



UNIUNEA EUROPEANĂ



GUVERNUL ROMÂNIEI



Fondul Social European
POSDRU 2007-2013



Instrumente Structurale
2007-2013



OIPOSDRU



UNITATEA EXECUTIVĂ PENTRU
FINANȚAREA ÎNVĂȚĂMÂNTULUI
SUPERIOR, A CERCĂȚĂRII,
DEZVOLTĂRII ȘI INOVĂRII

Institutional Evaluation Programme

*Ready for innovating, ready for better serving the local needs - Quality and
Diversity of the Romanian Universities*

“ARTIFEX” UNIVERSITY OF BUCHAREST

Evaluation report

July 2014

Team:

Sokratis Katsikas, Chair

Jean-Pierre Gesson

Dan Derricott

Lil Reif, Team Coordinator



Investing in
PEOPLE



Quality and Diversity
of the Romanian Universities



EUA
European University Association



IEP
EUA - Institutional Evaluation Programme



UNIUNEA EUROPEANĂ



GUVERNUL ROMÂNIEI



Fondul Social European
POSDRU 2007-2013



Instrumente Structurale
2007-2013



MINISTERUL
EDUCAȚIEI
NAȚIONALE

OIPOSDRU



UNITATEA EXECUTIVĂ PENTRU
FINANȚAREA ÎNVĂȚĂMÂNTULUI
SUPERIOR, A CERCETĂRII,
DEZVOLTĂRII ȘI INOVĂRII



EUA-Institutional Evaluation Programme



EUA
European University Association

Table of contents

1. Introduction	3
2. Governance and institutional decision-making.....	8
3. Teaching and learning	15
4. Research	18
5. Service to society.....	21
6. Quality culture	23
7. Internationalisation	26
8. Conclusion	29



UNIUNEA EUROPEANĂ



GUVERNUL ROMÂNIEI



Fondul Social European
POSDRU 2007-2013



Instrumente Structurale
2007-2013



OIPOSDRU



UNITATEA EXECUTIVĂ PENTRU
FINANȚAREA ÎNVĂȚĂMÂNTULUI
SUPERIOR, A CERCETĂRII,
DEZVOLTĂRII ȘI INOVĂRII



EUA-Institutional Evaluation Programme



European University Association

1. Introduction

This report is the result of the evaluation of “ARTIFEX” University of Bucharest. The evaluation took place in 2014 in the framework of the project “Ready for innovating, ready for better serving the local needs - Quality and Diversity of the Romanian Universities”, which aims at strengthening core elements of Romanian universities, such as their autonomy and administrative competences, by improving their quality assurance and management proficiency.

The evaluations are taking place within the context of major reforms in the Romanian higher education system, and specifically in accordance with the provisions of the 2011 Law on Education and the various related normative acts.

While the institutional evaluations are taking place in the context of an overall reform, each university is assessed by an independent IEP team, using the IEP methodology described below.

1.1 The Institutional Evaluation Programme

The Institutional Evaluation Programme (IEP) is an independent membership service of the European University Association (EUA) that offers evaluations to support the participating institutions in the continuing development of their strategic management and internal quality culture. The IEP is a full member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) and is listed in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR).

The distinctive features of the Institutional Evaluation Programme are:

- A strong emphasis on the self-evaluation phase
- A European perspective
- A peer-review approach
- A support to improvement

The focus of the IEP is the institution as a whole and not the individual study programmes or units. It focuses upon:

- Decision-making processes and institutional structures and effectiveness of strategic management.
- Relevance of internal quality processes and the degree to which their outcomes are used in decision-making and strategic management as well as perceived gaps in these internal mechanisms.



UNIUNEA EUROPEANĂ



GUVERNUL ROMÂNIEI



Fondul Social European
POSDRU 2007-2013



Instrumente Structurale
2007-2013



MINISTERUL
EDUCAȚIEI
NAȚIONALE
OIPOSDRU



UNITATEA EXECUTIVĂ PENTRU
FINANȚAREA ÎNVĂȚĂMÂNTULUI
SUPERIOR, A CERCETĂRII,
DEZVOLTĂRII ȘI INOVĂRII



EUA-Institutional Evaluation Programme



European University Association

The evaluation is guided by four key questions, which are based on a “fitness for (and of) purpose” approach:

- What is the institution trying to do?
- How is the institution trying to do it?
- How does it know it works?
- How does the institution change in order to improve?

1.2. “ARTIFEX” University of Bucharest’s profile

“ARTIFEX” University is a non-profit private higher education institution, located in Bucharest. It was founded in 1992 by the “ARTIFEX” National Technical, Scientific, Social and Cultural Foundation. Aside from the “ARTIFEX” Foundation, the university has close links to UCECOM, the National Union of Handicraft and Production Cooperatives. The university’s basic aim is "preparing professionals and specialists for the management and organisation of the cooperative economic sector, of small and medium-sized enterprises, as well as other fields of activity". (SER p. 7)

Given its specific organisational structure, which will be explained in chapter two, the university has wide outreach into the cooperative sector all over the country. According to the university, most students are from Bucharest and its surroundings. In this context, it should be noted that the university sees its location in Bucharest as an opportunity: it is a relevant segment of the national economy with many employment opportunities for graduates as well as many opportunities for the university to recruit students (SER p. 5).

The university has two faculties: the Faculty of Finance and Accounting and the Faculty of Management and Marketing (SER p. 5). Currently, the university has 94 employees, out of which 61 are academic staff on a permanent basis and 12 are associated academic staff members. The university offers five Bachelor programmes and eight Master programmes. In the current academic year (2013-2014), 1 935 students are enrolled, of which 1 519 students (79%) study at undergraduate and 416 students (21%) at postgraduate level (SER, p. 6). The university plans to introduce PhD studies in the near future.

The university has autonomy in relation to its organisation as well as teaching and scientific autonomy, financial and administrative autonomy, jurisdictional autonomy (SER p. 4). Recently, the institution has made major investments to improve its premises, including seminar rooms and equipment, the establishment of a major medical centre as well as a renewal of the university's dormitories.

The team learned from the leadership of “ARTIFEX” University, further referred to as "ARTIFEX", that the university’s values include solidarity and helpfulness. As the team observed during the site visits, these values cover both students and staff with a high awareness of the need to offer inclusive higher education in Romania as well as in being a social, responsible and supportive employer.



UNIUNEA EUROPEANĂ



GUVERNUL ROMÂNIEI



Fondul Social European
POSDRU 2007-2013



Instrumente Structurale
2007-2013



OIPOSDRU



UNITATEA EXECUTIVĂ PENTRU
FINANȚAREA ÎNVĂȚĂMÂNTULUI
SUPERIOR, A CERCETĂRII
DEZVOLTĂRII ȘI INOVĂRII



EUA-Institutional Evaluation Programme



European University Association

The main challenge stressed by the university is the decreasing number of potential students. This is not only due to the demographic decline, but also to the low success rate among high school students at the final exams (baccalaureate). The team was told that, because of the financial crisis, there have been drastic changes in the banking sector, which makes certain study programmes less attractive, whereas other sectors such as the service sector are expanding with demand for more skilled human resources in this field. Another challenge is the tough competition for students among higher education institutions in Romania, not only because of the decline of potential students, but also because of the large number of higher education institutions.

To deal with these challenges, the university aims to concentrate on its strengths and provide high quality higher education, with clear relevance to the labour market. A strength the university also builds upon is the reported very good relationship between teachers and students and a well-established tutoring system that support students in pursuing their studies. The university is very proud of its financial management and its financial situation in general, and is not dependent on bank loans. It is able to provide higher education free of charge for a large number of students. For fee-paying students, the team was told the tuition is affordable compared to other universities. To face the problem of fewer students passing the baccalaureate, the university has set up a special post-secondary school/pre-university education institution to support their transition from school to university. In this institution, students not only obtain a baccalaureate, but also a professional qualification, for example as tourist guide, management assistant or fiscal agent. The results of this pre-university education are recognised for subsequent studies at the university.

