Mieczyslaw W. Socha Warsaw, 17 April 2019

Foreign expert Report

1. Introduction

This foreign expert report contains my impressions and observations from the most recent institutional evaluation of the Appolonia University Iasi (referred to as AUI throughout the text). This evaluation of education quality is specific for two reasons. Firstly, it refers to a very small higher education institution where there are only 440 persons studying programmes covering 6 fields of study. AUI frequently undergoes ARACIS institutional evaluations, as far as I know five times between 2011 and 2017, however has not obtained full accreditation. Secondly, a fuller evaluation of education quality at the Appolonia University was drastically limited as no English version of a number of key documents was provided. Basically, only the body of the Self-Evaluation Report (SER) had been translated into English but not its very numerous (234) annexes. The quality of SER itself leaves a lot reservations because despite a considerable number of pages (102) it contains many repetitions and an overwhelming majority of statements are not supported by evidence. Hence the information it provides is poor and its analytical depth is insufficient.

Unfortunately, the University's website could not be used as an additional source of information for foreign expert, as it contains Romanian-language material only and the most important documents posted there, such as the Mission, strategic plans and the University Chart, Quality Manual etc. are available only in that language. This is why my impressions described below will be heavily based on information contained in SER and obtained during the meetings that were held with various representatives of AUI's academic community. Apart from my meetings between the whole panel of experts and stakeholders, I had the opportunity to talk to the following representatives of the academic community:

- the University President (university owner),
- the Rector
- the Dean of the Faculty of Dental Medicine representing also International Relations Department.
- the Quality Assessment and Assurance Commission (CEAC)
- the Commission for Internal Academic Audit (CIAA),
- the Career Counselling Office and Career Guidance (CCOCG),
- the Students' Association,
- the Scientific Research Commission.

In my report I will endeavour to answer the following questions:

- Where is the University going and how does it perceive its role in the Romanian and European education market? To what extent have its actions taken so far brought it closer to the vision and mission it has developed?
- How does the University ensure the quality of education, research and university governance, and - going slightly further - how is its Quality Culture developed? To what degree does AUI use ARACIS experts' suggestions and recommendations as

well as those coming from other accreditation agencies to improve the quality of its operation?

- What role do students and external stakeholders play in university governance and how far has the University gone with promoting student-centred learning and teaching?
- Does the University have adequate human and financial resources to provide its programmes and conduct research?
- How closely is AUI integrated with EHEA in the field of education and research?
- How does it communicate with external stakeholders?

I would like to take this opportunity and give my heartfelt thanks to the management of ARACIS for inviting me for the 4th time already to participate in an institutional evaluation, and to the authorities of AUI and all interviewees - for providing me with additional information and sharing their opinions. In particular, I would like to thank Dr. Laura Romila for efficient interpreting at the meetings with University stakeholders.

2. University Vision, Mission and the Strategy

Findings:

The University has formulated its Vision and Mission at various levels including faculties and programs levels. The Vision statement has not been changed since the beginning of the AUI. These documents are posted on the University's website. According to SER, AUI's vision focusses on "*the achievement of a private education perfectly integrated in the European educational system, with educational and research standards, similar to the world's greatest universities".* The Mission states that the University "*is to develop a modern education, combining the medical field with that of the socio-human field with the purpose of achieving an efficient education, an integrative scientific research and the social and cultural development of the region"*. It covers 4 areas: education, research, relations with the society and cultural development. The implementation of the Mission is to be based on three values: clarity, distinction and specificity. The Mission served as a foundation for a five-year strategic plan (2015-2020) which, in turn, resulted in the development of annual executive plans. Missions have also been developed for faculties and fields of study. Some of the Mission's provisions have also been specified in several policies such as quality assurance policy, research policy, human resources policy. According to SER, all key internal stakeholders participated in the development of those documents. The University also possesses appropriate internal regulations covering the broad spectrum of its activities.

Comments:

The fact of having the above-mentioned documents should be assessed positively. I've been told that the strategic (operational) plans are systematically evaluated. However, it is striking that those ambitious Vision and Mission statements do not take account of AUI's specificity as a micro-university, its position in the national education market and of the ways in which the University will be further developed. In view of the current scale of operation and above all - due to a shrinking number of students and means obtained from their fees - it will be difficult

to achieve world-class standards in teaching and research in the near future. Despite the falling number of students, no risk-management plan has been developed. Moreover, the Mission lacks a specific reference to the quality policy developed in this higher education institution. The Mission promises "*combining the medical field with that of the socio-human field"*, but the programme offer provides no evidence of combining the two disciplines. Also, no many evidence was found, either, to prove the application of benchmarking. SER does not provide information concerning how a particular part of the Mission is implemented - the one talking about AIU's participation in the development of the region. Generalisations contained in the Mission result in a strategy that is not very clear and lists too many goals within each objective presented.

