and teaching staff. The leadership of the university shows high professional behavior and identification with

the institution. Especially because the number of students was dramatically decreasing in the last years, from former about 19.000 students in the academic year 2013/2014 to currently about 9.500 students need a good financial and educational management. However the university has to diversify and broaden the financial basis. The university has a very good Quality Management in place, which is currently equipped with all the instruments and procedures necessary for the achievement of the complete cycle „Plan - Do - Check - Act" in order to assure the quality of education, research and support services for students and teaching staff.

Based on the mission SHU with focus on initial and lifelong professional learning and training, student-centred learning, creativity and entrepreneurship, civic spirit and social responsibility, applied research and knowledge transfer the university has reached in the last years a substantial development. The Central Research Institute (ICCS) provides scientific and methodological support for all of Spiru Harut University's faculty oriented research centres. The ICCS encouraged multi-disciplinary research and improves the visibility of University's publications. Adhering to the European Researcher Charter and the Researchers' Recognition Code of Conduct USH is the first university in Romania to be rewarded with the HR Excellence in Research logo. The results of the research, namely the number of publications (articles,books), have recorded quantitative and qualitative significances in the period 2014-2017. However to reach the general essential objective of Spiru Hare/ University in the scientific research area "strengthening its position as an academic and research organisation in order to join the ranks of advanced research universities" it is still a lot of efforts to do.

COMMENTS

Teaching and Learning, Lifelong Learning

Investment in education and training for skills development is essential to boost growth and competitiveness. The student-teacher relationship has been significantly improved to ensure greater student participation in the education process, with a teaching counselling timetable displayed at the faculties' notice boards and virtual counselling, whereby the teachers advocate for making students reflect on the learning outcomes, which we consider to be very important. Teachers design their student-centred learning methods, structure their courses on well-defined objectives, explaining the important information and the competencies the student should develop.

The University ensures the implementation of practical work in the curricula.

E.g. teachers organize together with the students Student Circles, where they are involved in research projects, solving practical applications, simulations and activities in micro-groups. Collaboration between education units and relevant labour market (integration) stakeholders are established to focused on the relation university-labour market for developing the practical relevance of university education and for developing/implementing on-the-job training

programmes.

Spiru Haret University is the first Romanian university who invested in implementing a e-learning system - the Blackboard platform, which, since 2006 to date, has been updated constantly and used intensively for supporting the learning-research-development-education processes

This has to be continuously further developed.

I would like to recommend:

- Extending the interdisciplinary, cross-faculty, real life project in the curricula
- Enlarge the practical phases and promoting project and work based learning.
- Expand the use of active teaching / learning methods, meant to provide the graduates the acquisition of through theoretical knowledge, supported by practical skills and solid transversal competencies
- To scale-up use of ICT in learning and teaching
- I strongly support the commitment by the university to lifelong learning/distance learning opportunities, also on Master or even on PhD level. Students increasingly expect to choose what they learn, how they learn and when they learn, according to their individual needs and interests. They are ready to do it in their country of origin, abroad, via courses offered online or via blended forms of learning combining all of these possibilities.
- Supporting particularly entrepreneurial skills, creativity and social responsibility

Research and Development, Innovation

The results of the research, namely the number of publications (articles, books), have recorded quantitative and qualitative significances in the period 2014-2017. The SHU's Central Research Institute (ICCS) provides scientific and methodological support for all of Spiru Harut University's faculty oriented research centres. ICCS encouraged multi-disciplinary research and improves the visibility of University's publications. Adhering to the European Research Charter and the Researchers' Recognition Code of Conduct USH is the first university in Romania to be rewarded with the HR Excellence in Research logo. Staff and even Students participate in various events such as national and international conferences, symposia, workshops, book launches, cultural events, summer schools, library days.

The involvement of bachelor and master students in the research projects assures the acquisition of practical competences and skills necessary for the

graduates, as well as their contact with potential employers, facilitating thus their transition to the labor market.

The ProBusiness Centre of SHU hosts the Student Entrepreneurial Society, which is a mechanism of supporting, developing and encouraging entrepreneurship in the university environment, especially among students and graduates, in order to increase the university's competitiveness.

The Student Entrepreneurial Society (SAS) of Spiru Harut University is open for both the students of SHU, regardless of the study programmes they are attending or the mode of study, including mobility students, and our graduates in the first 3 years after graduation.

Spiru Haret University also covers the Pro Transfer Centre, as a department of USH ProBusiness. It is established as an entity in the innovation and technology transfer infrastructure, and is part of the National Technology Transfer Network. The promotion of scientific research consolidates the institutions' prestige, whereas the revenues earned from research could continuously support the modernisation of lab endowment and research infrastructure of the university.

I would like to recommend

- Focus the research, development and innovation on regional/local problems in cooperation with the regional/local Government and industry; Think Global – Act Local
- It also requires to overcome more the fragmentation into faculties research centres and target their efforts collectively on institutional priorities for research, teaching and services.
- Focusing less on scientific disciplines and more on research domains (e.g. neuroeconomics, digitalisation, regional and social development), associating them more closely with related or complementary fields (including, entrepreneurial skills, communication skills, leadership skills, life-long-learning skills) and fostering interaction between students, researchers and research teams through greater mobility between disciplines, sectors and research settings.
- Set the goal “strengthening its position as an academic and research organisation in order to join the ranks of advanced research universities” as a mid-term goal.
- Extend the international exchange of SPU research and development results

Teaching staff

High quality and well trained teachers can help learners develop the competences they need in a global labor market based on ever higher skill

levels, and evidence¹⁹ shows that a primary influence on learners' performance is the quality of teaching and learning.