1.3. The evaluation process

The self-evaluation process was undertaken by the following team:

- Prof. Constantin Anghelache (President of the Senate);
- Assoc. Prof. Virginia Cucu (Principal);
- Assoc. Prof. Alexandru Manolé (Vice-rector for Research and International Relations, contact person);
- Assoc. Prof. Cristian Marian Barbu (Dean of the Faculty of Finance and Accounting);
- Prof. Constantin Coderie (Dean, Faculty of Management and Marketing);
- Assoc. Prof. Sorin Gabriel Gresoi (Head of the Department of Management and Marketing);
- Assoc. Prof. Elena Bugudui (Head of the Department of Finance-Accounting);
- Assoc. Prof. Dan Năstase (senior lecturer at the Department of Management and Marketing);
- Dr Cătălin Deatcu (Chief Registrar and Junior Lecturer at the Department for Finance and Accounting);
- Ms Marcela Ganea (Junior Lecturer at the Department for Management and Marketing);



UNIUNEA EUROPEANĂ



GUVERNUL ROMÂNIEI



Fondul Social European
POSDRU 2007-2013



Instrumente Structurale
2007-2013



MINISTERUL
EDUCAȚIEI
NAȚIONALE
OIPOSDRU



UNITATEA EXECUTIVĂ PENTRU
FINANȚAREA ÎNVĂȚĂMÂNTULUI
SUPERIOR, A CERCETĂRII,
DEZVOLTĂRII ȘI INOVĂRII



IEP
EUA-Institutional Evaluation Programme



EUA
European University Association

- Dr Veronica Vasile (Junior Lecturer).

This team was set up by the rector of the university and approved by the Senate and the Administrative Council.

The self-evaluation group held several formal and informal meetings on the preparation of the report, including its presentation in the Senate and Administrative Council. In doing so, fruitful cooperation during the preparation was mentioned as well as a generally open-minded attitude among staff members towards this evaluation (SER, p.3). During the meetings with staff and students, the team observed that staff members are aware of the report and agree with it.

There was no student member in the self-evaluation group, even though it is recommended in the IEP guidelines. When the team questioned this, it was told that the students' perspective had been included in the report. For example, the report was presented and discussed in the Senate as well as in the Administrative Council and Faculty Council. These are all bodies where students are permanently represented and thus, can express their viewpoint. Furthermore, outcomes from the regular student evaluations were included in the report and it was also given to the university's student association to provide feedback. In general, the self-evaluation group stressed the good cooperation with the student representatives, which was also mentioned in the self-evaluation report. During the meetings with the students the team gained the impression that most students knew about the report.

The team found the self-evaluation report to be honest, but not very self-critical. For example, the SWOT analysis mentioned weaknesses implicitly, as they were already transformed into suggestions on how to remedy the actual weaknesses. This sometimes causes a rather "blurry" picture in the description and differentiation between problems and possible solutions or between areas for improvement and actual strengths of the university. In some cases it was hard for the team to tell whether activities described are aspirations or if they have realistic grounding, including concrete planning behind them. In general, the team found the SER to be comprehensive and helpful for developing a first understanding of the university. Appendixes and extra data were clearly presented and in most cases easy to understand. It was obvious to the team that the university used the opportunity and truly engaged with the IEP methodology, as existing data were not simply copy-pasted, but collected and adapted for the purpose of this evaluation.

The self-evaluation report, together with the appendices, was sent to the evaluation team in December 2013. The visits of the evaluation team to Bucharest took place from 19 to 21 January 2014 and from 30 March to 1 April 2014, respectively. In between the visits "ARTIFEX" University of Bucharest provided the evaluation team with some additional documentation.

The evaluation team (hereinafter named the team) consisted of:



UNIUNEA EUROPEANĂ



GUVERNUL ROMÂNIEI



Fondul Social European
POSDRU 2007-2013



Instrumente Structurale
2007-2013



MINISTERUL
EDUCAȚIEI
NAȚIONALE

OIPOSDRU



UNITATEA EXECUTIVĂ PENTRU
FINANȚAREA ÎNVĂȚĂMÂNTULUI
SUPERIOR, A CERCETĂRII,
DEZVOLTĂRII ȘI INOVĂRII



IEP
EUA-Institutional Evaluation Programme



EUA
European University Association

- Prof. Sokratis Katsikas, former rector, University of Piraeus, Greece, team chair
- Prof. Jean-Pierre Gesson, former president, University of Poitiers, France
- Mr Dan Derricott, student, University of Lincoln, United Kingdom
- Ms Lil Reif, researcher, Danube University, Austria, team coordinator.

The team would like to thank the President Dan Cruceru, as well as the whole management team, namely, Rector Mircea Udrescu, Vice-Rector Alexandru Manolé, President of the Senate Constantin Anghelache, and Principal Virginia Cucu, for the warm reception and openness in discussions. The team would like to thank all staff members, students and external stakeholders of “ARTIFEX” for attending meetings with the team and their openness to answer the many questions.

The team would like to express that it appreciated the open-minded and professional atmosphere as well as the excellent organisation of the site visits, including the very timely delivery of all necessary documents and information. Altogether, this made the evaluation a very good, collaborative and collegial experience.



UNIUNEA EUROPEANĂ



GUVERNUL ROMÂNIEI



Fondul Social European
POSDRU 2007-2013



Instrumente Structurale
2007-2013



OPOSDRU



UNITATEA EXECUTIVĂ PENTRU
FINANȚAREA ÎNVĂȚĂMÂNTULUI
SUPERIOR, A CERCETĂRII,
DEZVOLTĂRII ȘI INOVĂRII



IEP
EUA-Institutional Evaluation Programme



EUA
European University Association

2. Governance and institutional decision-making

2.1. What is the institution trying to do?

According to the SER, the permanent concern of the university is to make

... its activities more efficient and ensuring a high-performing and friendly work environment. To this end, it has projected an academic and administrative structure based on modern managerial methods and flexible management models. It also encourages decentralization, autonomy and direct participation of all parties involved. (SER p.8)

The team was told that “ARTIFEX” sees itself as an entrepreneurial university.

Moreover, “ARTIFEX” underwent an institutional evaluation by ARACIS in 2011 and attained a “Trust” rating for the period 2011-2016. The university is proud of this result and envisages keeping it up or even improving it during re-accreditation.

2.2. How is the institution trying to do it?

The main structures for decision-making and management are the Senate, the Administrative Council¹ and the Faculty Council. These were set up in 2011, following changes in the Romanian law. Main leadership positions are the president, the rector, the vice-rector, the president of the Senate, the principal, the deans. It should be noted that unlike other universities, at “ARTIFEX” the president is the credit-authorising person, not the rector (see SER p. 9).

The Administrative Council is responsible for the operative management of the university (SER p. 9). It is composed of 13 members, of which seven are from the “ARTIFEX” Foundation or from UCECOM (National Union of Handicraft and Production Cooperatives). From the university itself, the following staff members are involved: 1) the president of the university, who is also the president of the Administrative Council and the executive director of the “ARTIFEX” Foundation; 2) the rector of the university; 3) the president of the Senate; 4) the principal; 5) the chief registrar and 6) a student member. The vice-rector and the two deans are not part of the Administrative Council, but the team was told that they could be invited to participate in meetings as guests.

The Senate is responsible for the development and discussion of the rules, regulations and methodologies coordinating research and teaching activities, which are later on presented to the Administrative Council for approval. The Senate consists of 21 members, of which at least

¹In the SER and some annexes, the Administrative Council was mentioned as “Board of Trustees” or “Academic Board of Trustees”. This was clarified during the first visit.



UNIUNEA EUROPEANĂ



GUVERNUL ROMÂNIEI



Fondul Social European
POSDRU 2007-2013



Instrumente Structurale
2007-2013



OIOPSDRU



UNITATEA EXECUTIVĂ PENTRU
FINANȚAREA ÎNVĂȚĂMÂNTULUI
SUPERIOR, A CERCETĂRII,
DEZVOLTĂRII ȘI INOVĂRII



IEP
EUA-Institutional Evaluation Programme



EUA
European University Association

25% are student representatives (SER p.9). As the team was told, it includes 10 specialised commissions. In many cases, these turned out to be the main coordination structures for certain management activities that one would expect to find outside the Senate as a unit – for example, “International Academic Cooperation” or “Evaluation and Quality assurance”. The team was told that meetings of the Senate and the Administrative Council are held every three months and consecutively. If necessary, additional meetings are organised.

The Faculty Council is the main decision-making body within faculties. Depending on the size of the faculty, the Council has eight to 11 members; it is presided over by the dean. The university has two faculties, both of which have a department with the same name as the faculty. Staff members of the faculty are all assigned to the respective department. Therefore, another leadership position beside the dean and the vice-dean is head of department. When questioning this seemingly redundant faculty – department structure, the team was informed that it is a requirement of the 1/2011 law for education, the departments being established on the basis of the former chairs. As to the difference between dean and head of the department, the team learned that the dean is responsible for students, whereas the head of department is responsible for human resources and curriculum development. The team was also told that the new law is controversial in this respect. Furthermore, staff members said that within the university, the two faculties are seen as an “integrated ensemble”, rather than two distinct entities. For example, some staff members teach in both faculties. The team was also told that the university tries to keep the management and administrative structure as efficient as possible to avoid redundancies and waste of resources.

