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UNDERSTANDING THE INTERNATIONALIZATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION AS A POLICY PROCESS THE CASE OF ROMANIA

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**Understanding the internationalization of
higher education as a policy process**

The case of Romania

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Abstract

This doctoral thesis analyzes internationalization of higher education in Romania as a both an international norm diffusion process and as a discrete policy process, in a wider context of post-communist transition. It is conceived as a study of policy for policy, with the explicit aim of contributing to better decision-making at the national and institutional levels. As such, it is intended to facilitate a strategic pursuit of internationalization strategies in Romania, which may further inform our understanding of other similar (post-communist transition) national cases.

The research objective is to understand the internationalization of higher education as a distinct policy process at the national and university level, by using a five-point star model of the policy field, which highlights the multiplicity of actors involved and acts as a 'cat's cradle'. A multi-theory approach for higher education governance is used for unpacking the complexity of this policy field. Stakeholder and resource dependency theories are employed for understanding the articulation of the interests, capacities and interactions between the actors, while discursive institutionalism is used to look at the role of ideas (norms) mobilized by actors to influence policy change and to construct policy frames. In terms of scope, the thesis addresses the rationales, drivers and impacts of internationalization of higher education, as well as its strategic use by relevant actors.

The conclusion yields that internationalization in Romania, especially at the national level, is more a fruit of the existing context – the overall globalization trends, the Bologna Process and the EU pre- and post-accession policy processes – than a deliberate strategic pursuit based on either foresight or long term planning. Political and economic rationales are predominant, to the detriment of those linked to social and cultural considerations, given the competing pressures linked to the demographic downturn, reduced public funding to universities, the perceived need to 'catch-up with Europe' and the global competitiveness imperative. Another finding is that internationalization of higher education has never reached the stage of policy formulation at the national level and in most Romanian universities; it was used as a legitimating discourse within higher education reform, but a genuine commitment to comprehensive internationalization policies was lacking, leading to an over-reliance on European programs and a narrow focus on mobility and research partnerships.

When looking at the agents of change, it can be inferred that success in pursuing internationalization activities was mostly influenced by policy entrepreneurs and leadership commitment and continuity, regardless of the institutional profile. At the same time, Romania has proven to be an exceptional laboratory for understanding internationalization as a distinctive public policy process within the higher education sector. This is due to the double centralization legacy of the higher education system (caused by its Napoleonic model of higher education system and the communist influence) and the over-sized influence of international actors in policy reform (e.g. UNESCO CEPES and the World Bank). A number of the overall conclusions, mainly aimed at improving decision-making at the national level, are also potentially relevant for a wider regional audience: the need to minimize the over-reliance on international funds and technical assistance of international organizations; limiting over-regulation based on international norms; and improving the national role in the global discussions on internationalization and fighting double discourse. This latter aspect points to the difficulties of replicating policy concepts across borders in a non-contextualized form, especially when domestic contexts differ significantly from the pioneering setting of a given policy.

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List of abbreviations

AIMS - International mobility for students program (of ASEAN)
ANCS - National Authority for Scientific Research
ANIE - African Network for Internationalization of Education
ANOSR – National Alliance of Student Organizations in Romania
ANPCDEFP – National Agency for Community Programs in Education and Professional Training
ARACIS –Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
ASEAN - Association of Southeast Asian Nations
AUF – *Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie*/Francophone University Agency
CCI - Centre for International Cooperation (in universities)
CEE – Central and Eastern Europe
CEEPUS - Central European program for University Studies
CH – Swiss Confederacy
CHEI - Centre for Higher Education Internationalization
CMU – Constanta Maritime University
CNCSIS – National Council for Higher Education Research
CNEEA - National Council for Academic Evaluation and Accreditation (of Romania)
CNFIS – National Council for Higher Education Funding
CNR – National Rectors’ Conference (of Romania)
CPE – Centre for Education Policies (in Romania)
DAAD - The German Academic Exchange Service
DIR - Department of International Relations
EACEA - Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (of the European Union)
EAIE - European Association for International Education
ECTS – European Credit Transfer System
EEA – European Economic Area
EHEA – European Higher Education Area
ENLACES - Space of Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean
EP – European Parliament
EQAR - Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education
ESN – Erasmus Student Network
ESU – European Students Union
EU/EU27/EU28– European Union/number of European Union members referenced
EUA - European University Association
EUROSTAT – European Statistics Agency

GATS - General Agreement on Trade in Services
GDP – Gross Domestic Product
HE – Higher Education
HEI – Higher Education Institutions
HEIGLO - Higher Education Institutions’ Responses to Europeanisation, Internationalization and Globalization project
HER-RO 9601 – EU/World Bank funded project on higher education reform in Romania (1990’s)
IATA - International Air Transport Association
IAU - International Association of Universities
IEMU - Internationalization, equity and university management for quality higher education in Romania project
ISI - International Scientific Indexing
LLP – Lifelong Learning Program
LSRS - League of Romanian Students Abroad
MENCS – Ministry for National Education and Scientific Research (of Romania)
MERCOSUR – Southern Common Market (of South America)
NATO – North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NIS – National Institute of Statistics
NUFFIC – The organisation for internationalisation in education
OECD - Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OIF – *Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie*/International Organization of the Francophonie
PIRLS - Progress in International Reading Literacy Study
PISA - Program for International Student Assessment
PPS – Purchasing Power Standard (as used by EUROSTAT)
R&D – Research and development
RAU – Romanian American University (of Bucharest)
RDI - Research, development and innovation
RDT – Resource dependence theory
RON – Romanian New Leu (currency unit)
SEAMEO RIHED - Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization Centre
SNSPA - National School (University) of Political Studies and Public Administration
TEMPUS - Trans-European Mobility Scheme for University Studies
THES - Times Higher Education World University Ranking
TIMSS - Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
UAIC- “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University of Iasi
UBB – “Babeş – Bolyai” University of Cluj-Napoca
UCSC - *Universita Cattolica del Sacro Cuore* (of Milan)

UEFISCDI - Executive Agency for Higher Education, Research, Development and Innovation Funding

UEFISCSU - Executive Unit for Higher Education, Research and Funding

UNESCO - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNESCO-CEPES - UNESCO European Centre for Higher Education

UNESCO-IESALC – UNESCO International Institute for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean

WUT – West University of Timisoara

Chapter 1 – Introduction

1.1 General context and main trends on internationalization of higher education

In the context of globalization and in light of recent technological developments, the internationalization of higher education has moved from a being a trend reserved for systems with an already existing competitive position in the global arena to a priority for most institutions¹ and governments.

Even though internationalization of higher education can be traced back to the foundation of universities, due to the inherent circulation of knowledge, scholars and students, its conceptual understanding has evolved. A historical overview of this chronological evolution² is useful in understanding its inter-play with the changing role of higher education in society, as well as other relevant trends. For the purpose of this thesis, internationalization of higher education is understood as ‘the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions and delivery of post-secondary education’ (Knight 2008: 11).

In two decades, the OECD estimates that the current 99 million students enrolled worldwide will increase to 414 million³, with large disparities between world regions in terms of demography. The traditional openness of universities to the world has been replaced by an imperative to expand their partnership networks, internationalize their academic communities

¹ For the purpose of this thesis and for the sake of brevity, I use institutions as a synonym for universities in the Romanian context, even though the term itself has a wider meaning in the political science literature.

² As presented in chapter 2.1 of the present thesis.

³ www.oecd.org/edu/highereducationandadultlearning/highereducationto2030vo11demography.htm

and increase their standing in international league tables, in order to remain competitive and sometimes in order to survive. More than half of the approximately 1400 universities from 131 countries surveyed by the International Association of Universities in 2014 responded that they have an internationalization policy or strategy, while most European universities list internationalization of higher education among the top three influencing factors for their future strategic endeavours (Sursock, 2015). So, even though internationalization of higher education is a relatively new and inescapable process triggered by the economic globalization and the increased inter-connectedness of our societies, it has also become a deliberate strategic endeavour by governments, institutions and academic communities to be better positioned and to adapt to a fast changing environment.

At the same time, internationalization of higher education is increasingly being perceived, compared and contrasted in relation with other processes, such as globalization and regionalization (with its most studied form – Europeanization) (Altbach, Reisberg & Rumbley 2009; Knight 2008; Scott 1998; Teichler 2004).

In one such comparison, globalization is seen by Altbach et al. (2010) as an external reality, which goes well beyond the remit of higher education policies, including 'economic, technological and scientific trends', while internationalization is portrayed by the same author as a response to this external all-encompassing reality. At the same time, Scott (1998) highlights the fact that internationalization of higher education retains a central role for governments (since higher education is a national prerogative) and partnerships, while globalization is seen as a process of 'disembedding' higher education institutions from their national contexts (Beerkens, 2004), in which the state loses its central role due to (imperfect) market logics.

Europeanization is characterised by various actors as a particularly 'thick' version of higher education regionalism, in which key features have been strengthened over time – the policy discourse, the strong involvement of European actors and institutional arrangements, which prompted clear trends of higher education harmonisation (see the Bologna Process implementation process for example) (Jayasuriya and Robertson, 2010). As such, Europeanization resembles internationalization due to a similar focus on cooperation and its reactive character towards globalization, but its purpose is different – if internationalization focuses on instilling a broad international (beyond Europe) character to higher education and is based on international norm diffusion, Europeanization is linked to the specific regional goal of strengthening the European construction and enhancing harmonization of higher education systems within the area (see for example the Bologna Process or the EU Modernization Agenda).

