EXTERNAL EVALUATOR'S REPORT
FOR ARACIS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF DANUBIUS,
GALATI, MAY 2009

AGENȚIA ROMÂNĂ
DE ASIGURARE A CALITĂȚII
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Introduction

I was appointed as a Foreign External Evaluator for the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ARACIS) and was consequently invited to join the evaluation team for the institutional re-accreditation process of Danubius University in Galati. The audit took place between Wednesday 27 May and Friday 29 May 2009.
The evaluation team consisted of the following members, in addition to myself:

Prof. Ph.D. Anton Hadar – Director Coordinator
Prof. Ph.D. Ioan Nistor – Evaluation Coordinator
Prof. Ph.D. Emil Scarlat – Institutional Committee Expert
Prof. Ph.D. Marcel Rusu – Program Expert (Law)
Prof. Ph.D. Nicolae Voiculescu – Program Expert (Law)
Prof. Ph.D. Mihai Romanca Program Expert (Law)
Prof. Ph.D. Alina Bargaoanu – Program Expert (Research and Development Department)
Associate Prof. Ph.D. Marius Dinca – Program Expert (Banks and Finance)
Associate Prof. Ph.D. – Mihaela Gheorghe – Consultative Committee Expert
Lecturer Ph.D. Oana Preda – Scientific Secretary
Melinda Szabo – Student Evaluator
Marius Imbrea – Student Evaluator

The evaluation process began on Wednesday the 27th of May at 10 a.m. in the Senate Room with the introductory statements of the mission from Prof. PhD Anton Hadar and he also asked the members of the evaluation team to introduce themselves. Then Prof. univ.dr. Benone Pusca the Rector of Danubius University welcomed the evaluation team and asked the coexist colleagues of the university management to introduce themselves too.
This was followed by a tour of the university and its specialist facilities.

Between 11 a.m. and 5 p.m. the group of experts was working on different aspects of the accreditation. In my role as Foreign Expert Evaluator, I was responsible for establishing an overview of the whole university and was allowed to move freely, talking to members of staff, students of the university. At 17 p.m. we had an appointment with a group of about 200 Students of Danubius University.

The team continued the evaluation process on Thursday the 28th of May starting at 9 a.m. until 5 p.m. At 5 p.m. there was a one hour meeting with a group of about 30 graduates' employers.

The evaluation process was finished on Friday the 29th of May when the team of experts prepared the final report. The evaluation process was conducted in open and collegial manner.

General Statements

Danubius University operates according to the Constitution and the laws that govern the higher education system in Romania.
Danubius University is an accredited private higher education institute and has been operating since 1992. It is functioning on the basis of Law no. 409/2002.
It has five faculties:

- The Faculty of Law
- The Faculty of Economics
- The Faculty of Communication Sciences
- Faculty of International Relationships and European Studies
- Faculty of Administrative Sciences

The University offers eight Bachelor and five Master degrees. The Danubius University changed the programs according to the European Bologna process since 2005.
The University has 9020 enrolled students. There are 4864 full time students, 381 part time students and 3775 students in distance learning programs.

The scientific potential and quality of human resources at Danubius University seems to be on a good level.

Managerial Structure

The management of the university is organised in accordance with its legal obligations, which are stated in the university's charter. In terms of structure, the university is led by a Rector, who is supported by two Pro Rectors. The Rector's duties include the strategic leadership of the university and representing the university at judicial and public bodies, one of the Pro Rector is responsible for educational matters and academic field (quality insurance is also charged by him), the other is responsible for international partnerships and research.
Senate is the main decision making body of the university which consists of a mixture of appointed and elected representatives. There are 26 persons in the Senate at Danubius University (20 teaching staff, 6 students).
The university is divided into five faculties, which are further subdivided into departments. Each faculty is led by a Dean and also has a professorial council.

Management system is based on the integrated information systems in a unified system that provides automated data records, functional departments of the University by communicating through the intranet system. University Management System (UMS) is an instrument dedicated to the administration of activities from the educational process that exists in the academic environments. It seemed to me that UMS operating quite well at Danubius University which support the educational administration.

Comment: The Hungarian regulation says that one third of the Senate should be the representatives of the students. I know the Romanian regulation says that a quarter of the Senate should be the representatives of the students. Raising the quantity of the student's representatives might grow the confidence. I also recommend *involving more students* in the professorial councils of the faculties.
The Senate of the Hungarian universities includes besides the teaching staff and the elected representatives of the student community also elected representatives of the technical and nontechnical employers.

Teaching Staff

The number of academic staff holding positions at the university level is 91. Most of the academic staff is employed full-time (71) by the university. All academic staff members at Danubius University are PhD holders (69,8%) or PhD in progress (31,2%) in science. There are 41,73% professors and associate professors out of the total holders. Danubius University has now a highly qualified staff.

Comment: While the academic staff quality is on a quite good level, *the quantity is not sufficient* compared with the high number of students. If the teaching staff is over loaded, the academic quality will decrease.

Facilities

The University functions in very nice new buildings. Following educational spaces are available: lecture halls with 966 seats (the total surface is 1130.4 square metres), seminar halls with 402 seats (the total surface is 631.19 square metres) and laboratories (the total surface is 226.35 square metres).
All the educational spaces fulfil every requirement of the European standards (conference whiteboards, air conditioning, smoke sensors, modern quality furniture, projecting systems, internet access etc.).