Going through SWOT analysis does not help to find out what the University's intentions are and how it perceives its own position in the education market. For example, there is a glaring imbalance between AUI's strengths and weaknesses. There are as many as 16 strong points and as few as 4 weak points. Out of the 7 risks listed only two are identified as internal. SER and AIU's representatives emphasise the practical dimension of education as something that distinguishes this University from other HEIs in Romania. They say two special didactic platforms serving the purpose of practical teaching are up and running. This should result in its graduates' quick employability, however, page 61 of SER offers statistics proving that only half of the University's graduates find a job within two years and 3/4 after more than two years. According to President of the University 97% of medical programs graduates find jobs very easily, and among them are professors employed in other Romanian and foreign universities. Unfortunately, the University did not provide data on the employability of graduates of particular study programs.

The interviews I held with AUI's representatives did not dispel those doubts. I am inclined to believe that part of the community does not know the above document to a sufficient degree, hence they are unable to say what AUI's comparative advantages are and how the University intends to improve its development capabilities measured with the number of students. In recent years, the number of students has more than halved, from 967 in 2013 to 441 in this academic year. Student fees are the main source of financing AIU's expenses (about 70%). The number of academic staff members has remained more or less stable within the same period. This drop is sure to result in an increase in average education costs, especially in the case of cost-consuming medical professions. If these unfavourable trends persist, the University may be closed down for economic reasons. The information I was given does not make me believe that the University has an efficient plan developed to prevent its dropping student numbers. Despite no evident success in recruiting students for programmes provided by the Faculty of Communication Sciences (there are only 4-5 students in some years of study program in Journalism), their closing down has not been considered and no development of AUI towards becoming a medical university has been envisaged. The University President said that he would rather expand humanities and would like to have a Faculty of Philosophy. There are no talks concerning a fusion with another higher education institution and there have been no substantive changes to the ways of expanding the recruitment base, that is the marketing strategy remains the same. One of the barriers to university development, also in the recruitment

of candidates from abroad, is the lack of full ARACIS accreditation and the associated unfavorable perception of AUI by the public.

In conclusion, it has to be said that the current Vision and Mission do not reflect AUI's uniqueness, nor do they identify the niche in which AUI could pursue its long-term development.

Suggestions for improvement:

- Revise AUI's Mission and Vision to adapt it to the specificity of a university where medical education is predominant.
- Start to work on the new strategic plan for the medium (2021 – 2025) and long-term (10 years) periods.
- Develop a new marketing strategy. Consider the possibility of establishing a direct contact (for example by e-mail) between candidates interested in studying at AUI and AUI students.

3. University Governance

Findings:

The organisational structure and university governance are highly specific. AUI is composed of the Faculty of Dental Medicine and the Faculty of Communication Science. The potential of each of them is very different. The Faculty of Dental Medicine employs 67 academic staff members and offers programmes covering 4 fields of study to 364 students. The Faculty of Communication Science provides education to a mere 76 students of two programmes. It employs 18 persons. The organisational structure includes traditional collegial bodies such as the Senate, Faculty Councils and Department Councils. In addition, there are quite large a number of Senate committees in the university. The University is governed by the Rector, Board of Directors headed by the Rector, Senat and the Academic Council whose work is managed by the University President who is also its founder. The Rector and Deans are not members of the Senate, as it is in other European universities. The Academic Council is of a consultative nature and includes the two previous collegial bodies. As far as I understand it among other settles disputes between the owner of the University, Senate and the Board of Directors and it may to take own initiatives.

Comments:

AUI's organisational structure derives from the past decision to start providing both medical and socio-humanistic study programmes. From the perspective of the completely different programmes they provide, both Faculties operate in certain isolation from each other as there is practically no didactic and scientific cooperation between them.