In Europe, the last 30 years have seen the success of the ERASMUS program, but also the transformation of the higher education system at a regional level in light of the inter-governmental commitments included in the Bologna Process and in the EU 2020 agenda (previously the Lisbon Agenda). The rationales for internationalization vary greatly based on national and institutional characteristics, but are mainly of economic, political, socio-cultural and academic nature. That leads to a lack of a universal model or recipe for internationalization, but a correlation exists between the standing of the higher education system in the global arena and the influence of its internationalization model worldwide.

According to the most recent study developed at the request of the European Parliament (2015), ten key developments for internationalization at the global level were

identified. These include: a growing importance of this topic at the global level, including an increased and more diversified level of strategic activities, especially at the institutional level; the risk of homogeneity through mimetism and over-focus on quantitative results; over-reliance on economic benefits, with low funding allotted to internationalization activities; a clear shift from cooperation to competition, coupled with increased regionalization (see the European Higher Education Area, The Space of Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean - ENLACES, ASEAN etc.); a general increase in volume of internationalization activities; lack of sufficient data for decision-making and a general emerging focus on internationalization of the curriculum, transnational education and digital learning.

To sum up, the centrality of internationalization of higher education in the strategic concerns of governments and institutions alike has prompted the need for coherent policies at regional, national and institutional level.

1.2 The case of post-communist transition countries

Post-communist transition countries are a privileged site for understanding the transformations triggered by the globalization of higher education, as well as by regional policy initiatives, such as the Bologna Process (Dakowska and Harmsen, 2015). The intensive use of international norms and of European inspired policies by countries in Central and Eastern Europe is linked to the search for models in order to 'catch-up with Europe', as suggested by prominent political slogans in the 1990s (Králiková, 2014). In fact, universities in Central and Eastern Europe are faced with a 'simultaneous transition' (Radó, 2001), characterized by the same external pressures as Western countries, which were linked to decreased funding, push

for academic output and the calls for efficiency (Neave, 2003), as well as domestic processes of transformation focusing on massification, self-governance, academic freedom and privatization of the higher education sector (Dobbins, 2008). Later, after a phase in which European models and structural imperatives (e.g. the 3+2+3 three cycle degree model) were predominant, the narrative linked to international competitiveness and the quest for becoming ‘world class universities’ became a main driver for policy change in post-transition countries.

The openness towards the technical assistance of the World Bank and to the influence of international organizations allowed for the enhanced use and even misuse of international norms in higher education reforms over the past quarter of a century (Deca, 2014; Cîrstocea, 2014). Essentially, policy changes that took decades in Western countries were compressed into a very short timeframe and with telling results as to the way in which ideas extracted from outside of the national or institutional contexts can be mobilized by actors to effect change. Moreover, Central and Eastern European countries can be also analyzed from a ‘periphery’ point of view (Tomusk, 2008), in relation to their limited or even marginal role in the overall student and staff mobility flows and global knowledge production, which would pre-dispose these countries to policy download, rather than a real and meaningful say in internationalization policy trends.

1.3 Research objectives and rationale for case study selection

1.3.1 Research questions

Existing research on the internationalization of the Romanian higher education system mostly focuses on the history of the Romanian higher education reforms and the influence of

international norms, as well as on analyzing the content and impact of various policy initiatives taken at either national or institutional levels. Internationalization of higher education is often seen as a goal in itself, not as an ongoing distinct policy process, with different rationales, mediating factors and features at different levels (regional, national and institutional).

In order to address this research gap, the thesis is conceived as a study of policy for policy, which analyzes the internationalization of higher education in Romania as both an international norm diffusion process and as a discrete policy process in a wider context of transition. The contribution of institutional, national and international actors will be looked at, in order to capture the rationales, drivers and obstacles for furthering internationalization goals. Building on this understanding of internationalization in relation to the policy process at the system and institutional levels, the thesis will then also address the way in which more general reforms might be pursued in the Romanian higher education system so as to support the further development of internationalization as a policy goal. Thus, the thesis is based on a dual research question:

1. How can the internationalization of higher education be understood and analyzed as a policy process at the national and institutional level?
2. How could higher education reforms be pursued so as to further internationalization in the system?

In answering these questions, another under explored research topic will be addressed, namely the potential policy misalignments between the national and institutional levels and their impact on achieving the objectives at both levels.

The innovative character of the research lies within its focus on providing policy advice to decision-makers, while also providing an in-depth analysis of the internationalization of higher education policy in the still poorly mapped and overly descriptive Romanian higher education policy context, which may then enable an understanding of other national cases with similar characteristics.

To conclude, this thesis is a study of internationalization of higher education policies, at both the national and institutional level, seeking to understand the policy making process and its specific characteristics. It does not as such seek to contribute directly to the wider literature on decision-making, but rather it is mainly intended to contribute to better decision-making at the national level.

1.3.2 Rationale for the national case study selection

Romania's distinct profile in Central and Eastern Europe, which includes a series of similarities and distinctive features in relation to other countries in the region, provides a unique opportunity to observe the process of internationalization of its higher education system. The first decade after the change of regime in 1989 was distinctively impacted by a large degree of permeability to international norms and models, motivated by the need to reform a previously centralized and elitist model specifically geared for a particular political and economic context. Following the start of the EU accession talks and the signing of the Bologna Process declaration, national actors became better at strategically using or indeed misusing international norms to further domestic policy interests. After 2007, internationalization slowly becomes both a separate policy area, in which global competitiveness imperatives play an

increasing role in the shaping of national and institutional objectives. Romania exhibits an interesting combination of similarities and distinctive features in relation to the main trends impacting CEE countries, which make it a privileged site for observing internationalization of higher education.

Massification of higher education and the private sector

Romania was definitely in line with the general trend of the rapid increase in student numbers in CEE – its student population increased dramatically from around 200,000 students in 1990 to almost 1 million students in 2008, only to drop again to around 400,000 in 2015. However, one thing separates the Romanian case from other countries in the region – the mix of growth and volatility of the private sector. The number of students attending private higher education institutions grew from 0 in 1990 to around 350,000 in 2008 and abruptly fell to 65,893 in the academic year 2014/2015. The overall percentage of students attending private higher education institutions dropped from over 40% before 2010 (which placed Romania closer to countries such as Poland and Estonia) to around 16% in 2014/2015 (which places Romania closer to Hungary or Slovenia). This development is more similar to those in the US or UK tertiary systems than to Western European ones (Dakowska and Harmsen, 2015), with a clear shift in recent years, mainly due to migration and demography, but also due to a decrease in the success rate at the Bacalaureate exam (following various anti-fraud measures being introduced).

The distinct academic tradition and the double centralization effect

Romania's Latin heritage and cultural affinity with the Francophonie makes it a very interesting case in a predominantly Slavic region. This historical link with France makes Romania a unique case of double centralization, on the one hand influenced by the Napoleonic university tradition (Scott, 2002; Dobbins and Knill, 2009), on which the higher education system was set-up in the nineteenth century, and on the other hand impacted by the communist legacy. This combination was hard to overcome in a short time frame and had a path dependent influence in the way in which internationalization norms were mediated by relevant actors, as well as on the development of distinct internationalization policies. In this, the Romania case is different from countries with a strong Humboldtian academic tradition (such as Hungary, Poland or the Czech Republic) and from systems with highly independent faculties such as those shaped by the Tito regime in former Yugoslavia (Dobbins, 2008).

The openness to Europeanization trends and the presence of international actors

In Central and Eastern Europe, the rapid post 1990 reforms were influenced to varying degrees by European and international institutions (Králiková, 2014; Dobbins, 2011; Dakowska and Harmsen, 2015). Even if the policy framing of domestic changes in CEE higher education systems was similar, the different EU accession processes and the public support for this option had an impact on the way in which internationalization and Europeanization influenced on each system. Romania's public opinion was very strongly pro-European and thus the government could easily use the EU pre-accession efforts and a periphery complex to legitimize a number of unpopular reforms (see chapter 4). This is not an unusual finding in CEE, where the double

pressure of democratization and EU accession made countries more likely to adopt an understanding of voluntary international reforms such as the Bologna Process as binding commitments, seeing it as part of the EU *acquis communautaire* (Musselin, 2009). In this context, there was a lot of willingness to take on what was seen as predominant European models in order to become the 'good pupils' in comparative EU and EHEA tables. This opportunistic willingness should not be mistaken with a profound adherence to the principles of EU reforms or the Bologna Process, in light of the limited debate in academic communities and the speed of adoption generated by the EU accession process (Dakowska, 2014; Deca, 2014).

Romania does, however, appear to stand out in terms of the comparative, over powerful influence exercised by international actors. The already existing presence of UNESCO-CEPES in Bucharest and the strong involvement of the World Bank all through the 25 years of transition had a direct, structuring impact on the development of the national system, in contrast to what appears to have been a pattern of more mediated impact elsewhere in the region (Dobbins, 2008; Scott 2002; Tomusk, 2004).