The library of the University owns more than 26000 volumes and 3000 periodicals. Some of them are signed by well known authors but the others should be updated.
The reading room has 150 places with a surface of 250 square metres with modern functional furniture, and also nine computers used to store bibliographic data on the library's documents, using the legal data basis, accessing technical literature articles.

There is a plan to build a student hostel in 2009 and a sport field in 2010 close to the campus. The lack of sport facilities was mentioned when we had the appointment with the students.

Comment: It is important that the university *continues to invest* in its physical infrastructure.

Students

There is the following number of students at each faculty:

- Faculty of Economics 4610 (3730 BA / 880 MA)
- Faculty of Law 3465 (2399 BA / 1066 MA)
- The Faculty of Communication Sciences 467
- Faculty of International Relationships and European Studies 384
- Faculty of Administrative Sciences 94

Comment: In my opinion the number of students participating in MA program is a bit high in proportion to the BA program at the Faculty of Law. It would be useful to provide for students the *access to take part in doctoral programs*.

At the appointment with the students and during my discussions with them, I found them very open minded, energetic and intelligent. They seem to be very loyal to their university and pay a lot of attention to their studies. I was surprised that the students I met did not speak too much English.

There are only a few bilateral agreements within the framework of Socrates programme: Higher Education (Erasmus). Some of the students participate in European program. The outgoing students are more than the incoming.

Comment: It is recommended to enter into more bilateral contracts and increase the number of students taking part in mobility activities. It will help the language qualification of the students and it is also suits to the EU recommendations which *inspire the students to study* one semester *abroad*.

At the meeting with employers, they seemed very pleased with those students who graduated from Danubius University.

I had an appointment with the president (Daniel Virinteanu) of "Alumni" Association of Graduates which has been founded recently. Also one of the founder member (Angelica Chirila; at the moment she is a senior lecturer at Danubius University) of the association took part in our discussion. They told me that there were around 400 members of the association. Their main activities are hunting jobs for the graduated students, organising conferences, establishing international relations etc.

Research

Research activity within the university is led by one of the Pro Rectors and is mainly organised through the Department of Research, Development and Innovation as well as inside the faculties, is focussed on nearly 20 topics. The nature of these themes are inter- and multidisciplinary.

At Danubius University not only the academic staff but also the students are performing scientific activities.
The scientific research appears mainly in articles published in ISI journals, papers presented and published in the volumes of scientific sessions, in university annals, in journals internationally acknowledged or journals accredited at a national level. On the other hand, the research is turned to account by achieving projects financed by European or national funds.

There are two scientific journals (Acta Universitatis Danubius and Euroeconomica) written in Romanian, English and French dealing with such domains as juridical, economic, international relationships and communication, published by Danubius Publishing House. Since the very foundation (2000) until now, there have been edited no less than 470 titles – most authors being academic staff members of Danubius University.

Danubius University participates in international research groups by actions stipulated in Bilateral Agreements of Multiple Collaboration (e.g. Oxford Computing Laboratory, UK – agreement of research cooperation for intelligent hybrid systems; Flensburg University in Germany – agreement of cooperation in all domains – didactic, research, scientific events; Kent State University, Ohio, USA – agreement of

bilateral cooperation to achieve common research activities, participation in international seminars and conferences, exchanges of scientific materials and publications and organising of short-term academic programmes etc.)

Comment: I was impressed by the publishing activity of Danubius University. I suggest increasing the number of publications in English language and *decreasing the number domains of research fields.* I would encourage the university to develop its international collaborative links.

Quality Management

Danubius University has structures, strategies, policies and procedures for quality assurance of the teaching and research process. In order to develop the quality within the university The Department of Ensuring Quality (DEQ) was created. Together with Commission for Evaluation and Ensuring Quality within the university support the management of the university in achieving the quality objectives, dealing with the dissemination of standards and quality methodology at a national level. There are similar commissions within the faculties and the departments. Periodically, these committees meet and analyze the compliance of institution's policy in quality domain at their levels, as shown in the medium-term strategies and the operational plans. The results of these analyses are noted down in the reports, and then they are submitted to the University Senate and faculties' Councils.
I was informed that the Quality Management System (QMS) SR EN ISO 9001:2001 would be implemented at Danubius University.

Comment: In my opinion the structure of *quality management vertically is too deep and process is too complicated.*

Conclusion

I recommend the institutional reaccreditation of Danubius University based on what I have experienced; seen, red and heard. I hope that some of the comments which I made will help the University Management in the process of continual improvement.

I emphasize the following:

- The number of students, the structure of the university and the programmes (8 BA and 5 MA) developed faster than human resources (academic staff).
- I strongly suggest developing international links and collaborations to support international research activities and encourage students taking part in exchange and mobility programmes.
- Danubius University should continue to invest in the physical infrastructure and facilities when funds allow.

Finally I would like to express my thanks to the Rector, Vice Rectors, Deans and all the University staff for the pleasant atmosphere and the support during my stay in Galati. Also much gratitude to my colleagues from the evaluation team for the professional, open and gentle way in which the audit was conducted.
At least but not last special thanks to ARACIS for giving me the opportunity to participate in this evaluation process in Romania.

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