The central guiding document for the university's development is the Development Strategy 2012-2016. The strategy largely reflects the rector's programme during his candidacy in 2012. Based on this management programme and the strategy, the rector concluded a management contract with the Senate for his term of office (four years). Based on the development strategy, operational annual plans are prepared at faculty level and later approved by the rector. The rector reports to the Senate annually and to the Administrative Council on the indicators included in the annex of the contract.

Beside the formal quarterly meetings of the Senate and the Administrative Council, the team learned that informal meetings are mainly used for facilitating communication between staff members with management functions. For example, a “management team meeting” takes place every morning, over coffee, in the president's office. These meetings usually gather the president, the rector, the vice-rector and the president of the Senate. The principal, deans, or heads of departments are also invited if needed.

The team observed that students are well-represented in the main governance bodies. The university has a student association, which sees its duty as bridging the gap between students and professors, as the team was told. An example of its activities is a debating programme currently in progress, which aims at strengthening the students' communication skills (SER p.



UNIUNEA EUROPEANĂ



GUVERNUL ROMÂNIEI



Fondul Social European
POSDRU 2007-2013



Instrumente Structurale
2007-2013



MINISTERUL
EDUCAȚIEI
NAȚIONALE



UNITATEA EXECUTIVĂ PENTRU
FINANȚAREA ÎNVĂȚĂMÂNTULUI
SUPERIOR, A CERCETĂRII,
DEZVOLTĂRII ȘI INOVĂRII



EUA-Institutional Evaluation Programme



European University Association

16). There are also many other social or cultural events organised by the association. The association uses social networks including special interest groups to communicate with students. When asked about means of communication between students and the institution in general, students mentioned poster announcements, direct contact with professors, the university's website as well as the intranet.

According to the SER, the largest share of income (90%) comes from tuition fees; other sources of income are rents charged for the dormitories, sponsorships, bank interests and research projects. Approximately 68% of the annual budget is spent on personnel, 20% on inventory costs, outsourced work and services, overheads and depreciation expenses (SER p. 14 and annex 5). As already mentioned, the university is facing a decrease in student numbers. So far the university has successfully managed the decrease in income, including lowering expenses regarding staff costs. However, as the positive balance is also diminishing, this may forecast more difficult times ahead. The team was told that recent major investments included the renovation of student dormitories and the establishment of a medical centre. The team observed that the main values of the university are mirrored in its financial policy. For example, first-year students study free of charge and, if results are above a certain level, can continue free of charge in the following years. Furthermore, there are a number of places for students from foster homes, as well as for Roma students, free of charge throughout the whole study programme. The university offers several social benefits for students and staff, for example subsidised food in canteen, medical services and check-ups free of charge.

In order to attract students, the team was told that the university created flyers that are distributed in schools by "ARTIFEX" students. Furthermore, the university places advertisements in the free newspaper of Bucharest metro. As the team was told, the university applies a rather cautious approach when promoting its educational offers. This is to avoid negative impacts, considering the high competition for students among higher education institutions in general and, particularly, between the public and the private institutions.

The principal has the main responsibility for human resources development. The university policy in this regard aims "to attract and keep high-performing teaching staff and to support continually every academic in their professional, methodical and pedagogical improvement efforts" (SER p. 8). The team gained the impression that the central tools for the development of human resources are the different forms of staff evaluation, which will be described in more detail in chapter 6 on Quality Culture. Another focus in the development of the university's human resources is the hiring of new staff members. Here, the university has developed a policy for a clear and transparent recruitment process. Furthermore, the university mentions trainings for staff, and provided the team with an overview of courses in the period from 2008 to 2013. In this context, the team was told that it is an official requirement for all academic staff to participate in didactical trainings on a regular basis. Among the varied topics listed were trainings on quality assurance or teaching methods.



UNIUNEA EUROPEANĂ



GUVERNUL ROMÂNIEI



Fondul Social European
POSDRU 2007-2013



Instrumente Structurale
2007-2013



OIOPOSDRU



UNITATEA EXECUTIVĂ PENTRU
FINANȚAREA ÎNVĂȚĂMÂNTULUI
SUPERIOR, A CERCETĂRII,
DEZVOLTĂRII ȘI INOVĂRII



EUA-Institutional Evaluation Programme



European University Association

These trainings or courses are mostly organised by external organisations such as ARACIS, various ministries or governmental agencies in conjunction with other universities.

2.3. How does the institution know it works?

As the team observed, the university has established clear processes for monitoring its strategic objectives and operational plans. The team was told that monitoring progress includes the annual revision of the operational plans at three levels: Faculty Council, Senate, and Administrative Council. In addition, the rector prepares an annual report, serving as a basis for the yearly operational plans.

The university described its financial and accounting system as being fully computerised; relevant documents are made public on the university's website (SER p. 14). At the end of each year, the university draws up a profit and loss account, which is checked and approved both internally and externally. According to the SER, financial management and investment policies are planned and defined according to the number of (potential) students and the objectives of each programme. Furthermore, the existence of a four-year budget is mentioned as well as short- and medium-term policies (SER p. 14).

In the data provided by the university, the team observed that the gender and age breakdowns of academic staff members were generally well balanced. The team was informed that the average age of academic staff members is currently 35 years, and that of all staff members 43.5 years. Taking a closer look, however, the team noted a certain gender imbalance both along the academic and the managerial hierarchy. In the academic year 2012-2013, the team noted that all eight full professors are male, even though at earlier stages of the academic career women outnumber their male colleagues in positions such as lecturer and assistant. There are only two women in leadership positions. When the team asked about this imbalance, staff members replied that this relates to previous times and will not be a problem in the future. Female staff members are on the way to being better represented in higher academic and leadership positions; for example, in terms of academic advancement, the team was told that three out of seven staff members currently preparing for habilitation are women. The team encourages the university to keep this aim of having more women in high academic and management positions, ensuring a better gender balance in the future.

2.4 How does the institution change in order to improve?

“ARTIFEX” University has a very experienced and dedicated leadership; this is essential for the future development of the university. The team observed a high awareness among leadership and staff members regarding how much autonomy the legal framework provides, and how to best use this autonomy for the organisation and development of the university. The university’s lean management structure avoids redundant resources or parallel structures linked to managerial and administrative support. Furthermore, the team noted that



UNIUNEA EUROPEANĂ



GUVERNUL ROMÂNIEI



Fondul Social European
POSDRU 2007-2013



Instrumente Structurale
2007-2013



MINISTERUL
EDUCAȚIEI
NAȚIONALE

OIPOSDRU



UNITATEA EXECUTIVĂ PENTRU
FINANȚAREA ÎNVĂȚĂMÂNTULUI
SUPERIOR, A CERCETĂRII,
DEZVOLTĂRII ȘI INOVĂRII



EUA-Institutional Evaluation Programme



European University Association

governance and management structures are clear to all staff members. The team had the impression that staff members appreciate their workplace and working conditions. Therefore, it can be stated that the university is, in general, reaching its self-defined aims. Yet, there are some aspects where the team sees room for improvement.

The team was pleased to see that “ARTIFEX” has a well-focused vision and mission, which are shared among the academic community. Social impact is a driving force and the university is serving well the cooperative sector. However, as universities exist in ever-changing environments, the team recommends the university to consider expanding the vision and mission to serving other parts of the economy as well, beyond the cooperative sector. Closely linked to this is the lack of evidence in the strategic planning of a well-established mechanism to engage stakeholders in expanding the vision and mission. The team was informed that the university sees this as the Administrative Council’s role because of its seven members who are represented by the “ARTIFEX” Foundation or by UCECOM, with wide outreach into the country and its labour market. Yet, the team is not convinced that this does facilitate the enlargement of the university’s vision and mission, as it has broader contacts in very different sectors. Therefore, the team recommends the university to *secure the university's strategic development by systematically including broader perspectives in the domains of interest of “ARTIFEX” University*. There are several options to do so – for example, change the composition of the Administrative Council or establish an advisory board to bring additional perspectives to the strategic development of the university. The team would like to stress that the university should have mechanisms in place that would provide new viewpoints for strategic development.