It would be logical to expect that such a small HEI should operate a simplified governance system and that its administrative burden should be small. However, there are many

collegial bodies operating within the HEI at university (the Senate itself is composed of as many as 29 persons, of which 8 of them are students), faculty and department level.
It seems that sometimes there are duplications of tasks by various committees, eg QAC, internal academic audit, didactic etc. On the other hand, it is not known why the Careers Office is practically not involved in the examination of the graduates' professional careers. The organization of graduates monitoring is carried out by the University Chief Secretary and analysis of the results is conducted at the level of Faculties and Senat. Thus, the Career Office helping students in taking up jobs works in a certain "isolation" from signals from graduates. The information provided shows that there are no systematic analysis of graduates' professional career in longer perspective, eg 3, 5 years after the completion of the studies.

However, it should be emphasized that to a large extent this structure, according to AUI representatives, results from national regulations that do not fully take into account the specificity of small private universities. Considerable amount of students and almost all academic teachers participate in the governance in some sort of capacity. These create a good foundations for the participative model of the university governance and the university interlocutors named in such a way current system of the management. However, on the other hand this consume the time teachers and researchers could spend on improving education quality and research. The information I obtained makes me think that there is no comprehensive evaluation of AUI's organisational structure. External stakeholders are not included in the composition of AUI's bodies, involved in governance or consultations.

On the basis of the interviews I held it is difficult to realise how a proper balance is maintained between those bodies when making decisions and - in particular - what actual role the owner plays (the University President, otherwise known as the Founding President) who presides over Academic Council meetings, especially in the field of strictly academic issues. A conflict of interests can be seen here from the perspective of management sciences and governance practice, because the University President heads the body that has to resolve disputes between himself and the Senate or the Board of Directors. According to the opinion of the President of the University and the Rector Academic Council has never considered the contradictions between the decisions of the said bodies.

Suggestions for improvement:

- Consider establishing a Consultative (Advisory) Council with the participation of non-academic stakeholders, employers, representatives of local authorities, foreign experts etc. advising the university on the issues of the development strategy.
- Review the functions and tasks of individual academic bodies, including committees, to simplify the management system and remove duplication of tasks.
- Consider consolidation of the graduates monitoring system in the labour market (including analyzing their results) in the CCOCG.

4. Quality Assurance Policy and Internal Quality Assurance System

Findings:

The information that was made available to me makes me think that the University has developed its Quality Assurance Policy, and that its objectives and tools are included in Chapter 2 of the 2015-2020 Strategy. The principles of promoting the culture of quality were articulated in a separate document. The list of annexes shows that faculties also have their own quality policies and strategies. However, information about quality provided in SER is rather too general. On page 47 we read that "***the mission of the university*** *is of developing a modern education process, both in the medical field and in that of socio-humanistic sciences, for achieving high-class-learning…".* Further on, it is said that the University will ensure the provision of high-quality knowledge and promote interdisciplinary education. Those terms, that is "modern" education, "high-class learning" and "high quality" have not been defined precisely enough. AUI has also developed its Quality Manual where - only presumably as no English-language version was made available to the expert - the internal quality assurance system is presented.

Quality assurance tasks are the responsibility of the Commission for Evaluation and Quality Assurance (CEAC) and its equivalents at faculty and department level. There is no quality assurance unit evident in the administration structure. The main responsibility of the Commission consists in analysing and implementing tasks in the field of teaching and learning quality as well as scientific research. The Commission presents the results of its work as reports and posts them on the webpage. University governance is not something falling within the remit of the Commission. This is partly dealt with by the Commission for Academic Audit and the Financial Audit Commission. Their activity is more about audit and supervision and not about introducing quality improvements. Therefore, there is no good reason to say that the three areas are integrated into a uniform quality management system.

Comments:

It is very satisfying to note the existence of number of documents presenting the position of the university in the matter of Quality Culture, including Quality Assurance in strategic plans, as well as relevant procedures and creating an organizational structure supporting the implementation of tasks in this area. According to the latest trends at EHEA, the field of interest of QAC is not only teaching and learning, but also scientific research. However it is difficult to identify actual priorities in quality assurance, as the University Strategy lists as many as 18 objectives in this field. A small academic community, numerous commissions involving students and dealing with the evaluation of teaching and learning as well as in academic and financial audits should be conducive to an in-depth understanding of the quality policy. In such a small HEI academic values, attitudes, moral standards making up an informal quality assurance system are of paramount importance to the development of quality culture. These elements were repeatedly emphasized by representatives of the university as distinctive features of AUI. The university has developed a lot of procedures and according to it has a Quality Manual. However, the latter contains only individual procedures without identifying main processes and showing mutual interrelations between individual Internal Quality Assurance System elements. One can even wonder if these separate parts make up the system per se. The interviews with AUI's representatives including CEAC members did not paint a clear picture

of the quality assurance system and quality culture. My interviewees were unable to identify and indicate benefits derived from the existence of both formal and informal quality assurance systems. The University declares full integration with EHEA, but nobody was able to explain how the ideas and provisions of ESG'15 Chapter 1 are used to improve the system. Certain changes were justified by ARACIS recommendations.