The domestic actors' configuration

In the Romanian case, as elsewhere, the shaping of higher education policies in general and of internationalization policies in particular is mediated by the distinctive configuration of the actors playing a role in the policy process. The reforms principally relied on the government as a proponent and main mediator of international norms, but they were also pushed by an influential group of policy entrepreneurs, socialized in international organizations and wearing

multiple hats in the academic and political environments (Cîrstocea, 2014). Student organizations were also quite relevant as an actor and used international reforms such as the Bologna Process as leverage to boost their influence and legitimize their demands (Deca, 2014). As opposed to Poland or the Czech Republic, where the Rectors' Conference was a powerful player (Dakowska, 2014), in Romania they played a much lesser role in designing the reforms. More general observations are difficult to make, insofar as research on policy-making processes in the region is uneven (Scott, 2007; Dobbins and Knill, 2009). It is clear, however, that the study of the distinct and diverse configuration of actors in the Romanian case is of particular interest in terms of understanding how external norms were mediated and internationalization policies were developed in a context of post-communist transition.

1.3.3 Rationale for the institutional case study selection

The selection of individual universities as cases was determined with two main factors in mind, while also taking into account other criteria to ensure the relevance of the cases for the Romanian higher education system. The first factor was institutional positioning in Romania's 2011 classification system. While this is an imperfect tool in looking at the position of universities within the Romanian higher education landscape, it nevertheless aids in identifying patterns linked to size, prestige, research potential and *de facto* mission (e.g. regional teaching universities vs more outward-looking research-intensive ones). A second key factor was participation in the UEFISCDI IEMU project which heavily discussed and researched internationalization. This offered access to data, chiefly due to the project determining universities to formalize their internationalization approaches by drafting strategies and reports. The selection of universities which participated in the IEMU project as case studies is motivated by the fact that they have proactively engaged in strategic planning to further their internationalization

objectives, thus providing enough documentary evidence to become the object of a serious research effort.

University classification as background

A key background dimension in Romanian higher education is the classification exercise which has attempted – since 2011 – to accelerate differentiation and mission diversification among Romanian universities, while at the same time rationalizing the system and providing the basis for differentiated funding. The classification exercise was undertaken as part of a series of reform attempts initiated by Education Minister Daniel Funeriu starting in 2009. One of these reforms was the new university classification system, envisaged as necessary in pushing for a shift in the allotment of funding and in encouraging smaller public universities to merge into bigger regional institutions. This was viewed as an imperative at the time given the chaotic development of Romanian higher education during the “boom” stage in the transition years.

The classification employed a multi-indicator approach, used to give each university a score (the basis for its classification). It is important to note that the index itself is the result of the use of three main indicators: a research indicator, an institutional evaluation indicator and a complex aggregate indicator (Andreescu et al., 2015).

The research indicator was based on the number of publications, and was independent of the size of each institution. The use of an extensive indicator contributed to the dominance of large institutions in the top level of the classification hierarchy, as these have more resources, departments and subordinate research bodies. The institutional evaluation indicator was however independent of size and based on the formal quality assurance process:

universities were awarded a score based on the institutional quality assurance ratings awarded by ARACIS. This, of course, made prestige a factor that doubled down on size as a boon for larger and older institutions, as it will become visible when discussing institutions in depth in the following chapters. The list of Romanian universities classified according to the 2011 is presented in Annex 1.

Participation in the IEMU project

Going beyond their performance in the classification exercise, case study universities were also chosen in light of their relative progress on formalized internationalization policies, since this is quite a recent development in Romania. In order to be able to compare and contrast institutional approaches and to document the role of actors in internationalization policies, the five institutions were selected from the sample of twenty institutions which volunteered to be involved in the 'Internationalization, equity and university management for quality higher education in Romania' (IEMU) project, implemented by the Executive Agency for Higher Education, Research, Development and Innovation Funding (UEFISCDI) in 2014-2015, in partnership with the International Association of Universities (IAU) and the National University of Political Studies and Public Administration (SNSPA). The selection of universities that took part in the IEMU project was based on several factors: ensuring a relevant sample in terms of university missions, balancing size and geographical spread, but also public and private character. Leadership commitment in finalizing a university strategy on internationalization of higher education was a sine qua non condition and each candidate university submitted a written commitment to this effect. The institutions involved in this project were asked to design

in cooperation with an external team of experts an institutional strategy for internationalization. The process involved a self-study exercise by each university, which resulted in a self-assessment report. Based on this report, a strategic planning visit of external experts would be planned, which meant that each university was visited by a team of 4-5 experts (both Romanian and international) and provided with support and training. Following the strategic planning visit, a report would be issued and the university would submit to the project team a draft strategy for internationalization, which would need to be endorsed by the leadership.

In light of the voluntary character of their participation in the project, it is to be expected that these institutions represent the more strategically oriented and internationally active universities in the over 100 universities Romanian higher education system.

Case selection – other considerations

The thesis uses a five university sample to complement the analysis of the national policy level, covering the main types of institutions that based on their distribution in the 2011 classification exercise and IEMU participation. This, however, did not represent the entire set of considerations behind final case selection.

Taking into account the high levels of contestation towards the classification exercise as a tool for mapping institutional diversity within the Romanian higher education landscape, other benchmarks were employed to cross-verify that the proposed cases were sufficiently representative. The best alternative tool was to be found in the Higher Education Institutions'

Responses to Europeanisation, Internationalization and Globalization (HEIGLO) project methodology⁴, developed by a research consortium in 2003 - 2005 and funded by the European Commission. For the purpose of the thesis, this methodology was adapted to the Romanian context, taking into account various institutional characteristics, such as: size, age of institution, type – public or private, comprehensiveness, recruitment basin and recruitment basin. Four main categories of universities emerge:

1. Alpha universities: large public major national universities, with a wide array of programs, research intensive, among the oldest in the country (Babeş – Bolyai University in Cluj and the Alexandru Ioan Cuza University in Iași);
2. Beta universities: younger public universities, smaller than the Alpha group, situated in large to medium size cities, focused on both teaching and research (West University of Timișoara);
3. Gamma universities: private universities, focused on both teaching and research, regionally focused and with a less wide array of programs (Romanian – American University);
4. Delta universities: specialized universities, involved mainly in one discipline, focused mainly on teaching and mainly catering for the needs of the labor market (Constanța Maritime University).

The five case studies geographically cover most of the Romanian territory, as well as the three official classification categories established in 2011. They are also quite diverse in their student numbers and recruitment basins, represent both public and private institution

⁴ <https://www.uni-kassel.de/einrichtungen/en/incher/research/projects-completed-up-to-2010/heiglo.html>

categories and have different performance in terms of research and employability. None of them however includes a Medicine Faculty and they have all been part of the IEMU project, as mentioned before. This limited university sample provides an opportunity to have an in-depth analysis of institutional policies and practices of higher education internationalization, but it cannot be seen as an exhaustive mapping of internationalization practices at institutional level in the Romanian context. However, the main rationales behind internationalization, as well as the cross-cutting approaches between the national and institutional level, are likely to have a large degree of generalization in the Romanian system, in light of the diversity of missions in the chosen sample.

1.4 Methodological approach and personal experience

In order to address the research aim formulated in the previous section, a qualitative methodology was used, in order to allow for in-depth research into both the national and institutional level facets of internationalization as a distinct policy area and as a policy process (Tight, 2012).

Several methods were used to underpin my research analysis. Firstly, a comprehensive documentary analysis was conducted, including national legislation, policy documents, governmental and actors' reports, statistical databases, parliamentary debates outcomes of proceedings and newspaper articles for the national level. For the institutional level, several types of documents were used in the analysis, based on the IEMU project data: self-evaluation reports, including statistical data, reports of the strategic planning meetings conducted with the external teams of experts and institutional strategic documents. These documents were

provided by UEFISCDI, following a general access to project data request. The documentary analysis was complemented by a series of fourteen semi-structured interviews, conducted in the 2013 – 2016 timeframe, with national and institutional actors and decision-makers, including government present and former representatives, academics, leaders of teachers and student associations, rectors, vice-rectors for international affairs and international office coordinators. The interviews are intended to provide context and depth to the analysis. In addition, the documentary analysis and the interviews have been supported by the participation of the author in the IEMU strategic planning visits and the project conferences, where the efforts of the universities to develop their strategic approaches to internationalization were witnessed first-hand.

My previous involvement in the policy field, as well as my research and publications on the Romanian higher education sector, have informed the development of my research approach, from policy oriented studies (such as the IEMU project results and a chapter in the 2015 European Parliament study) to articles in various journals and edited volumes, which focused on the evolution of the Romanian higher education sector, its governance arrangements and internationalization policies (Deca, 2010; Deca, 2014; Deca and Fiț, 2015; UEFISCDI, 2013; UEFISCDI 2015a, b and c; European Parliament, 2015; Alexe et. Al, 2015; Curaj et al., 2014; Curaj et al., 2015; Wit et al., 2015)). The contribution made in the frame of the IEMU project, designing its methodology and contributing to its results, has helped me in uncovering the most appropriate theoretical and methodological approaches to be used for the purpose of this thesis.