The development strategy of the university is complemented by annual operational plans; processes for drawing up and monitoring operational plans are transparent and well-established. The team found the development strategy to be an extensive document, which seemed to contain an accumulation of aims over the years. The team did note, however, that it contained the main areas for development for the upcoming academic year. The team observed that some strategic objectives are not supported by plans on how to reach them and vice-versa: for example, there are some objectives in the rector’s management contract with very specific indicators in the field of internationalisation, which should be verified annually, but these are not underpinned by a clear strategy and policy, or a budget. Therefore, for its strategic planning the team recommends the university to *articulate and prioritise how objectives will be achieved*.

The team observed that students and external stakeholders hold a very positive image of the university although the students reported several times that the university’s image should be improved. However, when talking to staff members, the team gained the impression that this very positive image is not confidently projected to the external environment. Instead, the team was told that the university is consciously keeping a “low profile” in the external environment. The team doubts that this is helpful for the university, given the sharp decrease in student numbers and the highly competitive environment. Thus, the team recommends



UNIUNEA EUROPEANĂ



GUVERNUL ROMÂNIEI



Fondul Social European
POSDRU 2007-2013



Instrumente Structurale
2007-2013



MINISTERUL
EDUCAȚIEI
NAȚIONALE
OIPOSDRU



UNITATEA EXECUTIVĂ PENTRU
FINANȚAREA ÎNVĂȚĂMÂNTULUI
SUPERIOR, A CERCETĂRII,
DEZVOLTĂRII ȘI INOVĂRII



IEP
EUA-Institutional Evaluation Programme



EUA
European University Association

formulating and delivering a promotion strategy. As previously stressed, this strategy should be well-defined and supported by concrete plans and resources to reach its aims.

The team observed that everyday management between the quarterly meetings of the Senate and the Council of Administration is mostly done informally. The team believes that this is working very well, partly because of the excellent relationships between individuals of the leadership. It will continue to work well as long as the same individuals are involved. Therefore, the team recommends to *institutionalise daily executive management* in order to ensure that this culture of good communication is not based on the individuals themselves but on their functions. The team found decision-making to be transparent and democratic, based on consensus with broad participation.

As mentioned above, students are well represented in the different governance bodies. The team was informed by members of the student association that being nominated for a function within the association or as a student representative is quite prestigious and highly competitive. However, the team gained the impression that student involvement is limited to cultural and social activities rather than the academic development of the university. One example was already given in relation to the composition of the self-evaluation group. The team noted in the SER as well as during the site visit that no mention was made of the student member of the Administrative Council. The team is convinced that the university can only benefit from encouraging students to participate more actively in governance. This requires a more proactive approach from staff members. Therefore, the team *recommends supporting students to engage more actively in the academic development of the university.* The team also feels that the role of students in governance and strategic planning could be strengthened.

The university has developed an elaborated human resources policy, which focuses not only on clear and transparent selection and recruitment procedures and staff evaluation activities, but also offers trainings to support staff members. The team was told that it is not so easy to organise such trainings internally, by the university itself, because it needs to be done by specialised, accredited bodies. Still, the team encourages the university to think of other less formal (but nonetheless institutionalised) ways of supporting staff in their development, especially for younger and less experienced staff. It was mentioned in the SER that colleagues meet regularly and discuss teaching methods, which in the team's view could also be seen and recognised as a form of staff development. Another example of internal support is mentoring the professional relationships between a younger and more senior staff member. Summing up, the team would like to commend the university for being aware and attentive to the development of its human resources, which keeps in mind not only the institution but also individual staff members. Furthermore, the team thinks that the strategic objective of excellence in teaching (or research) is not yet underpinned by appropriate and sufficient staff professional development activities (both academic and administrative), as well as its monitoring. Therefore, the team would like to emphasise that the university needs to have



UNIUNEA EUROPEANĂ



GUVERNUL ROMÂNIEI



Fondul Social European
POSDRU 2007-2013



Instrumente Structurale
2007-2013



OIPOSDRU



UNITATEA EXECUTIVĂ PENTRU
FINANȚAREA ÎNVĂȚĂMÂNTULUI
SUPERIOR, A CERCETĂRII,
DEZVOLTĂRII ȘI INOVĂRII



EUA-Institutional Evaluation Programme



European University Association

the resources to meet the aims of its human resource policies and strategies and recommends to *proactively use and resource staff development as a tool for improvement*.

Despite external factors like the economic crisis and demographic decline, the university has managed to maintain financial sustainability for which the team congratulates the university. The team was told that the university has no bank loans and was even able to generate some revenues due to diversification of funds. Thus, the university has the funds to secure two study cycles at undergraduate level (for six years) and was also able to keep salaries at a “correct level”, as the team was told. The team was also pleased to learn that the social responsibility of the university stressed in its mission and vision is also reflected in its financial policy, mostly by the high percentage of non-fee paying students and reaching out to students from socially marginalised groups. The team encourages the university to continue its strong approach of closely linking its activities with society.

However, the team learned that the university is not applying full-cost accounting, and observed that in the decision-making process detailed financial data is missing. Therefore, the team strongly recommends the university to *implement full-cost accounting* to inform decision-making processes depending on available funds.

Another observation the team made is that multiannual financial planning does not conform to the long-term strategic objectives of the university. There is a four-year budget, but its purpose is described as ensuring the sustainability of academic programmes (SER p. 14). As the team learned during the site visits, there is no long-term financial planning for strategic objectives like the development of research, the introduction of a doctoral school or the elaboration of a human resources development policy – all of them being long-term activities, which therefore also need long-term financial planning. Therefore, the team recommends the university to *make sure that the financial planning is informed by long-term strategic planning, in order to be able to achieve the aims and to make sure that strategic objectives are backed up by multiannual financial planning*.



UNIUNEA EUROPEANĂ



GUVERNUL ROMÂNIEI



Fondul Social European
POSDRU 2007-2013



Instrumente Structurale
2007-2013



MIPIOSDRU



UNITATEA EXECUTIVĂ PENTRU
FINANȚAREA ÎNVĂȚĂMÂNTULUI
SUPERIOR, A CERCETĂRII,
DEZVOLTĂRII ȘI INOVĂRII



EUA-Institutional Evaluation Programme



European University Association

3. Teaching and learning

3.1 What is the institution trying to do?

As already mentioned, “ARTIFEX” University aims at preparing professionals and specialists for the management and organisation of the cooperative economic sector and small and medium-sized enterprises (SER p. 7). In the Development Strategy 2012-2016, the improvement of the practical component of didactic activities is mentioned. More generally, the university aims at high quality teaching that is carried out by committed staff, and at providing a good infrastructure and a friendly family atmosphere. Furthermore, the university sees that it has a social responsibility towards students coming from socially marginalised backgrounds.

3.2 How is the institution trying to do it?

Currently, the university offers altogether five Bachelor programmes and eight Master programmes. Studies cover management, marketing, finance and accounting and even tourism. The ratio of students to staff is 25 to 1 at Bachelor and 4 to 1 at Master level. Furthermore, the university has developed a tutoring system to support students in their studies, which is of specific value for students coming from vulnerable groups. Many Master students work in parallel to their studies; to accommodate them the university organises classes in the evening starting at 5 p.m. Students said that they appreciate this form of planning, especially the reliability of schedules, as it makes it feasible to combine studies with other responsibilities. Also, the team was informed by students that contact hours range between four and six hours a day at undergraduate level. Up to 10 hours a day are spent in total on studies, depending on the student. In order to ensure a good link between studies and integration into the labour market, internships are an integrative part of all study programmes. Career counselling is also offered. The university also states that modern equipment for teaching is available in most classrooms. As forms of student-centred teaching, the use of email, fora, and personal web pages were mentioned (SER p. 11), whereas students mentioned “open discussions” and “using PowerPoint”.

3.3 How does the institution know it works?

The university conducts several evaluations, which are more or less explicitly linked to the monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning (student evaluation on the teaching quality, staff evaluations). Furthermore, it has developed a methodology for the initiation, approval, monitoring and periodical evaluation of academic programmes (SER p. 19). These activities will be discussed in more detail in chapter 5 on Quality Culture.

The team was told that between 2008 and 2013 dropout rates oscillated between 9% and 12% at Bachelor level and 5% and 9% at Master level. Most drop out occurs after the first year of studies; the reasons for this have not been studied yet. Also, student workload is not



UNIUNEA EUROPEANĂ



GUVERNUL ROMÂNIEI



Fondul Social European
POSDRU 2007-2013



Instrumente Structurale
2007-2013



MINISTERUL
EDUCAȚIEI
NAȚIONALE



UNITATEA EXECUTIVĂ PENTRU
FINANȚAREA ÎNVĂȚĂMÂNTULUI
SUPERIOR, A CERCETĂRII,
DEZVOLTĂRII ȘI INOVĂRII



IEP
EUA-Institutional Evaluation Programme



EUA
European University Association

monitored. Yet, the university conducts a satisfaction survey among graduates, which the team commends. In addition to this, the team learned that the university is monitoring the level of labour market integration. Here, the team was told that around 70% of graduates from Bachelor programmes and 77% of Master programmes have found a job after graduation. However, it should be noted that there is no indication on the percentage of graduates who have found jobs matching their qualifications.

