Annex 6 – Thematic analyses

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Annex 6.1 – Perception of the policies and quality of Romanian higher education at the system level

Study 1. The study from Quality Barometer - 2015

Between December 2014 and October 2015, a sociological research (quantitative and qualitative) on measuring respondents' perception of the policies and quality of Romanian higher education at the system level (*respondents volume: 1533 students, 1454 teachers and 1572 employers*). The study was published in *Quality Barometer*[1] and each educational institution received one physical copy.

Quality analysis – interviews

The external evaluations carried out by ARACIS are considered to be useful and necessary because they exert pressure on the system and compel regular revisions of its functioning:

"The mechanisms of the periodic evaluations carried out by ARACIS are helpful in compelling us to periodically adapt ourselves, although we do it annually when we re-evaluate and revise our curricula and disciplines records."[T.I. Professor 2; Position: 33-33]

"The periodic evaluations carried out by ARACIS are useful."[T.I. Professor 5; Position: 36-36]

"The evaluations are good and the results are beneficial."[T.I. Professor 10; Position: 35-35]

An interesting aspect regarding the external quality system consists in taking responsibility and sharing it among all actors of the system:

"The main responsibility for assuring the quality of the academic system is ARACIS, but each of us is also responsible."[T.I. Professor 2; Position: 35-35]

Along with favorable opinions, we also find critical opinions on the usefulness and effectiveness of ARACIS. There are teachers who consider that ARACIS procedures are inefficient and often interfere with the internal systems, with problems of internal coherence (between commissions) and external coherence (with the internal mechanisms).

"The mechanisms of the periodic evaluations carried out by ARACIS interfere with the internal quality assurance system."[T.I. Professor 3; Position: 36-36].

"The periodic evaluations carried out by ARACIS have deficiencies and are different from commission to commission. These commissions creates a beneficial tension that maintains quality."[T.I. Professor 8; Position: 35-35].

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[1] *Petrescu I., Gogu E., Iucu Bumbu R. (coordonators) – Quality Barometrer-2016, The Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in HigherEducation, 2017, pag 366 ISBN 978-973-0-24193-8* http://www.aracis.ro/fileadmin/ARACIS/Publicatii_Aracis/2017/Quality_Barometer_2016_EN.rar

Annex 6.2 – Opinion of the Higher Education institutions on the quality of ARACIS activities carried out in the external evaluation process

Study 2 **Analysis report. Quality evaluation of ARACIS activities**

Between January and April 2017, a survey of the university management and evaluators from ARACIS Register through[2]:

a. studying *the opinion of the higher education institutions* on the quality of ARACIS activities carried out in the external evaluation process (**626** respondents from the university management);
b. studying *the opinion of the evaluators from ARACIS Register* on the Agency role in the development of the higher education system in the following period (**328** respondents from ARACIS evaluators - teachers and students).

The study included two open questions regarding the improvement of ARACIS evaluators activity and of the Romanian education trends in the field of quality assurance.

In a very synthetic way, the opinions analysis resulted in the following points:

- *The quality indicators* defined in ARACIS standards are identified as an important means by which better choice and definition can contribute to the increase of higher education quality,
- The idea of reconsidering the share (in the sense of maximizing) of the *educational*, pedagogical in fact, activities results is supported,
- The increase in responsibility of *the internal quality assurance systems* is frequently identified as one of the main goals of the entire activity in this field,
- *Performance based financing* is identified as a possible solution for improving the results in the field of quality assurance and management,
- A better use of *information technologies* is proposed,
- The improvement of the adaptation to *the beneficiaries requirements* (the labor market) is one of the important levers in the Romanian education quality increase,
- A better correlation with *the international quality standards* is insistently proposed,
- *Students' involvement* should be improved in everything that academic activity means,
- The academic system must continue to rely on ARACIS as an already validated means for quality increase, although improvements are required in the Agency activities.

ARACIS is perceived as *an important actor for the future* to *improve the quality assessment and management* in the field, although improvements of the methods and practices are necessary.
Likewise, the knowledge of the complexity and interdependence of the phenomena in the evaluation and quality assurance process, the managerial structures of the higher education institutions and the evaluation experts from ARACIS Register lead to an increased awareness of the need to develop an internal culture of quality and of direct involvement in the mechanisms implementation to assure and enhance the education processes quality.

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[2]*Lache S., Gogu E. (coordonators), Petrescu I., Stanciu St etc., [2017] – Analysis report. Quality evaluation of ARACIS activities (printed edition, 2017) ARACIS Page 127, ISBN 978-973-0-24447- http://www.aracis.ro/fileadmin/ARACIS/Publicatii_Aracis/2017/Prezentare_EN/2017__Review_-_Evaluation_of_the_quality_of_the_activity_of_ARACIS.pdf*