The work of CEAC according to their own strategy and operational plans, conducting systematic analyzes and preparation of reports published on the university's website deserves recognition. The assessments concern specific aspects related to quality assurance, rather than a holistic assessment of the entire system made primarily from the perspective of developing a quality culture. CEAC representatives were of the opinion that no comprehensive evaluation of the current internal quality assurance system had been conducted, as yet. According to one of my interlocutors, the quality assurance committee is primarily responsible for the adoption of legal regulations concerning quality.

As a foreign expert I am not sure of the real role played by external evaluations conducted by ARACIS and other agencies. SWOT analysis indicates that they only cause uncertainty within the academic community. SER contain few information about the introduction of certain recommendations made by ARACIS experts. However, the follow-up plan adopted by the Senate in September 2018 shows that the vast majority of recommendations formulated by ARACIS experts during the institutional assessment made in 2017 have been fully implemented. In the light of this information it is intriguing that despite the 30 years of the university's existence and many external reviews by ARACIS, EUA and other organizations, it has not been possible to obtain full ARACIS accreditation. One reason could be insufficient level of self-evaluation, as demonstrated in the SER. It provides quite a schematic presentation of the University, devoid of profound reflection and self-criticism, which suggests that the recommendations of previous expert panels failed to be applied to improve the quality of self-evaluation. One of the most obvious shortcomings of SER is that it does not analyse changes introduced since the most recent institutional evaluation conducted by ARACIS. SER was not disseminated in the academic community, therefore, its influence on employees and students is limited.

Suggestions for improvement:

- Review the quality policy and formulate its objectives from the perspective of quality culture in the context of the current stage of AUI's development.
- Review the internal quality assurance system from the perspective of lightening its burden on academic staff members.
- Introduce a research quality evaluation system and integrate it with the quality assurance system applicable to teaching and learning and university governing into coherent quality management system.
- It is necessary to develop a new Quality Manual in accordance with the principles of quality management.

5. Students and Student-centred learning

Findings:

There is no formalised student-centred learning policy at AUI, but page 21 of SER reads: *..."main concern of the University leadership, is to ensure the optimal condition for carrying out the student-centred teaching activity".* AUI provides solely full-time programmes. Students participate in university governance by being members of all academic collegial bodies. They prepared a separate report for the purpose of the site visit. Students are provided comprehensive didactic assistance, they find it easy to contact their lecturers, they can seek advice from year tutors and individual tutors. The University offers them individual learning pathways and the participation of students in extracurricular activities. Low numbers of students per one academic teacher (from 1 per 1 at BFKTR, to 4.1 per 1 at General Nursing) and small classes offer the opportunity to provide the master-pupil type of education and implement active teaching methods. However, SER does not offer much information about the scale of students' active participation during classes. Similarly, not much information is provided in the scope of active teaching methods. Students may express their opinion about the teaching process in anonymous questionnaires. Page 81 of SER reads: "*the results are discussed individually by students…*". Students present at a meeting between Students Association representatives and the foreign expert did not confirm they had full access to the results of such surveys.

Comments:

SER and AUI authorities emphasise the partner relationship that exists between them, teaching staff and students as an unique feature of the University. It is somewhat natural in a small HEI. The students I interviewed confirm this opinion. A high examination success rate and a low drop-out rate may prove a good level of education However, this hypothesis should be carefully examined, because in view of a dropping number of students a high examination success rate may also reflect lowered standards when assessing learning outcomes. Students can start a subsequent year even with a relatively low percentage of ECTS (75%, at least 45 out of 60). According to information made available to me, there has been no analysis of the relationship between learning outcomes achieved by students at the end of study and their professional achievements in the labour market. Basically, there is no clear mechanism of disseminating good teaching practice between the faculties.

When talking to the expert, students confirmed their high level of satisfaction with the didactic assistance they received. They think they are treated as partners, are able to influence the operation of the university and they say their relations with the teaching staff are friendly. The preparation of the student report has to be seen in a positive light, however, its analytical value and usefulness for the authorities of AUI is rather modest. Most of the time it repeats information contained in SER and does not perform its analysis from the perspective of student interests. When interviewed by the expert, student organisation representatives were unable to put forward their main problems nor were they able to formulate suggestions for improvement. Lack of student' criticism may result from close intimacy with the teaching staff (such hypothesis was brought in by one professor at the meeting with the staff), and the fear that critical remarks may harm the university in the process of accreditation.