3.4 How does the institution change in order to improve?

As the team was told, students choose to study at “ARTIFEX” following the recommendations of friends or family members. Students seem to be proud of their university and would study here again, as they are satisfied with the learning experience and the good relationship with academic staff. The team observed that the university is very attentive to ensuring that its programmes are relevant for the labour market and thus, the employability of graduates. Internships are an integrative part of curricula both at Bachelor and Master level. Furthermore, the team learned that the university is active in providing opportunities to students to get involved in research-oriented activities, even at undergraduate level. This is all good, and the team encourages the university to continue and further strengthen these approaches.

The team observed that student-centred learning is a major concern at “ARTIFEX” University. However, the team felt that emphasis is largely on “teaching” and less on “learning”, with attention mainly on the teacher’s performance and possible improvements. Here, the team suggests that the university also thinks about students’ involvement in the process of teaching and learning. This also touches upon the notion of students being referred to as “clients” in some of the documents. The team has no doubt that this is motivated in the best sense, namely, that the institution understands itself as being responsible for providing the best conditions for the students and their studies. However, the team doubts that the term “client” is appropriate in higher education and more specifically, it actually does not capture the very close, attentive and collaborative relationship between staff and students observed by the team during the visits. Therefore, it might be better to stress the joint engagement of academic staff and students in teaching and learning, where the university and its academic staff members in particular are responsible for providing the appropriate environment for both good teaching and learning.

Linked to these observations, the team thinks it is reasonable to monitor the student workload to have a better understanding of the “learner’s” perspective. In this respect, the team observed that even though the university is using ECTS, its application seemed to be rather mechanistic, based on mere calculations from previous credit points. Similarly, the team thinks that the university should use more actively the learning outcome approach for the design of curricula and individual courses.



UNIUNEA EUROPEANĂ



GUVERNUL ROMÂNIEI



Fondul Social European
POSDRU 2007-2013



Instrumente Structurale
2007-2013



MINISTERUL
EDUCAȚIEI
NAȚIONALE
OIPOSDRU



UNITATEA EXECUTIVĂ PENTRU
FINANȚAREA ÎNVĂȚĂMÂNTULUI
SUPERIOR, A CERCETĂRII,
DEZVOLTĂRII ȘI INOVĂRII



IEP
EUA-Institutional Evaluation Programme



EUA
European University Association

Furthermore, the team acknowledges the investments made to improve the university's facilities. However, with regard to teaching and learning, the team thinks that there is still much room for improvement, especially of the library services and the use of educational technology. The team was told that the university currently plans to implement a virtual learning platform and encourages it to explore the many opportunities ICT are offering in order to enhance not only the teaching but also the learning process. With regards to this, the SER stresses that the availability of modern equipment in most classrooms would stimulate the use of new technologies (SER p. 11). In this respect, the team would like to remind the university that the actual shift from teaching to learning will not occur because of the mere existence of technology. This requires time and resources to think of how the integration of technologies and didactics can be done, including the development of related competencies. Topics for staff training mentioned earlier included some courses on didactics and the use of educational technologies. The team encourages the university to continue in this direction and recommends that the university *pursue the stated aim to embed student-centred learning by a) monitoring student workload; b) applying ECTS based on estimations of student workload; c) implementing learning outcomes; d) integrating learning resources (library, virtual platform) and technology enhanced teaching and learning.* The team uses "pursue", because both the objective and good practice are already in place.



UNIUNEA EUROPEANĂ



GUVERNUL ROMÂNIEI



Fondul Social European
POSDRU 2007-2013



Instrumente Structurale
2007-2013



MINISTERUL
EDUCAȚIEI
NAȚIONALE
OIPOSDRU



UNITATEA EXECUTIVĂ PENTRU
FINANȚAREA ÎNVĂȚĂMÂNTULUI
SUPERIOR, A CERCETĂRII,
DEZVOLTĂRII ȘI INOVĂRII



IEP
EUA-Institutional Evaluation Programme



EUA
European University Association

4. Research

4.1 What is the institution trying to do?

The university describes research in the SER as the main knowledge and innovation process for the development of teaching activities, to accomplish the objectives of each academic programme (SER p. 11). The leadership gives high priority to the development of research. The main question is how to engage academic staff more in research.

4.2 How is the institution trying to do it?

In order to accomplish its aims, “ARTIFEX” University has developed a “Strategy for the Development of Scientific Research”, covering the period from 2012 to 2016 (SER p. 8). The team was told that due to technical reasons this document is separate from the Development Strategy. The team observed that one of the main goals in developing research is to increase the number of publications, especially in B+ journals. Therefore, every academic should publish at least one paper per year in a prestigious national or international journal indexed by an international database or printed by a recognised publishing house. Similarly, the university aims at enhancing the quality of its own journal “ARTECO” to become recognised by the Romanian National Research Council (CNCS).

To reach these aims, a research support office was set up in 2006. It is organised under the auspices of the Vice-Rector for Research and International Relations, which means in practice that it is run by the vice-rector himself, with support by a technician from the library. When questioning the size and subsequently, the impact of the office, the team was told that it also gets support from colleagues of the two faculties. Beside monitoring research results and drafting reports, the research support office provides technical help in the layout of publications. In addition to the office, a Senate commission is in charge of research, headed by the president of the Senate.

There is some financial support for staff members to attend conferences and about eight to ten staff members are funded per year. The team observed that statements on research refer to enlarging contacts with universities in Romania and abroad for joint research activities. In fact, most of the descriptions on internationalisation aim at developing research. Calls for conferences and invitations to join consortia for research proposals are received by individual staff members and distributed by email or informal talk among staff members.

There are currently no doctoral studies at “ARTIFEX” University, but the team was told that this is underway. Two professors are accredited to supervise PhD students, which they do at another university. According to “ARTIFEX”, it would need three more accredited professors in order to fulfil the minimum requirements for the establishment of a doctoral school. The university thinks that this will be the case within a year.

4.3 How does the institution know it works?



UNIUNEA EUROPEANĂ



GUVERNUL ROMÂNIEI



Fondul Social European
POSDRU 2007-2013



Instrumente Structurale
2007-2013



MINISTERUL
EDUCAȚIEI
NAȚIONALE
OIPOSDRU



UNITATEA EXECUTIVĂ PENTRU
FINANȚAREA ÎNVĂȚĂMÂNTULUI
SUPERIOR, A CERCETĂRII,
DEZVOLTĂRII ȘI INOVĂRII



IEP
EUA-Institutional Evaluation Programme



EUA
European University Association

According to the SER, the research support office has set up a database for managing research results, which is used for drafting reports and synthetic statements in self-evaluation activities (SER p. 13). The team was provided with a list of research output over the period from 2010 to 2013 and observed a clear decrease in the number of publications, both articles and books. Here, the team was told that this is due to the strategic decision of the university to focus more on publications in “high quality journals” with certain indices. It should also be noted that other activities in the field of research were not listed as research outputs – for example, the organisation of academic events such as symposia, or the presentation of a paper during such an event. For 2013, the university reported 21 ongoing research projects. The team was told that most of these projects are funded based on contracts with companies or by the university. As to projects with partners from abroad, the team was told that it is rare that research proposals are actually developed. It takes approximately one month to get the “green light” before the researcher can actually start writing a proposal or joining a consortium for this, because prior approval is needed from the Faculty Council, the Senate, the rector and the Administrative Council.

4.4 How does the institution change in order to improve?

The team observed that the university has identified the need to build on sustainable research capacities. It has a research strategy and the capacity for research leadership exists. However, the team found insufficient evidence that human and financial resources for implementing the research capacity have been foreseen and allocated. The team's impression is that human and financial resources are still very scarce, also given that most staff members involved in the structural support of research have many other duties. There is no doubt that these staff members are competent, but the team emphasises that there are limits to what one person can do in order to support colleagues in developing research, even if applying the very positive open-door policy. Also, if developing research is the strategic objective of the university, the team would like to stress again that this needs to be taken into consideration in the multiannual financial planning.