Teachers need a strong commitment to training: in the use of new technologies; to improve learning to learn competencies; how to cater for diversity and inclusion; and to meet the needs of disadvantaged learners, such as Roma, children with disabilities or those from a migrant background. This requires a new set of competences for teachers, teacher educators and education leaders. The Spiru Haret University has with the Teaching Staff Training Department a unit that has strong potential for advanced pedagogical training of their staff.

The academia at Spiru Haret University is specially trained in university teaching. Increasing teachers' performance and competencies is achieved through their participation in postgraduate studies, complementary training at the second faculty, masters, doctoral and post-doctoral schools, and training courses organized within the European professional training projects (ODEQA).

The online Resource Centre addressed to professionals, which includes information and good practice examples on the quality assurance of open and distance learning and the identification of good practice and specific procedures for improving the quality of distance learning and part-time education.

Professionally competent teachers, with pedagogic vocation, permanently preoccupied by the enhancement of attractiveness and effectiveness of the teaching/ learning activities is the target of the university.

I would like to recommend:

- The stimulation of an entrepreneurial mindset also amongst all teaching staff and researchers.
- Supporting strongly the international mobility of teaching staff to obtain more international teaching experiences.
- Set up an annual didactic training seminar for SHU teaching staff

Quality Management

The Spiru haret University made great efforts to consolidate and develop the quality management system, which is currently equipped with all the instruments and procedures necessary for the achievement of the complete cycle „Plan - Do - Check - Act" in order to assure the quality of education, research and support services for students and teaching staff. The university have of a true culture of quality management.

The specific objectives related to the assurance and improvement of institutional academic quality are detailed described in strategic and operational plans of the university. The degree of these objectives' reaching is annually assessed.

The assessments related to the institutional academic quality refer to the following aspects:

- Organisational culture
- Students' satisfaction degree in relation with the educational services and the facilities provided by the university
- The SHU customers' satisfaction degree, related to the quality of graduates and activities of research-development and consulting offered
- Quality of the programmes of study offered
- Students' assessment
- Teaching staff quality
- Teachers evaluation by students
- Research activities and results

I would like to commend:

- The Spiru Haret University has a very good Quality Management System and a true culture of quality management.
- Keep on going that way
- However, integrate into the institutional SWOT analysis next to education and research also topics like Quality Management, Material and Human Resources.

International Cooperation

The internationalisation of higher education will help prepare our learners, whether going abroad or staying at home, to live in a global world, increasing their experience and knowledge, employability, productivity and earning power.

A comprehensive internationalisation strategy should cover key areas grouped into the following three categories: international student and staff mobility; the internationalization and improvement of curricula and digital learning; and strategic cooperation, partnerships and capacity building. These categories should not be seen as isolated but as integrated elements of a comprehensive strategy.

The intensification of the internationalisation process of Spiru Haret University is one of the priorities of the strategic plan for 2014-2020. Continued achievement of this goal, integrated in the university's overall development strategy, will generate a better adaptation to the needs of a growing international academic environment.

The internationalisation strategies of Spiru Haret University is comprehensive and follows the above mentioned three categories. However, International academic cooperation is often still fragmented, based on the initiative of individual academics or department level.

The Centre for International Relations and Academic Image, which also host the ERASMUS + Office, should be the nucleus of internationalization at SHU.

I would strongly support the internationalization strategy of SHU and like to recommend to further develop especially the following topics:

- The Spiru Haret University should continuously foster their international attractiveness; actively promote international mobility of students and staff; provide innovative international curricula and enter into strategic partnerships with other HEIs around the world
- Increase of the number of foreign students and (temporary) staff at SHU to rise the "internationalization at home"
- Identify new opportunities and participate in projects and programs supported financially by public and private international bodies
- Establishing centers of excellence in research. in cooperation with foreign partners in outstanding fields of SHU scientific research

FINAL REMARKS

The employers of the region as well as students and graduates are very satisfied with the Spiru Haret University Bucharest. For the region this University has a great importance. This university is an engine of the regional development. The mission and vision of the University conforms to the rules, the spirit and the further development of the European Bologna Process.

The University has got to solve many demanding tasks and challenges. Unfortunately, the reduction of the students' populations, have led, in the past five years, to the simultaneous drop of both budgetary and extra-budgetary revenues from 54.743.400 Lei in 2015 to 45.606.000 Lei in 2017. Under these circumstances, the university took decisive actions for enhancing the efficiency of the use of all available funds. And SHU still suffers from terrible reputation caused by suspicion from authorities and criticism by other (state funded) institutions of higher education concerning the educational quality. Beside this the university is still overregulated from state and regulatory bodies. Universities (state and private) will not become innovative and responsive to change unless they are given real autonomy and accountability. States should guide the university sector as a whole through a framework of general rules,

policy objectives, funding mechanisms and incentives for education, research and innovation activities.

But there is a very dynamic spirit within the University. The management of the university has a clear vision of the future of the university, has innovative ideas and a strong commitment for the regional development. It is important to support the teaching and administrative team to gain international experiences and further (digital) education.

However, the University has in the last 5 years continuously made a very good development (despite the nation-wide student decrease) with strong internal governance systems based on strategic priorities and on professional management of human resources, supporting quality in education and extending research activities. Such as this the recognition that their relationship with the business community of the region is of strategic importance for the development of the university and forms part of their commitment to serving the public interest.

This is in fact very strong shown through Spiru Haret University entities as distinct legal personality, which are part of the academic space of SHU and which, according to their object of activity, can be and are involved in education, implementing scientific research activities, contributing to increasing the national/international visibility of results achieved, and brings together students and staff with professional.

I suggest the institutional accreditation of the Spiru Haret University Bucharest with a valuation as high as possible.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "N. Grünwald". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letter 'N' being large and prominent.

08.04.2018, Prof. Dr. Norbert Grünwald