As such, the thesis benefits and it is at the same time impacted by my personal experience within the Romanian higher education system. My interest in higher education policy started in my years as a student representative at the national level in 2006 – 2007. After two years as a European level student representative, as Chairperson of the European Students' Union (ESU), I returned to Bucharest for a two year mandate as Head of the Bologna Process Secretariat (2010 – 2012).

After the start of my doctoral studies, in 2014, I was co-opted to act as an external expert for the IEMU project and coordinated, together with Eva Egron – Polak, the IAU Secretary General, the Steering Committee tasked to develop a policy framework for internationalization of higher education in Romania. In this capacity, I had access to all the data provided by national authorities (the Ministry of National Education and Scientific Research, the National Institute of Statistics, the National Research Council for Higher Education Funding, UEFISCDI etc.) and by the universities. In the frame of this project, I worked at developing various policy reports on different aspects of internationalization of higher education in Romania, including the national framework for developing a future national strategy on this topic, the blueprint for a structure to promote Romanian higher education abroad and the university strategies. This experience was instrumental in providing access to information and key national and institutional representatives, in order to finalize my doctoral research.

My involvement in the project provided privileged access to data and relevant individuals for my research, which proved instrumental in the in-depth analysis of the empirical cases.. Further details on research limitations and problems encountered are described in the final concluding chapter of this thesis.

1.5 Structure of the thesis

In order to better understand internationalization as a discrete stand-alone policy problem, with its own drivers and rationales and based on a wider policy process, the thesis looks at both the Romanian national level context and related policies, as well as at a sample of university strategic endeavors, together with the contribution of institutional, national and international actors.

The thesis is structured in seven distinct chapters. This first chapter introduces the context and the relevance of the topic of internationalization of higher education, continues with an overview of the existing trends and the rationale for the case study selection, provides the methodological approach and the experience of the author with the Romanian context and finally provides details regarding the structure of the thesis.

The second chapter surveys existing literature on the topic of internationalization of higher education, from its conceptual evolution to an overview of rationales for pursuing policies in this field. The chapter then details various approaches used by various authors at both system and institutional level, but also the factors which influence internationalization policies at these levels. Comparative studies and research focusing on Romania's efforts in internationalization are then looked at. The chapter ends by situating the contribution of this thesis in the wider body of research.

Chapter three is conceived to provide the conceptual underpinning of my doctoral research. The first section includes an overview of the shifting contours of higher education governance, which in the Romanian case are addressed by mapping the policy process using a

five-point star model of the policy field. Stakeholder and resource dependency theory are then used to articulate the representation of interests, the relative capacities of actors, as well as their inter-dependencies. Discursive institutionalism is used to analyze the manner in which ideas and norms can be mobilized by actors to effect change.

Chapter four addresses the national policy field. Its first section introduces the national context and the policy reform stages that Romania underwent since the 1990s. The second section refers to its particular post-communist transition path, while reflecting on its proximity with other Central and Eastern European countries. The third section analyses Romanian higher education as an object of internationalization, influenced by domestic mediating factors, international norms and actors. The chapter concludes with a survey of the strengths and weaknesses of the national policy level with a focus on internationalization of higher education, while drawing initial policy lessons in relation to the wider regional context.

Chapters five and six analyze the institutional internationalization policies, by using a similar structure. The chapters start with an analysis of the relative place of the universities in the wider higher education sector, as well as with an explanation for the case study selection. The need for internationalization policies and their formulation and development process at the institutional level is then looked at. The implementation process, as well as the obstacles and risks are described, leading to a concluding section which examines the drivers of internationalization for every category of higher education institution included in the sample and outlines the policy lessons that can be drawn in terms of institutional strategic pursuits.

Finally, the concluding chapter highlights the strengths and weaknesses of the national and institutional policy levels, while drawing policy lessons aimed at improving the decision-

making process at the national level, as well as in relation to similar national contexts in the wider Central and Eastern Europe region.

Chapter 2 – Internationalization of higher education – what does existing research tell us?

This chapter provides an insight into the existing research on internationalization of higher education, as well as its perceived dimensions. Firstly, an overview of the evolution of internationalization concept and definitions is provided, followed by a study of the rationales for engaging in this process and approaches used at both system and institutional level. Trends and factors which influence internationalization policies are also looked at, as well as the difference between national and institutional approaches. In the second part, the chapter will outline existing comparative work on national and institutional internationalization policies. The third section delves into the existing literature on Romania's internationalization efforts and finally it situates the contribution of the present thesis in the wider body of policy studies, with a view to better understanding a unique, yet relevant national context.

2.1 History, definitions and main trends

2.1.1 Internationalization of higher education – brief historical landmarks

The history of internationalization can be traced back to the Middle Ages. Universities have always been internationally open in their pursuit for knowledge, ever since their foundation. During Renaissance, the use of the Latin language and the pilgrimages undertaken by scholars ensured the propagation of scientific, political and artistic knowledge across the Christian world. There is perhaps no wonder that the name of the most successful mobility program in the world – Erasmus – comes from Desiderius Erasmus, a Dutch Renaissance

humanist and Catholic priest, who was famous for his travels that aided in the circulation of ideas in Europe. Between the 18th century and the Second World War, the internationalization of higher education had a very concrete manifestation – that of the imperial ‘export’ of national higher education models to colonial territories. Former colonies – in Africa, Australasia and the Americas - have ‘borrowed’ the British model of higher education. The first US universities were created following the model of Oxford and Cambridge, though the Johns Hopkins University was modeled the Humboldtian research-oriented university. Similarly, most Latin American universities have been created according to the models existing in the Iberian Peninsula. Naturally, French colonies looked to the French universities for inspiration. After the Second World War, in a bipolar world, higher education exchanges were one way on strengthening the sphere of influence. Many scholars immigrated to the US, Canada or Australia, which created a sort of centrality of the previous academic periphery (Knight and de Wit, 1995).

The values that were considered to be at the core of the Western World, such as the freedom of speech, safeguarded and strengthened the institutional autonomy of universities in this part of the world. On the other hand, the Soviet Union extended its heavy handed approach within its sphere of influence also to universities, with dramatic cutbacks in the freedom of academics and students and institutional exchanges and partnerships confined to the list of ‘friendly states’. Following the 1960/ 1970’s decolonization, massification of higher education and fights for civil rights, internationalization of higher education became dominated by unbalanced South-North student mobility flows and North-South substantial funding and academic staff mobility flows (Altbach et al, 2010).

Starting with the 1980s other players come into the scene, such as the European Community and Japan, which start funding research and development programs. Finally, after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the bipolar order evolved into multi-polarity, with clear consequences for universities in general. International cooperation in the field of tertiary education grew significantly, especially at the regional level, by the establishment of higher education 'spaces', such as the European Higher Education Area, the educational and cultural component of ASEAN, but also UNESCO led initiatives in Latin America and the Arab States. In addition, the role of international organizations increased significantly in shaping higher education reforms, based on good practice examples existing in other parts of the world. UNESCO, OECD, the European Commission, the World Bank and other actors such as the Soros Foundation for Central and Eastern Europe have been very active in promoting the need for internationalization of higher education, both as a stand-alone policy, as well as a rationale for reform (Dakowska and Harmsen, 2015).

The more strategically oriented concept of internationalization dates from the 1990's. The discussion on 'international education' pre-dates it, as an all-encompassing umbrella of any activity that had to do with non-national concerns, such as: mobility of students and faculty, partnerships, multicultural or peace education, exchanges and so on. Even if mentioned since the 1970s, the term 'internationalization' only starts being associated with the ways in which the international dimension of higher education become more complex since the 1990s. This shift in terminology also indicates a conceptual shift, from more ad-hoc activities to a more comprehensive and strategic approach. For the European Union this consolidation of 'internationalization of higher education' as a distinct policy was supported by research and

mobility funding for international cooperation, such as the Erasmus and Marie Curie programs (de Wit et al, 2015). The effects of mobility policies on other key priorities at the European level, such as social cohesion and the inclusive character of higher education were also studied in the course of recent years (Powell and Finger, 2013).

Discursively, a clear intention to move from a predominantly reactive to a more proactive approach is visible in national and international policy documents, together with a clear enlargement of the areas covered by the term 'internationalization'. With increasing global competition between higher education institutions and systems, coupled with an expansion of the for profit commercial sector and the cross-border delivery of higher education programs, a shift in values which underpin internationalization policies was seen (from exchanges, cooperation and capacity building to a more distinctly competitive outlook) (Egron-Polak and Hudson, 2014).

At the same time, a massification of internationalization efforts can be observed, in line of the assumption that it contributes to enhancing the quality of higher education provision. In this context, 'internationalization at home' comes gradually to be seen as equally relevant to degree or credit mobility.

If in the 1970-1980s, internationalization was mainly focused on development cooperation and aid, after 1985 a development towards mobility and curriculum development is seen, especially in continental Europe. In the Anglo-Saxon world, the emphasis was rather on a commercial view of internationalization, based on economic rationales, which did not seem to discourage incoming flows of students and staff, on the contrary (Knight and de Wit, 1995).