The team encourages the university to think of more mechanisms to support staff members in carrying out their research and notably in providing appropriate working conditions. For example, the team was told that there is a “teachers’ lounge”; this is a joint space for all academic staff members and is seen as a means to contribute to internal communication. However, staff members do not have their own office, which the team finds essential in order for them to do research. One way of enhancing research conditions could be to provide staff members with technical infrastructure — for example, with a personal laptop, so they would be more flexible in terms of space. Other possibilities include increasing the available funding for attending conferences, taking over costs for translations or proofreading articles for international journals. “Moral” support for staff members should also be mentioned. The team learned that the university provides active staff members with a prize or honorary certificate for good research, which the team found to be very positive. If the current strategic objectives for research remain unchanged, the team would like to recommend the



UNIUNEA EUROPEANĂ



GUVERNUL ROMÂNIEI



Fondul Social European
POSDRU 2007-2013



Instrumente Structurale
2007-2013



MINISTERUL
EDUCAȚIEI
NAȚIONALE

OIPOSDRU



UNITATEA EXECUTIVĂ PENTRU
FINANȚAREA ÎNVĂȚĂMÂNTULUI
SUPERIOR, A CERCETĂRII,
DEZVOLTĂRII ȘI INOVĂRII



IEP
EUA-Institutional Evaluation Programme



EUA
European University Association

university to *formulate and apply concrete incentives for academic staff to engage in research, secure necessary financial resources and to provide staff with necessary resources to facilitate research.* The team strongly recommends *increasing resources for the research support office.*



UNIUNEA EUROPEANĂ



GUVERNUL ROMÂNIEI



Fondul Social European
POSDRU 2007-2013



Instrumente Structurale
2007-2013



MINISTERUL
EDUCAȚIEI
NAȚIONALE

OIPOSDRU



UNITATEA EXECUTIVĂ PENTRU
FINANȚAREA ÎNVĂȚĂMÂNTULUI
SUPERIOR, A CERCETĂRII
DEZVOLTĂRII ȘI INOVĂRII



IEP
EUA Institutional Evaluation Programme



EUA
European University Association

5. Service to society

5.1 What is the institution trying to do?

As main areas for service to society the university states the provision of higher education including to the more marginalised groups of society. Furthermore, the SER refers to the university's responsibility to provide higher education relevant to the labour market.

5.2 How is the institution trying to do it?

As briefly described in chapter 1 and 2, the university provides higher education free of charge to young people from foster homes, based on a memorandum the university concluded with the Romanian Government. Thus, between 2003 and 2013, approximately 500 graduates out of 11 500 have benefited from this (SER p. 17). In general terms, the university aims at keeping higher education affordable: all first-year students are exempt from tuition fees and if study results are very good, 9.5 or higher, (decided annually), they continue without paying fees in subsequent years. According to the SER, 39% of all students were studying for free in 2013 at undergraduate level, with a total value of subsidies of 1.47 million RON (SER p. 16).

Furthermore, the team was told that the student association is very active in organising charity events to help marginalised people as well as cultural events, commemorating for example the International Day of Roma people.

During the meeting with external stakeholders, the team observed very good relationships with a large group of stakeholders, including alumni. Establishing and maintaining links with the external stakeholders is also an important objective mentioned in the strategy and translated into indicators that are part of the rector's management contract; these include, participation in events of professional organisations or considering membership in such an organisation. In addition, the management contract includes a certain number of partnership agreements per year to be signed and events to be organised in cooperation with external stakeholders. As the team learned from stakeholders, the main activity so far seen for cooperation is the provision of internships.

5.3 How does the institution know it works?

The university is surveying the satisfaction of its graduates upon graduation. However, this is done directly after graduation and might be too short to gain a sound understanding of the programme's relevance to the labour market. Furthermore, internships are concluded with internship reports, but there was not much evidence these are actually used by the university as a valuable source to understand the relevance of programme content for the labour market. Also, the team could not identify mechanisms to involve external stakeholders *systematically* in the development of core university activities – for example, to develop or improve study programmes. It might well be that this is not seen as relevant because a large



UNIUNEA EUROPEANĂ



GUVERNUL ROMÂNIEI



Fondul Social European
POSDRU 2007-2013



Instrumente Structurale
2007-2013



MINISTERUL
EDUCAȚIEI
NAȚIONALE
OIPOSDRU



UNITATEA EXECUTIVĂ PENTRU
FINANȚAREA ÎNVĂȚĂMÂNTULUI
SUPERIOR, A CERCETĂRII,
DEZVOLTĂRII ȘI INOVĂRII



IEP
EUA-Institutional Evaluation Programme



EUA
European University Association

share of staff members are also working outside the university as the team was told, thus ensuring constant links to the labour market.

5.4 How does the institution change in order to improve?

However, the team thinks there should be a mechanism to involve external stakeholders in the development of the university's core activities. The team gained the strong impression that stakeholders are very much interested in sharing their experience and viewpoints and would bring in good ideas on how to improve the quality of programmes and improve the relevance of learning outcomes for the labour market. The major concern that stakeholders raised during the meeting with the evaluation team was about balancing "theoretical knowledge with practical knowledge". Some examples to ensure this balance were brought up by the stakeholders during the meeting and are summarised here:

- Internship reports could be presented at larger events such as an internship conference, where the audience would be a mix of students, academic staff, as well as stakeholders involved in the internships. Thus, the university could make more use of internships and the related "learning product", the report, than it is the case so far.
- Round table discussions could be organised with the participation of final year students and experts from the labour market
- Writing a Bachelor or Master thesis in collaboration with a company.

It should also be noted that stakeholders include multinational companies. Here, the team discovered that the university has not yet considered the potential of these links for providing student with international mobility via internships. This will be further explored in chapter 7 on internationalisation.

Based on these observations, the team recommends the university to *systematically engage and draw on the expertise of stakeholders in developing the university (programmes, international character etc.)*.



UNIUNEA EUROPEANĂ



GUVERNUL ROMÂNIEI



Fondul Social European
POSDRU 2007-2013



Instrumente Structurale
2007-2013



MINISTERUL
EDUCAȚIEI
NAȚIONALE
OIPOSDRU



UNITATEA EXECUTIVĂ PENTRU
FINANȚAREA ÎNVĂȚĂMÂNTULUI
SUPERIOR, A CERCETĂRII,
DEZVOLTĂRII ȘI INOVĂRII



IEP
EUA-Institutional Evaluation Programme



EUA
European University Association

6. Quality culture

6.1 What is the institution trying to do?

According to the management contract signed by the rector at the beginning of 2013 and the SER, quality assurance is envisaged as a tool to create an optimal framework for achieving the objectives of the university and developing the institution. Furthermore, it is considered to be a part of human resources development, linking evaluation results with staff promotion (SER p. 20; management commitment).

6.2 How is the institution trying to do it?

The abovementioned management contract as well as a quality policy, both signed by the rector, set the general scene for all quality activities at the university. In addition, the university mentions the Quality Manual as a central document that describes the quality management system, its aims, structures and methodologies. The university claims to continuously enforce the methodologies and processes laid out in the Quality Manual (SER p. 18). Furthermore, the revision and update of the quality policy and its objectives are described as ongoing concerns and the main responsibilities of the rector. It is also the responsibility of the rector to make sure that the quality policy and objectives are known, understood and respected by all staff members (management commitment; SER p. 22). The university applies ISO 9001:2008 standards, which is seen as the optimal framework to achieve the objectives of the university.

Quality assurance is mainly dealt with by the Senate Commission for Evaluation and Quality Assurance, which is authorised to implement the policy of quality of education at institutional level and to coordinate all activities related to this (SER p. 18). The university has five staff who are certified quality assessors (Development Strategy 2012-2016, p. 17). The most prominent procedures "ARTIFEX" applies as a basis for evaluation and development of quality are: peer evaluation, student evaluation on teaching quality and self-evaluation.

Peer evaluation is used for the regulation and self-regulation of institutional behaviour. It consists of a table with the initials of all staff members and eight psychological and social dimensions, for example "active", "cooperative" or "assertive". During evaluation, each staff member evaluates all colleagues including themselves along the eight psychological and social dimensions. This evaluation takes place at the end of the academic year, after exams. Based on these judgements, a general picture is created on each staff member, considering them in the less favourable case to be "risky", "obstructive" or "non stimulating", or, in the better case, to be "stimulating" or even "highly stimulating".