Suggestions for improvement:

- Review your syllabuses from the perspective of active teaching techniques.
- Introduce lectures and classes held by visiting professors and student placements to the teaching process.
- Involve practitioners in the process of designing and reviewing programmes of study.
- Evaluate the teaching/learning process from the perspective of graduates' achievements in the labour market, above all their employability.

6. Resources

Findings:

There are 80 posts to be held by the teaching staff of the Faculty of Dentistry and 20 - by the staff of the Faculty of Communication Science. In fact, the number of employees is slightly inferior, 67 and 18 respectively. SER states that all lecturers fulfil the formal criteria contained in the State regulations concerning the employment of teachers in higher education. Assistants have undergone certified pedagogical training. The University supports scientific and teaching development in many ways. Among other things, its teachers are able to improve their competences as part of training offered by the Performance Centre for Continuous Professional Education. Teaching staff evaluation taking account of teaching, academic and organisational achievements is regularly conducted. Students think highly of their academic teachers which they express in anonymous questionnaires being an element of this evaluation.

The teaching process is supported by AUI's academic infrastructure. The University is the owner of about 80% of buildings. In view of the diminishing number of students, the number of seats in classrooms and laboratories is adequate to offer education provided on an individual basis. New technologies are being implemented to modernise the teaching process. The University has bought licences for specialised software which is vital for modern education. Special practical training platforms have been developed. The University has its own library and provides its students with basic electronic access to scientific journals (EBSCO database, Dentistry and Oral Science Source). The computer communication system is also used for collecting data relating to student achievements. In recent years, investment expenses have constituted between 20 and 30% of all AUI's expenditure. A significant inconvenience is the lack of own campus, which would create conditions for mutual interaction between students and academic teachers of different study programs.

Comments:

From the quantitative and qualitative perspective, AUI's human resources are sufficient to provide programmes covering the current fields of study. Although the number of students is dropping, the number of lecturers remains more or less the same. Teaching staff fluctuation is small. A small number of teachers also provide classes in other higher education institutions. However, it is striking that the degree to which practitioners are involved in teaching remains so low despite AUI' s statements relating to the practical character of education. The application of technologies enabling electronic access to books has not reached its full potential. Accessing

international databases is only possible from the computers that are located in the higher education institution. AUI's on-line catalogue contains just over half of the books in the library.

7. Research orientation

Findings:

The development of the University Research Strategy and the Scientific Research Plan as well as annual research plans at both faculties is a very positive thing. They provide evidence that the HEI carried out research development in the academic year 2017/2018 by implementing 12 internal research projects and 13 implemented as a result of national or international calls for proposals. Page 25 of SER reads that one of those projects is the only State-funded one in the private sector. The annual International Congress of Appolonia University of Iasi attended by a number of scientists from many Romanian and foreign higher education institutions is AUI's flagship. The "Acad Ioan Haulica" Research Institute provides organisational support to the research process by organising its own conferences and symposiums. In evaluating scientific, teaching and organisational achievements, clear preferences given to research and academic activity are evident (more points can be scored for publications than for teaching). Scientific activity finds confirmation in the form of publications in scientific journals ranked in international library databases. AUI also publishes its own two scientific journals. It is worth considering whether funds spent on their publication would be better used when allocated to support provided to academic staff publishing their scientific articles in high impact factor journals.

Comments:

Positively should be assessed research strategy, internal competition for the grants, applications for the national grants, supportive structure in terms of Institute, Appolonia Congress, publications in international journals with IF. Priorities given to the research in the periodic evaluation of teachers. As the basic documents are not available in English, it is difficult to have a clear picture of the level of research and its relevance to AUI's strategic plans. The University offers no quotation statistics, H-index values and other tools for measuring its scientific output. I was informed that the highest value of H-index is about 2-3. This is an extremally low value, especially for professors representing medical sciences. Also, during the interviews it was difficult to get clear priorities in research and development. I was informed that the main priority is to obtain acceptance for the second journal in the Thomson Reuters bibliographical database. It seems, however, that in relation to the University's potential this area is being quite well developing during the recent years. AUI's involvement in cooperation with foreign university researchers is highly commendable. Student participation in research whose results may be presented at student research circles meetings and students' own conferences is a very positive thing. As there is no relevant information, it is hard to realise the extent to which research results are incorporated in the teaching process. I have been assured that systematic analysis of the syllabuses was conducted, but the panel saw some syllabuses with rather obsolete bibliography.