A new dimension of internationalization developed in the 1990s, following the Asian economic crisis that affected the number of incoming mobile students for countries such as the UK and Australia. These countries thus took the lead in providing higher education programs closer to the source of interest, by developing franchise operations and branch campuses in South East Asia (Singapore, Malaysia, Vietnam), South Africa and lately in the Middle East. Mobility was no longer confined to students or academic staff, but it now included higher education programs as well. This new form of internationalization has expanded and is called either transnational (or offshore) education or simply cross-border education delivery. This trend intensified the competition for a piece of the emerging higher education market, leading to the supremacy of countries such as the US, the UK and Australia in off-shore provision of higher education (de Wit et al, 2012). This particular evolution was not easily adopted by most continental European countries, though explicitly encouraged by recent EU level policies. The co-existence between cooperation and competition in internationalization policy trends has also been researched by van der Wende (2001).

A balancing trend in internationalization policies was also seen, as a result of the increasing commercialization in the sector. Guidelines for maintaining the quality and ethical standards for cross-border education provision were put forward by international organizations, such as OECD and UNESCO in 2005. The International Association of Universities adopted a set of ethical guidelines for transnational education activities - 'Affirming Academic Values in Internationalization of Higher Education: A Call for Action' - in April 2012. Recently though, we also notice a reaction to the strong commercial focus in international education.

This concern was motivated by the risk of disreputable providers and dubious practices affecting the reputation of the higher education institutions.

Changes are also visible in terms of the leading regional and state actors in internationalization of higher education. The classic North-South and West-East division is less strong, with Asia and the Middle East becoming more and more active in this policy area, as well as Africa and Latin America (de Wit et al, 2015). This emergence of new regional players is bound to exercise an influence, has the potential to redefine internationalization and its scope in the years to come.

2.1.2 Internationalization - conceptual efforts and definitional diversity

Looking at the existing literature on internationalization of higher education, there seems to be an emphasis on descriptive studies (Beelen 2012), trying to define and unpack the phenomenon of internationalization in general terms, but also at the national and institutional level. However, most publications mainly target practitioners and policy makers, but without a real attempt to look at internationalization as a distinct policy field and to analyze it from the policy cycle point of view, and thus bring conceptual clarity to the phenomenon with a policy analysis objective.

The predominant themes in the literature have evolved (Teichler, 2004), from internationalization to globalization and its (negative) impacts, from information society to knowledge society and modes of knowledge transfer, from administration of student and staff mobility to strategic action on internationalization, and from structural variety to increased convergence and even homogenization. Various authors have dealt with the impact of

internationalization on students (Jones, 2010; Deca, 2010), global and multicultural competences (Deardorff, 2006), as well as on curricular aspects, including the wider concept of internationalization at home (Beelen and Jones, 2015). Furthermore, there is a clear clustering of literature around so called focusing events, such as the GATS negotiations, the Bologna Process, important OECD studies or UNESCO Forums.

Comparative studies are still quite scarce and still quite bound to look at components of internationalization such as mobility and cross-border education provision (Ferencz, 2015; European Commission, 2014) or at national/ institutional strategic approaches. In addition, there is a concentration on the nation state for international comparisons, as well as a focus on policy effects and international governance of higher education institutions. There is a relative neglect with regard to the input side of policy formation. The focus seems to be on macro-level policy making and meso-level organizational adaptation (Enders, 2004).

Perhaps the most extensively cited definition of internationalization comes from Jane Knight: 'Internationalization is the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions and delivery of post-secondary education' (Knight 2008: 21). In Knight's perspective, internationalization of higher education has two main aspects – 'internationalization at home' and 'internationalization abroad'. Internationalization abroad is the most visible part of this process and includes cross-border mobility of students, academic staff, projects and joint projects. Internationalization at home is more focused on developing the necessary intercultural skills and attitudes for students enrolled in the home institution, by building appropriate strategies and actions.

In the view of the Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), internationalization is 'the totality of processes whose combined effect, planned or not, is to ensure the international dimension of higher education experience in universities and similar educational institutions' (Knight, 2008: 21).

In terms of purposes of internationalization, Zha Qiang notes that 'internationalization is not merely an aim in itself, but an important resource in the development of higher education towards, first of all a system in line with international standards; secondly, one open and responsive to its global environment' (Qiang, 2003). On the same note, Wit et al (2015) also underline that internationalization is a means to an end and not an end in itself, something considered as one of the key misconceptions of internationalization; in this view, internationalization's main aim is to enhance the quality of education and research.

In recent years, there were various efforts to update and deepen the conceptual understanding of internationalization. One such attempt, encompasses the earlier definition by Knight and launches the term 'comprehensive internationalization', defined as:

'a commitment, confirmed through action, to infuse international and comparative perspectives throughout the teaching, research, and service missions of higher education. It shapes institutional ethos and values and touches the entire higher education enterprise. It is essential that it is embraced by institutional leadership, governance, faculty, students, and all academic service and support units. It is an institutional imperative, not just a desirable possibility. Comprehensive internationalization not only impacts all of campus life but the institution's external frames of reference, partnerships, and relations. The global reconfiguration of

economies, systems of trade, research, and communication, and the impact of global forces on local life, dramatically expand the need for comprehensive internationalization and the motivations and purposes driving it.’ (Hudzik, 2011: 6)

If the OECD view on internationalization touches on the dual nature of phenomenon, brought about by both planned and unplanned processes, Hudzik’s view of internationalization places internationalization in a dual role – as both an objective and a series of subsumed processes. The latest definition updated Knight’s classic understanding of internationalization and shifts the OECD perspective, by underlining the intentional nature of the processes leading to internationalization, as well as its renewed status as a process and not a goal in itself. This new definition can potentially open new research avenues which would study internationalization as a policy process:

‘the intentional process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions and delivery of post-secondary education, in order to enhance the quality of education and research for all students and staff, and to make a meaningful contribution to society’ (de Wit, 2015)

Other authors have been pursuing the clarification of the ‘internationalization at home’ concept put forward by Jane Knight. Altbach et al (2010) saw this type of internationalization as the sum of approaches that would instill an international dimension into home campus experiences, by using international and comparative perspectives in curriculum reform, as well as by diversifying the academic community, by attracting international students and members of the academic staff and successfully taking advantage of their existence on campus. Beelen and Jones (2015: 69) aimed to put forward a new definition, which is not based on a negative

identification – anything which is not internationalization abroad (i.e. mobility, partnerships, cross-border higher education):

‘Internationalization at home is the purposeful integration of international and intercultural dimensions into the formal and informal curriculum for all students, within domestic learning environments.’

In this definition update, the authors underline the importance of meaningful and purposeful processes that allow internationalization to be experienced by all students, regardless of where they pursue their studies.

2.1.3 Internationalization, globalization and Europeanization

The imperative for international cooperation was obvious in many policy sectors and higher education represents no exception to this rule. Internationalization of higher education is used, sometimes interchangeably, with Europeanization (specifically in Europe) and globalization. This tendency has to do with the evolution of the term, as well as its use by scholars from various fields, such as political science, educational policy, international relations etc.

Experts and institutional actors have defined the concept of internationalization of higher education, sometimes in opposition with the more loaded ‘globalization’ terminology and in close connection with the ‘Europeanization’ phenomenon.

Globalization and its relation with higher education internationalization

In the opinion of Altbach et al (2010), globalization is seen as an external reality, which cannot be changed and that encompasses much more than higher education policy – it thus refers to ‘the broad economic, technological, and scientific trends that directly affect higher education and are largely inevitable in the contemporary world’. Internationalization is seen by the same scholar as a sort of response to this external reality, which involves ‘specific policies and programs undertaken by governments, academic systems and institutions, and even individual departments to deal with globalization’ (Altbach 2006: 123).

In one such approach (Scott, 1998), internationalization is defined as greater cooperation between states, where activities take place across state borders, but national states maintain a central role. The emphasis in this case is on international partnerships (mutual cooperation and observation) and the boundaries between markets/ market forces and universities are well defined (though usually contested). Globalization is seen as a process of increasing interdependence and convergence of economies, where higher education, as an imperfect market, becomes increasingly deregulated. In this approach, states have limited control over higher education policies and concepts such as competition, efficiency and managerialism become central, while higher education institutions become ‘disembedded’ from their national contexts (Beerens, 2004). There are limits however to the extent to which we can assume universities are de-localized or de-nationalized - Marginson (2011) pointing to competing pressures that universities need to respond to, coming from the global, national and institutional levels, creating a so-called ‘glo-na-cal’ operating reality. In the case of Romania, a complex and contradictory reality emerges, with various elements coming into play – increasing

internationalization trends at a global level, post-communist transition effects, regional pressures stemming from European Union accession and national reform pressures, marred by local economic and social inequalities (Harmsen, 2014; Dakowska and Harmsen, 2014).