Self-evaluation of academic staff members is carried out annually and based on a self-evaluation chart. It takes into account the activities performed by every academic over the preceding five years in different fields of activities: teaching; research; national/international visibility; student activities; activities within the academic community; contributions to the



UNIUNEA EUROPEANĂ



GUVERNUL ROMÂNIEI



Fondul Social European
POSDRU 2007-2013



Instrumente Structurale
2007-2013



MINISTERUL
EDUCAȚIEI
NAȚIONALE
OIPOSDRU



UNITATEA EXECUTIVĂ PENTRU
FINANȚAREA ÎNVĂȚĂMÂNTULUI
SUPERIOR, A CERCETĂRII,
DEZVOLTĂRII ȘI INOVĂRII



IEP
EUA-Institutional Evaluation Programme



EUA
European University Association

institutional development. The outcomes of this self-evaluation are discussed bilaterally between the head of department and the academic staff member, searching for solutions when needed. This evaluation serves as a basis for the yearly evaluation of staff members done by the head of department, ranking academic staff members as “average”, “well” or “very well”. The team notes, based on examples provided, that the evaluation results do not differ largely within one faculty, which lowers their value. The team learned that in one faculty, the dean organises working groups between staff members with difficulties and those with better results in the respective field. With this collegial exchange of experiences the dean aims at supporting the further development of staff members.

The evaluation of teaching by students is done via questionnaires developed at university level. These are filled in by students for all courses they attended, two weeks before the exams. It is done on paper with around 70% of all students participating. The questionnaire comprises 19 questions assessing the quality of teaching as well as that of the course in general. Three of these are open questions asking what students particularly liked, what they would recommend for further improvement as well as giving room for open comments. The main responsibility for following up these evaluations rests with the deans.

In addition to these evaluation procedures, the university applies a methodology for the initiation, approval, monitoring and periodical evaluation of its academic programmes (SER p. 19).

6.3 How does the institution know it works?

The team observed that all evaluations are done regularly, with a clear understanding of responsibilities and how to use the results. Academic staff members to whom the team spoke mentioned student evaluations as important sources of information for new ideas. From discussions with students, the team learned that they are confident that results of their evaluations are taken into consideration by academic staff as well as by the rector and the management team as a whole. It should be noted that student engagement in the respective course – apart from the mere question of course attendance – is not considered in the questionnaire. Student workload is also not assessed.

As mentioned already in chapter 3 on teaching and learning, the university is aware of student dropout numbers and when it most often occurs. However, the reasons for the drop out have not been explored yet, which seems contradictory given the identified general problem of decreasing student numbers.

6.4 How does the institution change in order to improve?

One main observation the team made is that the university has taken ownership of quality assurance. Outcomes of quality assessment are seen as important sources of information for



UNIUNEA EUROPEANĂ



GUVERNUL ROMÂNIEI



Fondul Social European
POSDRU 2007-2013



Instrumente Structurale
2007-2013



OIOPSDRU



UNITATEA EXECUTIVĂ PENTRU
FINANȚAREA ÎNVĂȚĂMÂNTULUI
SUPERIOR, A CERCETĂRII,
DEZVOLTĂRII ȘI INOVĂRII



EUA-Institutional Evaluation Programme



European University Association

the development of the university and were not described at all as a bureaucratic burden. Quality procedures and processes are clearly articulated and staff members are fully aware of them. The team praises the university for this.

Furthermore, the team observed that there is a tendency to translate many of the evaluation results into aggregate numbers and based on this, to draw up categories. The team would like to caution the university to not overestimate the outcomes of such results, as they might be biased for several reasons. One example is less experienced staff members competing with evaluation results of more experienced colleagues, due to their different positions in the system and therefore, having different possibilities and resources. The team encourages the university to continue its approach to build firstly on good interpersonal communication, dialogue and mentorship and not as much on numbers, though this might be less easy to take into account in decision-making processes.

The team observed a strong focus on evaluating individual staff members and courses as mentioned earlier. This is advantageous because it allows courses to be improved as well as the further development of staff members on an individual basis. However, the team did not find much evidence that outcomes of the different evaluations are used for strategic improvements, be it on the level of the institution as a whole or a study programme.

Therefore, the team recommends to *extend the process of quality assurance to university level by including aspects not necessarily stipulated by the law, but relevant for reaching strategic objectives of the university*. For example, the university claims to have the European Standards and Guidelines reflected in its internal management system (SER p. 22). The team did not find evidence for this statement during the site visits and encourages the university to make use of the ESG more actively, as they are developed specifically for higher education and provide a good framework for strategic development at university level.

Also, the university should consider establishing *a mechanism for understanding reasons for student dropout and take action accordingly*. In this respect, the university should also take measures to evaluate student workload.



UNIUNEA EUROPEANĂ



GUVERNUL ROMÂNIEI



Fondul Social European
POSDRU 2007-2013



Instrumente Structurale
2007-2013



OIPOSDRU



UNITATEA EXECUTIVĂ PENTRU
FINANȚAREA ÎNVĂȚĂMÂNTULUI
SUPERIOR, A CERCETĂRII,
DEZVOLTĂRII ȘI INOVĂRII



IEP
EUA-Institutional Evaluation Programme



EUA
European University Association

7. Internationalisation

7.1 What is the institution trying to do?

Two of the eight strategic objectives clearly mention an international dimension. Both are linked to research: “to develop scientific research, in permanent cooperation with similar institution from Romania and abroad” and “to assert the scientific performances of the academic community members, through participation in reunions organized at both national and international level” (SER p. 7-8, team's emphasis). Furthermore, the SER includes a short section on international cooperation (SER p. 17-18). Based on these explanations, it appears that, so far, international cooperation at “ARTIFEX” is mainly oriented towards initiating research partnerships. Other objectives related to internationalisation were not stated in the SER.

The Development Strategy 2012-2016 does not include a special section elaborating on “international cooperation” or similar. Yet, it still gives a different, broader picture on international activities than the SER. Beside activities in “research”, they also include objectives relevant to students, for example: to increase the number of foreign students; to initiate international Master programmes; to conclude protocols with foreign universities for the mutual recognition of degrees and the granting of double diplomas; to encourage the involvement of students in as many international opportunities as possible; to inform them about these opportunities and involve them in various programmes; to facilitate the exchange of teachers abroad; and last, but not least, to send as many students as possible abroad for different purposes (“ARTIFEX” Development Strategy 2012-2016, p. 10 ff.). In the list of indicators annexed to the rector's contract with the Senate, some of these objectives can be traced.

Based on the SER and moreover, on the observations during the site visits, the team got the strong impression that internationalisation is not among the strategic priorities of the university. Except for one meeting, which was dedicated to the topic of internationalisation, international activities were hardly if at all mentioned by the leadership or staff members. The same applies for discussions with students.

7.2 How is the institution trying to do it?

The chapter in the SER on international cooperation emphasises the constant concern of the university to initiate partnerships and maintain “a permanent contact with these institutions”. As the team was told, international activities are mainly dealt by the Senate Commission for International Academic Cooperation, consisting of three academic staff members and two student members. In addition to the Senate Commission, the vice-rector is also responsible for international relations. As some of the aims stated above are linked to research, it should also be noted that some international activities overlap with research and related activities, which was described in chapter 5. There is no international office or similar



UNIUNEA EUROPEANĂ



GUVERNUL ROMÂNIEI



Fondul Social European
POSDRU 2007-2013



Instrumente Structurale
2007-2013



MINISTERUL
EDUCAȚIEI
NAȚIONALE
OIPOSDRU



UNITATEA EXECUTIVĂ PENTRU
FINANȚAREA ÎNVĂȚĂMÂNTULUI
SUPERIOR, A CERCETĂRII,
DEZVOLTĂRII ȘI INOVĂRII



IEP
EUA-Institutional Evaluation Programme



EUA
European University Association

support structure and no administrative support for the Senate Commission for International Academic Cooperation or the vice-rector. When questioned about how information is provided, the team was told that calls for conferences, publications or other activities are circulated via an internal mailing list, or distributed by staff members if they receive information. It was stressed that the small size of the university fosters ease of close communication.

The team learned that the university had successfully applied for the extended Erasmus University Charter in 2012. The rector's contract mentions the goal of ensuring international mobility for at least 20 students, which is to be annually checked. There are about 15 to 20 foreign students currently studying at "ARTIFEX", mostly from Turkey, Iraq or the Republic of Moldova. The team learned that they came on their own accord; no specific measures are taken to attract foreign students.

The team was told that the Senate Commission for International Academic Cooperation tried to identify universities abroad with a similar profile to ARTIFEX. Another example of cooperation with partners abroad is the European University of Cooperatives, a network of similar institutions in Europe and of which "ARTIFEX" is one of the founding members. Also mentioned were approaches to establish partnerships through a project of the Romanian Ministry of Education or setting up links between the student association and international student unions.