Suggestions for improvement:

- Consider the establishment of an International Council for Research with the participation of foreign experts.
- Review the topics of research conducted at AUI in order to set up a clear priorities in R&D.

8. Internationalization

Findings:

SER does not contain a separate chapter analysing international cooperation or the degree of education internationalisation. The annual strategic plan posted on the webpage is completely illegible, even in Romanian, as the quality of the photocopy is very poor. The University has cooperation agreements signed with a number of foreign universities, but this cooperation mainly focusses on research. There are 10 foreign partner HEIs listed on the AUI's webpage. It was only last year that AUI obtained its Erasmus+ Charter. There has been no student and staff exchange so far. However, the MOBILITĂȚI folder lists 8 names of those who effected visits to foreign universities within 2013-2014. Few foreign students - only those speaking Romanian - have been involved in programmes provided by AUI. The Department of International Relations is the unit providing organisational support to international exchange.

Comments:

AUI's achievements in this field, especially in teaching and learning, are really modest - which is in opposition to the statements contained in the Vision and the Mission of this University. The neglect of this field of AUI's activity is evidenced by the fact of preparing information for foreign students in Romanian only which drastically reduces the chances for the recruitment of those students. The benchmarking practice in relation to study programmes and the inclusion of inter-cultural and international learning outcomes are not evident, there are no courses offered in foreign languages, the University does not use the services of visiting professors and there are no foreign experts in the University's committees. There is no plan relating to improving staff's and student's language competences. This may severely limit the chance for international exchange offered by the Erasmus+ Charter. On the other hand, it was evident from the interview, that the current management has a strong determination to be more open for international cooperation.

Suggestions for improvement:

- Develop an internationalisation policy with clearly defined priorities and a list of strategic partners from abroad.
- Make your teaching staff's professional advancement more dependent on foreign language competences (minimum at the C1 level).
- Consider the introduction of courses provided in foreign languages, also with the participation of visiting lecturers.

9. Public information

Findings:

The webpage which is offered in Romanian only is the main channel providing information about the University and its operation. Its structure is very much like that in other HEIs, it offers separate folders presenting general information about AUI, recruitment principles, research, education quality, etc. More detailed information (among other things teaching staff members' CVs) is posted on the webpages of the faculties. The fact of publishing reports prepared by individual commissions is a very commendable thing. The *Nova Appolonia – the Journal of modern student* periodical is posted on the webpage. The higher education institution has its own radio and TV. It is worth mention that Appolonia TV is listed among the best 20 Tv stations in the country. AUI also publishes printed information and promotional materials. Its representatives visit high schools and promote study programs. These activities are not coordinated to form AUI's information policy nor are they supported by a separate organisational structure.

Comments:
In general, the scope of information about the University and its processes should be seen in a positive light. However, it is difficult to agree with the statement found in SER on page 87 that "*public information provided by Appolonia University is comparable both in quantity and quality to that offered by the Universities of the European Higher Education*". On the contrary, it seems that AUI fails to make sufficient use of the potential of the Faculty of Communication Sciences in relation to the improvement of channels used for communication with its stakeholders, especially those from abroad. The absence of a webpage provided in foreign languages, at least in English, is a major weakness. Not all subfolders are active, for example the Alumni folders could not be open and the contents of some of them has not been updated since 2012, for example the brochure presenting AUI.

Suggestions for improvement:

- Develop AUI's information policy and a system for its organisational support.
- Make the webpage more attractive by adding video materials, such as films, etc.
- Develop an English-language webpage and post there at least AUI's key documents presenting the University.
- Consider the possibility of establishing a direct electronic contact between candidates interested in studying at AUI and AUI students.

10. Final Conclusions

There is no doubt that AUI is in a critical situation, which is manifested by a dramatic drop in the number of students. It seems that a number of good initiatives have been implemented too late. The further existence of the university will depend to a large extent on the restraining of this unfavorable trend and a better defined niche for AUI on the highly competitive education market. A sine qua non condition for achieving success is a significant increase in the quality of education and research and obtaining full ARACIS accreditation. In these activities the university should focus more than before on the analysis of internal barriers to its development. And more attention should be paid to the long-term perspectives in university strategic plans.