Europeanization and internationalization – simultaneous and mutually reinforcing influences on the Romanian higher education sector

In discussing the dynamics of globalization and its effects on higher education, Chou and Ravinet (2015) proposed to look at a particular development to be seen in various parts of the world (Latin America, South East Asia, Africa and, of course, Europe) – that of higher education regionalism, defined as:

‘the political project of region creation involving at least some state authority (national, supranational, international), who in turn designates and delineates the world’s geographical region to which such activities extend, in the higher education policy sector’ (Chou and Ravinet, 2015: 368)

The authors propose three main elements to support the analysis of higher education regionalism, which include mapping a constellation of actors involved, analyzing the institutional arrangements characteristic for the respective region and identifying the ideas and principles at the core of the process. Europe and its European Higher Education Area (underpinned by the Bologna Process and the strong support of European Union bodies) presents a particularly ‘thick’ variant of higher education regionalism, in which the policy discourse, the strong involvement of European actors and the institutional arrangements have

been strengthened over time, with clear effects for the harmonization of higher education systems within (Jayasuriya and Robertson, 2010).

Europeanization is also seen as a regionalization process which looks similar to internationalization when it comes to cooperation between the states inside the educational area, but also having characteristics of globalization, as Europeanization of higher education is often viewed as a way to strengthen competitive advantages in light of external pressures. In this vision, both globalization and regionalization lead to a 'de-nationalization' process – transferring sovereignty to either international or local levels (Robertson, 2012). As mentioned earlier, this view is however challenged by the strong anchoring of higher education institutions in their national contexts, particularly from the functional and financial point of view (due to the regulatory frameworks).

Wallace (2000: 370) argued that Europeanization, defined as 'the development and sustaining of systematic European arrangements to manage cross-border connections, such that a European dimension becomes an embedded feature which frames politics and policy within European state', can be seen as a unique mediator of globalization influences. At the same time, Europeanization can be seen as both a reaction to globalization processes, as well as a result of their effects (Dale, 2009).

The burgeoning literature surrounding the wider Europeanization concept includes research delving into its multiple definitions (Harmsen and Wilson, 2010; Olsen, 2002), as well as its evolution and conceptual application (Featherstone and Radaelli, 2003; Graziano and Vink, 2007; Börzel and Risse, 2012).

According to Vukasovic (2013), the two main theoretical approaches to Europeanization – the external incentives perspective (Börzel and Risse, 2003), which expects that the institutionalization of rules will be a natural consequence of rational choices, and the social learning perspective (Sedelmeier, 2011), in which persuasion of actors to follow European rules is a consequence of a logic of appropriateness – need to be adjusted to fit the specific nature of the higher education sector. These specificities include, but are not limited to, institutional autonomy, loose coupling, mission (purpose) ambiguity and bottom heaviness (Clark, 1983; Weick, 1976).

For the purpose of this thesis, in terms of its relationship with internationalization, even though Europeanization of higher education has a similar focus on cooperation, as well as a demonstrably reactive character towards globalization, its purpose is different. Internationalization focuses on instilling a broad international (beyond Europe) character to higher education and is based on international norm diffusion, while Europeanization is linked to the specific regional goal of strengthening the European construction and enhancing harmonization of higher education systems within the area (see for example the Bologna Process or the EU Modernization Agenda). Even if some of the globalization features, such as the focus on competition and a certain degree of policy isomorphism are to be identified when analysing Europeanization trends in higher education, Europeanization displays a much stronger policy alignment imperative through its policies, funding programs and institutions, despite the limited European competence on education matters. At the same time, in Romania's case (as in the wider CEEC region), Europeanization is also concerned with 're-

joining' Europe and defining its wider cultural identity, as an integral part of a wider national transition phase from communism to a democratic society.

Generally, Europeanization of higher education was reinforced and facilitated by internationalization of the sector, through cooperation mechanisms (student mobility schemes, bilateral or multilateral partnership projects at the level of higher education institutions), reference to good practice models (at either national or HEI level) or even participation of external experts in national or institutional consultative or decision-making processes. Thus, Vukasovic (2013) argues that even before Europe developed its own policy instruments in the field of higher education, higher education was a significantly internationalized sector.

In the case of Romania, it can be argued that internationalization of higher education and Europeanization processes are mutually reinforcing. This can be observed especially in the way international norms mediated by international organizations and national actors were translated in national reforms in the 1990s with the help of both European institutions (European Commission) and international actors (World Bank), leading up to a strong normative translation of the Bologna Process voluntary commitments in the 2000s, as an expression of Europeanization characteristic to the EU accession process. Starting with the debates around the 2011 Law on education, the Europeanization influences seemed to consolidate the premise for Romania to revert to a focus on the international competitiveness discourse, in line with a quest for building world-class universities (Salmi, 2009) and the competitiveness agenda (also emphasized by the EU2020 Strategy).

2.1.4 Rationales for internationalization

According to de Wit (1995) and Knight (2004), rationales for internationalization are of four main types – academic, political, economic and socio-cultural. In these authors' views, they are not mutually exclusive, are in a continuous evolution and their prevalence differs depending on each stakeholder. For a better understanding of the reasons why internationalization policies are designed in a certain way, it is important to explore their rationales, as a sum of drivers and motives for pursuing this policy at different levels (individual, faculty, university or national/ international levels) (Wit, 2002).

At the national level, economic and political rationales for internationalization are mainly linked to geo-political and economic positioning and to competitiveness. In connection to economic growth, there is a general claim that new labor market criteria include an international dimension, though this claim cannot always be supported at national level (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015) and there is (as yet) no such thing as a 'global profile' for prospective employees. Politically, education is considered as the 'fourth dimension' of foreign policy (Coombs and Fulbright, 1964) and thus internationalization policies at the national level are often linked to broader national concerns about foreign relations alliances and strategic positioning (see, for example, the increasing presence of European, North American and Asian universities in the Middle East). Financial incentives, such as tuition fees coming from foreign students and income from international research grants, are also important internationalization rationales. There is a cultural dimension to internationalization, which is sometimes associated with the nationalist or nation-building argument (e.g. France or USA). Other interesting rationales are linked to the development of the individual (though more

present in debates in the USA than those in Europe or Asia), providing an international dimension to research and teaching through mobility and internationalization of the curricula and improved quality of education and research. Finally, internationalization can be seen as a factor in the build-up of an institutional identity and status, by a common pooling of resources using international staff members and enhancing incoming mobility flows, especially for those programs with little domestic demand (Knight and de Wit, 1995).

At the institutional level, according to Egron-Polak and Hudson (2014), the three top institutional benefits expected from internationalization are: increased student international awareness, quality of teaching and learning, and strengthening research. In terms of a regional perspective on internationalization, a number of differences were pointed out by the same authors, as part of the 4th Global Survey of the International Association of Universities. Asia-Pacific and North American universities pointed to students' increased international awareness as a main benefit of internationalization, while in Europe and the Middle East, the quality of teaching and learning is considered a priority. Research capacity and the consolidation of the knowledge production capacity was underlined by African universities as a main goal, while enhancing the networking capital of academic staff was the main priority of Latin American and Caribbean institutions. The survey also pointed to the disparity between what is seen as a priority/ main goal and what is measured. At the aggregate level, the areas which are mostly assessed by universities are international student enrollment, institutional partnerships and outbound student mobility. In terms of the drivers of policy, it seems that the top management (either institutional leadership or the internationalization office) act as the main supporters of internationalization policies from the inside. As external drivers, government policies seem to

be the most influential factor at a global level, though industry and international rankings closely follow. For Africa and the Middle East, rankings are the most significant external driver, while Europe mentions regional policies as a significant driver, a rather unique feature of the Old Continent (Egron-Polak and Hudson, 2014).

According to other studies (Stensaker et al, 2008), internationalization is used by higher education institutions for defining their branding and marketing strategies, sometimes for changing the academic profile of higher education institutions and to develop extensive partnerships. Knight (2004) advances the idea that institutional level rationales differ from national ones, depending also on the type of approach employed (bottom-up or top-bottom). These rationales are mainly linked to building a certain profile, an international reputation, student and faculty personal development, income generation, partnerships and enhancing research output.

As quickly becomes obvious, there is no immediate overlap between the rationales for internationalization at the national and the institutional levels, which prompts the question of whether associated internationalization policies are in fact compatible, complementary or indeed conflicting. Furthermore, since national policies seem to be one of the top three drivers for institutional policies, it is interesting to see whether the fact that a country has a distinct internationalization of higher education policy has a direct impact (also in terms of policy objectives and instruments) on institutional policies and strategies.

2.1.4 Internationalization approaches and trends

Firstly, a distinction needs to be made - an approach for internationalization is different from a definition, as the approach encompasses the values, priorities and actions identifiable during implementation of internationalization policies. Four different approaches for internationalization have been frequently researched, with different foci and constitutive elements. The most frequently encountered, especially for incipient internationalization efforts, is the activity approach. It mainly involves student and faculty inward and outward mobility, as well as support services for these exchanges. A second type is the competency based approach that is concerned with academic purposes, by focusing on developing international competences, attitudes and values for both students and faculty members. The ethos approach deals more with making sure that the university benefits from a cultural shift, enabling international initiatives, projects and views. The fourth type of approach looks at processes, specifically those that use institutional policies, norms and activities in order to mainstream an international dimension into all aspects of university life (Knight, 2004). For the purpose of this thesis, this last approach to internationalization is considered as most appropriate, in light of the research questions and the selected working definition of internationalization.