Some activities for these established partnerships could include inviting partners to participate in symposia held at ARTIFEX or to invite colleagues to join the editorial board of the university's journal ARTECO (SER p. 17-18). Apart from these cooperation mechanisms, the team did not find evidence of how the university makes actual use of its existing links with higher education institutions as well as with external stakeholders, how it intends to make use of the privilege of being one of the founding members of the European Cooperative University. There are no clear measures taken to enable and ensure student or staff mobility. In this respect, the team learned from students that this is seen as rather unproblematic, because they should also be responsible and make the effort to seek mobility opportunities. The team had the impression that all staff members were involved in keeping in permanent contact with partner institutions, but without any formal coordination.

Language courses are obligatory both at Bachelor and Master level, which the team commends. The team was also told that resources for language teaching could be improved since there are only three teachers responsible for language teaching in the whole university. Having said this, the team would like to underline the potential for students to improve language skills during studies or internships abroad. The university would be of essential help to students to explore such opportunities as well as finding ways to recognise the outcomes of such learning after their return. The team also noted that the university has not yet considered offering language courses for its own academic and administrative staff members.



UNIUNEA EUROPEANĂ



GUVERNUL ROMÂNIEI



Fondul Social European
POSDRU 2007-2013



Instrumente Structurale
2007-2013



OIPOSDRU



UNITATEA EXECUTIVĂ PENTRU
FINANȚAREA ÎNVĂȚĂMÂNTULUI
SUPERIOR, A CERCETĂRII,
DEZVOLTĂRII ȘI INOVĂRII



EUA-Institutional Evaluation Programme



European University Association

7.3 How does the institution know it works?

First of all, the team would like to stress that monitoring of international activities is hardly possible when an action plan guided by a strategy and based on a budget is missing. The SER states that “an increasing number of foreign specialists” are participating in the symposia of the university. Even though this is not substantiated in numbers, the university was confident that this works well and that the visibility of the institution has increased (SER p. 17-18, also mentioned as a strength p. 22). As for student mobility, the team did not find quantitative evidence for outgoing students, even though the rector's management contract states that at least 20 students per year should benefit from international mobility. Outgoing mobility for teachers was not mentioned at all, even though this is also explicitly included in the rector's contract. It should be noted that unlike student mobility, there are no target numbers for teachers mentioned in the report, as it is dependent on financial resources. It remained unclear to the team the extent to which the Erasmus University Charter is linked to the planning of student and teacher mobility.

7.4 How does the institution change in order to improve?

The team got the impression that internationalisation at “ARTIFEX” is more an aim than a strategy in practice and is still at the first stage of development. Internationalisation is not a strategic priority and therefore, no real strategy, related policies, specific plans and funding exist. Even though highly dedicated staff are working to do their best to develop this area, human and financial resources are very much limited. The team doubts that the university will experience major developments if internationalisation is supported by a commission staffed by three academics with a full-time teaching load and two student members, and without a specific budget or administrative support.

The team observed that the university has not yet explored the varied internationalisation opportunities through its excellent links with external stakeholders, particularly multinational companies. This observation was even more surprising, as the Development Strategy explicitly mentions “practical sessions” or “diploma projects” as activities for sending students abroad. Internationalisation could be further developed by offering students opportunities for international internships.

Based on all these observations, the team recommends developing internationalisation “from scratch”. *It is recommended to define internationalisation within the context of this particular university, and to include internationalisation among the top strategic priorities. ARTIFEX should develop and apply an appropriate strategy and policies, inter alia by engaging multinational stakeholders and by allocating additional human and financial resources.*



UNIUNEA EUROPEANĂ



GUVERNUL ROMÂNIEI



Fondul Social European
POSDRU 2007-2013



Instrumente Structurale
2007-2013



MINISTERUL
EDUCAȚIEI
NAȚIONALE
OIPOSDRU



UNITATEA EXECUTIVĂ PENTRU
FINANȚAREA ÎNVĂȚĂMÂNTULUI
SUPERIOR, A CERCETĂRII,
DEZVOLTĂRII ȘI INOVĂRII



IEP
EUA-Institutional Evaluation Programme



EUA
European University Association

8. Conclusion

The team thinks that “ARTIFEX” University of Bucharest is a very good example of an institution with a well-defined vision and mission, with a clear outreach into its environment. During the evaluation, the team found highly dedicated staff with a good understanding of the institution and real ownership and responsibility for its activities and processes. Given the very good links with external stakeholders and its firm rootedness in Romanian society, the team is convinced that “ARTIFEX” University has the best preconditions to revisit its vision and mission in the context of national and international economic developments, without jeopardising the links to its history and tradition. The team would also like to stress again the role of external stakeholders and students, which in the team's view is still an unlocked asset for the further development of the university.

There are many strengths highlighted in this report as well as areas in which the university could further develop. In this respect, the team encourages “ARTIFEX” University to continue building on its strengths whilst identifying answers to weaknesses and threats. The team would like to underline that the university should not be afraid to define its weaknesses more explicitly, in order to address them.

The team found that the university has a favourable internal working climate and communication culture and congratulates the university for this. Internal processes are clearly defined and as the team observed, and the university is proactive. Nevertheless, the team thinks that the leaderships should not completely rely on informal communication channels despite the small size of the university and the fact that people know one another fairly well. The current leadership is experienced and has the capacity to institutionalise some of the communication and decision-making processes, especially for daily executive management, in order to ensure continuity in the university's further development. As to the lean management structures and more particularly, to the very sparing approach to establish management and administrative support, the team would like to remind the university that there are natural limits to this. The university should make sure that all its goals are backed up by thorough and realistic planning, including resources, no matter what the area for improvement is.

Concluding this report, the team would like to express its confidence that “ARTIFEX” University of Bucharest has good preconditions to succeed even in turbulent times of demographic decline or economic crisis. The team wishes the members of the university good luck for all their endeavours as well as an unerring eye in all decisions, and last, but not least, to keep the high sense of responsibility to offer socially inclusive higher education.



UNIUNEA EUROPEANĂ



GUVERNUL ROMÂNIEI



Fondul Social European
POSDRU 2007-2013



Instrumente Structurale
2007-2013



OIPOSDRU



UNITATEA EXECUTIVĂ PENTRU
FINANȚAREA ÎNVĂȚĂMÂNTULUI
SUPERIOR, A CERCETĂRII,
DEZVOLTĂRII ȘI INOVĂRII



EUA-Institutional Evaluation Programme



EUA
European University Association

Recommendations

Governance

- (1) Secure the university's strategic development by systematically including broader perspectives in the domains of interest of "ARTIFEX" University.
- (2) Consider institutionalising everyday executive management.
- (3) Support students to engage more actively in the academic development of the university, including its governance and strategic planning.
- (4) Proactively use and resource staff development as a tool for improvement.
- (5) Make sure that financial planning is informed by long-term strategic planning and vice versa, that strategic objectives are backed up by multiannual financial planning.
- (6) Articulate and prioritise how objectives will be achieved, including by implementation of cost accounting.
- (7) Formulate and deliver a promotion strategy.

Teaching and Learning

- (8) Pursue the stated aim to embed student-centred learning by a) monitoring student workload; b) applying ECTS based on estimations of student workload; c) implementing learning outcomes; d) integrating learning resources (library, virtual platform) and technology-enhanced teaching and learning.

Research

- (9) Formulate and apply concrete incentives for academic staff to engage in research.
- (10) Secure necessary financial resources and provide staff with necessary resources to facilitate research.
- (11) Enhance resources for the research support office.

Outreach to Society

- (12) Systematically engage and draw on the expertise of stakeholders in developing a) the university's programmes and b) its international character.



UNIUNEA EUROPEANĂ



GUVERNUL ROMÂNIEI



Fondul Social European
POSDRU 2007-2013



Instrumente Structurale
2007-2013



MIPIOSDRU



UNITATEA EXECUTIVĂ PENTRU
FINANȚAREA ÎNVĂȚĂMÂNTULUI
SUPERIOR, A CERCETĂRII,
DEZVOLTĂRII ȘI INOVĂRII



EUA-Institutional Evaluation Programme



European University Association

Quality Culture

- (13) Extend the process of quality assurance to university level by including aspects not necessarily stipulated by the law, but relevant for reaching strategic objectives of the university.
- (14) Establish a mechanism for understanding the reasons for student dropout and take action accordingly.

Internationalisation

- (15) Define internationalisation within the context of this particular university, include internationalisation among the top strategic priorities, develop and apply appropriate strategy and policies, inter alia by engaging multinational stakeholders and by allocating additional human and financial resources.