The concept of internationalization is experiencing many changes, especially in the past couple of decades. Some of the most prominent shifts are:

- A move from institutional cooperation for 'capacity building' to cooperation in order to create networks and alliances for building a more competitive position at the global level;

- This first point is complemented by a shift from academic partnerships based on cooperation to more strategic and geopolitically oriented partnerships ;
- A shift from offering access to international students to programs which would not be available in their home country to attracting students with outstanding academic credentials and/ or that are able to pay tuition fees;
- A trend to value more the indicator, rather than the end goal – for example an institutional focus on their position in rankings and league tables, rather than on providing their academic community with meaningful internationalization experience (Egron – Polak, 2012; Deca et al, 2015).

Taking into account the variety of the higher education systems, in terms of history, values and missions, there is considerable diversity in the goals and practices of internationalization. Former colonial powers (United Kingdom, Portugal, France, Spain) still maintain close ties, by networks of universities, scholarships and privileged access routes to their linguistic and cultural areas of influence. Also, the regional cooperation (e.g. the Bologna Process/ the European Union, MERCOSUR, ASEAN) seen in recent decades has significantly influenced internationalization policies, with a clear focus on strengthening and consolidating cooperation within these geo-political spaces. This is proof of the complexity of goals that internationalization can serve at various levels (Egron-Polak and Hudson, 2014).

Sursock (2015) notes that the overall significance of internationalization has grown, not just for research intensive universities or for competitive higher education systems, but for all, making it a global development. The definition of internationalization varies depending on the

world region. After looking at the way in which different governments understand and pursue internationalization strategies, Jane Knight noted the possibility of a 'mid-life crisis' (Knight, 2011). She underlines a change from historic academic purposes to a commercial outlook, in light of the massification of higher education and the increase of providers. This has raised concerns regarding the academic benefit of the process. (UEFISCDI, 2015)

2.1.5 Factors that influence internationalization of higher education

Internationalization of higher education, as a discrete policy field, is influenced by a various characteristics, at all levels. The influence factors differ on a case by case basis, but they can largely be clustered in some typical categories.

At the national level, internationalization can be influenced by factors such as size, geographic location, culture, national socio-economic and political standing, quality and structure of the higher education system, role of the national language internationally and the history of internationalization policies. National authorities adopt policies as a response to or in anticipation of policy choices of other governments or to certain regional (European) or international developments. This leads to a so-called 'mutual adjustment' process, which defines further international policy norms (Enders, 2004).

Among the factors that influence internationalization at the institutional level, the following can be listed: geographical location, status (universities versus non-research focused higher education institutions), diversity of faculty and their international character. These factors have a clear impact on the focus of institutional internationalization strategies: large

higher education institutions tend to focus on research cooperation, while outgoing mobility of students seems to be the main concern for smaller higher education institutions.

Coherent internationalization policies at the regional level seem to influence national or institutional policies. For example, despite the global focus on research collaboration, in Europe it is generally regarded as less of a priority, with regional cooperation and intra-regional mobility as key goals for the future (IAU, 2010). This is perhaps due to the fact that Europe, in the context of the Bologna Process, had a strategy for the internationalization of higher education titled (EHEA,2007), more recently followed by the 'Mobility Strategy 2020' adopted in 2012 by the EHEA member states (EHEA, 2012). In addition, the Lisbon strategy and the EU 2020 Strategy (European Commission, 2010) have been motivated from the beginning by the objective to make the European Union the most competitive knowledge based economy in the world. In 2013 a focused 'European higher education in the world' internationalization strategy was launched, which includes objectives such as: enhancing the quality of European education (by using peer learning, benchmarking and cooperation), attracting students and skilled migrants in order to boost innovation and to foster job creation, preparation for global citizenship and increasing employability, as well as boosting the EU position in the world by influencing and engaging new audience. These objectives are coupled with European funds to enable EU countries to pursue these objectives, while encouraging all EU members to design their own internationalization strategies. The document explicitly states:

'A comprehensive internationalization strategy should cover key areas grouped into the following three categories: international student and staff mobility; the internationalization and improvement of curricula and digital learning; and strategic

cooperation, partnerships and capacity building. These categories should not be seen as isolated but as integrated elements of a comprehensive strategy.' (European Commission, 2013: 4)

Thus, important characteristics, such as internationalization of the curriculum for all students, received a central place next to mobility in the European framework (Wit et al, 2015).

Regional policy efforts to enhance internationalization of higher education have been replicated in other parts of the world, mirroring European developments. One such initiative is ENLACES - the Latin American and the Caribbean area for higher education (ENLACES). Its objectives are to increase cooperation among its members and encourage (intra)regional mobility, institutional exchanges, harmonization of the curricula, a joint research agenda for enhancing the social relevance etc. (UNESCO-IESALC, 2009). In Africa, the African Network for Internationalization of Education (ANIE) was founded (Teferra and Knight, 2008), while the African Union developed its Harmonization Strategy. In Asia, regular meetings of the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization Centre (SEAMEO RIHED) are being held, with the goal of harmonizing higher education in South-East Asia. SEAMEO RIHED managed the ASEAN International mobility for students program (AIMS), had worked on credit transfer, qualifications frameworks and quality assurance and maintains a network of internationalization offices within higher education institutions in the region.

Financial imperatives are a strong influencing factor for both national and institutional internationalization pursuits. The United States is a well-studied example: it is estimated that in the United States, international students and their families brought over \$30 billion to economy in 2015, an amount which practically doubled from the 2007-2008 academic year (when the

economic gain was around \$15 billion⁵. The global importance of internationalization was also confirmed by the place of the higher education sector the World Trade Organization's General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS).

Besides the financial gains, internationalization of higher education also serves foreign policy agendas, with a focus on capacity building. European countries with former colonial territories engage frequently in partnerships aiming at strengthening the position of their countries in development efforts, as well as to maintain the cultural, economic and political links with countries with a common past, notably in Africa and Latin America (Altbach et al, 2009).

2.1.6 Institutional level – why is it important and how does it distinguish itself from national and supranational efforts?

Higher education institutions are at the same time initiators, objects and subjects of internationalization policies. Looking at the institutional level for uncovering the way in which trans-national trends develop is relevant also due to the dual role of universities, which are both affected by international trends and tend to influence internationalization (Enders, 2004). Additionally, analyzing the institutional level in looking at internationalization as a policy endeavor presents a number of benefits. Firstly, it sheds light on what happens at the intersection between institutional values, cultures and tradition, national contexts and international norms. Secondly, it allows for a more in-depth observation of how higher

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http://www.nafsa.org/Explore_International_Education/Impact/Data_And_Statistics/NAFSA_International_Student_Economic_Value_Tool/

education is changing due to internationalization, be it in its core aspects, such as the shifts in university missions, as well as within its structures and delivery (delivery forms, curriculum etc.) in order to adapt to perceived international trends. (Stensaker et al, 2008). Internationalization can also be seen to constitute a vector to raise awareness inside academia regarding the adequacy of strategic institutional options, thus being 'one of the most significant drivers of change facing the modern university' (Taylor, 2004: 168).

Internationalization was identified by some authors to be a factor for increasing the level of institutional autonomy (Luijten-Lub, 2007). National authorities however still maintain their role in the development of overarching higher education policies, which influence institutional policies via steering mechanisms linked to funding, benchmarking instruments, accreditation etc. Even though internationalization is generally seen as a driver for policy change at various levels, there are dissenting views, which argue that it reinforced the status-quo and that the most powerful actors are those most likely to benefit from it (Teichler, 1999).

Internationalization is also considered to be a driver for policy change at the national level, which seems to absorb many of the overarching reform agendas which are applicable in one region or another (e.g. the Bologna Process and the Lisbon Agenda for the EU countries and neighboring states). The argument for policy change is often the strengthening of national capacities in the face of global competition. These agendas are obviously filtered through lenses such as national agendas, status, location and institutional culture (Enders, 2004).

International convergence seems to mainly manifest itself at the national policy level and with regard to structural arrangements, rather than at the institutional level. As previously outlined, institutional policies on internationalization are influenced by geography, history, size,

tradition, institutional profiles and prestige factors. In this context, policy gaps between the national and the institutional levels are bound to surface and they can be seen as being linked to the clashes of rationales for adhering to international norms or trends for the national and institutional level. For the national level, the issues related to economic competitiveness of the country seem to dominate, while at the institutional level the rationales for internationalization seem to vary according to many factors (including the prestige and competitiveness of the respective institution), which prompts questions related to the 'goodness of fit' of national policies, as well as the attendant question of how prescriptive a national policy should be (Stensaker et al, 2009).

2.1.7 Models of analyzing internationalization strategies

Both the national authorities and institutional leaders are displaying increasingly strategic approaches towards increasing the visibility and attractiveness of their entities in a global higher education sector. Some of the classic decision-making models could be used for conceptualizing such strategic attempts in the field of internationalization:

1. Neave's model, based on a number of studies developed for UNESCO in the 1990s, in which two paradigmatic options are put forward: the leadership driven model and the base unit model, largely based on the centralized/ decentralized or 'managerial rational' vs 'academic consensual' distinction in terms of strategic decision-making approaches (Neave, 1992: 166-169).
2. Davies' model, which underlines the explicit need for an institution to have a mission (vision) and a strategy for internationalization. It goes further to characterize

internationalization strategies with a four-quadrant matrix, which includes central-systematic strategies, ad-hoc central strategies, systematic marginal strategies and ad-hoc marginal strategies (Davies, 1992).

3. Van Dijk and Meijer's so-called 'cube' model, which extends Davies' model by adding three dimensions of internationalization: policy (the importance attached to internationalization aims), support for internationalization and type of implementation (Van Dijk, 1995).

Another model, more specifically developed for strategic internationalization endeavors, is Rudzki's stage model (Rudzki, 1995), used for UK business schools, which lists two main internationalization modes – reactive and proactive. This model also lists four dimensions of internationalization, considered as essential: student mobility, staff development, curriculum innovation and organizational change.

These models can be seen as complementary (Knight and de Wit, 1995) and are taken into account when analyzing institutional strategic approaches for the Romanian case studies.

2.2. Comparative research and existing in-depth studies

With an increasingly global higher education arena, internationalization of higher education became a multi-faceted research topic. The growing 'globalization of internationalization' requires a more nuanced approach as regards its interpretation, policy implications and implementation than before. Unsurprisingly, the dominant research on the topic has been developed in Western countries or by international organizations (de Wit et al, 2015).

In terms of comparative studies looking at internationalization strategies and policies at the national level, a few notable initiatives are worth mentioning. One of the most recent and wide in scope is the 2015 'Internationalisation of Higher Education' study commissioned by the European Parliament (EP) and carried out by the Centre for Higher Education Internationalization (CHEI) at the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore (UCSC) in Milan, in cooperation with the International Association of Universities (IAU) and the European Association for International Education (EAIE). The study included an analysis of seventeen national contexts and their internationalization policies and strategies (ten European and seven from other regions). In addition, the study aimed to provide, at the request of the European Parliament's Committee on Culture and Education an 'underlying gist of what internationalisation is and should be aiming for'. The document concludes with conclusions and recommendations on the future of internationalization of higher education in Europe (European Parliament, 2015).

Another comparative study was developed in 2004 in the frame of the HEIGLO project (Higher Education Institutions' Responses to Europeanization, Internationalization and Globalization), with funding from the European Union FP5 program. A wide research consortium⁶ examined both national and institutional responses to these main trends, while also looking at distinct internationalization policies and strategies. Two research volumes titled 'On Cooperation and Competition' were published in the ACA Papers on International Cooperation on Education series, following the research undertaken in the HEIGLO project.

⁶ The research consortium included the Centre for Higher Education Policy Studies, University of Twente as coordinator, the Centre for Higher Education Studies (Institute of Education, University of London), NIFU (Oslo), CIPES (Porto), the Centre for Research in Higher Education at IFF (Vienna) and the University of Athens

They included an overview of national and European policies, as well as of institutional responses to internationalization, based on various national case studies (Huisman and van der Wende 2004; Huisman and van der Wende 2005).

Studies looking at the rationale and drivers of internationalization at national and institutional levels have also been developed in recent years (Altbach and Knight, 2007; Knight, 2004; Egron-Polak and Ross, 2014; EUA, 2013).

A wide array of policy oriented studies are focused on specific aspects of internationalization – such as mobility of students and academic staff (Teichler et al, 2011; Kelo et al, 2006; European Commission, 2014), cross-border higher education provision or transnational education (Wilson and Vlăsceanu, 2000; Knight, 2006; British Council and DAAD, 2014), and internationalization at home (Soria and Troisi, 2013; Beelen and Jones, 2015). All these studies provide a detailed analysis of the history, trends and current situation of these manifestations of internationalization as a general trend, but they do not problematize the effects of the more complex reality of countries and higher education institutions being simultaneously involved with several such instruments at a time.

Increasingly, the internationalization of higher education has also become a topic of academic research and a number of journals are dedicated to it, such as the SAGE Journal of Studies in International Education, which includes articles that discuss both theoretical and more empirical aspects of internationalization, with a focus on regional, national and institutional levels or the RAABE Internationalization of Higher Education handbook. Another influential and more commentary oriented journal is the International Higher Education (IHE), a

multi-lingual publication of the Center for International Higher Education in Boston, which acts as a sort of summary digest of the main trends and issues of importance in this field.

Other more generalist journals, such as the Taylor and Francis European Journal of Higher Education dedicated special issues to analysis of the influence of international and European processes and norms to higher education reforms in specific regions, such as Central and Eastern Europe.

The European Association for International Education (EAIE) and the International Association of Universities (IAU) have their series of publications, targeting practitioners and institutional leadership interested in the more hands-on aspects of internationalization. It can be noted that internationalization of higher education seems to have gained traction as a niche in the higher education research field, with a growing interest from countries and institutions alike.

2.3 Research on the internationalization of higher education in Romania

As a post-communist transition country in Eastern Europe, Romania is not a major player in the international higher education arena. Yet, despite its relative marginality, several elements make Romania a case with a relatively solid base of studies on the use of international norms in the transformations of the higher education system, as well as specifically on the internationalization of higher education and its components (e.g. mobility).

One such element is the existence of the CEPES UNESCO, founded in 1972, which was mainly tasked with the promotion of international cooperation in Central and Eastern Europe. As part of the activities of CEPES, Florea and Wells (2011) published the first monograph of

Romanian higher education, which included a brief history of the Romanian higher education system (i.e. country profile, historical patterns and post 1990s reform), an outline of the typology of higher education institutions and the Bologna Process reform history, an overview of the governance arrangements within the higher education system, including funding, accreditation, quality assurance and control, as well as an analysis of the data referring to faculty and students – admissions, recruitment, mobility etc.

Several researchers have analyzed the use of international norms in shaping the Romanian higher education system. Cîrstocea (2014) examined the social conditions that enabled the transformations in Romanian higher education to happen and the composition of the groups that contributed to these changes (actors and policy entrepreneurs), as well as the role of international organizations. Curaj et al (2014) looked at the domestic and European transformations leading to the substantive legal reform in Romanian education sector in 2011, while Alexe et al (2015) examined the implementation of the Bologna Process action lines, including internationalization of higher education, both from a legal and substantive perspective. Korca (2000), Damian (2011) and Mihăilescu et al (1994) have provided historical accounts of the international influences of the European Union, the World Bank and the OECD spanning both the pre-Bologna and the Bologna Process periods, while also examining the results of various projects aimed at transforming the higher education system. Dobbins and Knill (2011) and Králiková (2014) looked at the use of international norms in changing the higher education governance policies across a range of Central and Eastern European countries, including Romania. Despite the similar historical backgrounds and post-1990s transition phase, these researchers concluded that the translation of the European Union ‘modernization

agenda', as well as of the Bologna Process into domestic policies, differed greatly between countries in this region, based on pre-existing university models and corresponding path dependency logics.

Dakowska and Harmsen (2014) also comparatively looked at whether the countries in Central and Eastern Europe can be treated as a cohesive group or as distinctive elements in their quest to reshape their higher education sectors, with domestic actors using globalization and internationalization logics to provide legitimacy to various policy proposals. The authors point to the uniqueness of these countries as 'laboratories of reform' in post-authoritarian contexts, by looking at the mediation of European and international norms by national and institutional actors.

Wodak and Fairclough (2010) provide a comparative view on how an internationally significant influence – the Bologna Process – was translated and recontextualized differently in two national settings, Romania and Austria. These authors underlined the difference in the way in which this European reform was understood and thus implemented by national actors, according to the differences in socio-economic and historical contexts.

Romania was the co-chair of the Bologna Process working group dealing with International Openness from 2010 – 2012 and also hosted the Bologna Process Secretariat (as part of the Executive Agency for Higher Education, Research, Development and Innovation Funding – UEFISCDI). In this time, it acted as a nexus of information regarding international cooperation inside the EHEA countries and between the EHEA and other parts of the world. This translated into a modest number of policy oriented studies, reports and research projects, mostly enabled by project grants managed by the Executive Unit for Higher Education,

Research, Development and Innovation Funding (UEFISCDI) or by the Erasmus+ Agency (ANPCDEFP), which assist in depicting a detailed overview of the existing national and institutional efforts related to internationalization of higher education.

Pricopie and Nicolescu (2011) and Deca and Fiț (2015) provide an analysis of the internationalization initiatives and supporting legal norms in the Romanian higher education context, together with an overview of the impact on mobility of students and staff, university partnerships and research performance. The studies developed in the frame of UEFISCDI strategic projects, in cooperation with the International Association of Universities (IAU) in 2013 and 2015 (UEFISCDI 2013; UEFISCDI 2015c) analyzed in depth both national policies and existing legal norms, as well as institutional policies (in the first project for five universities and in the second for 20). Both studies put forward recommendations on how to better support institutional efforts and the main steps forward in order to design a national strategic framework for internationalization.

Some of the institutional reports produced in recent years focused on very specific areas of internationalization, such as the impact of European Union programs that supported the internationalization of higher education (ANPCDEFP & CPE, 2015) on institutional structures and functioning, as well as on their academic staff and students (in terms of mobility, performance, networking etc.).

Another specific area on which UEFISCDI provided a policy report on was that of performance indicators for internationalization at the institutional level (UEFISCDI, 2015b). This study analyzed the various operation indicators that could be used to measure the level of

internationalization at institutional level, based on the existing comparable data at the national level and on their relevance.

Finally, the support structure for implementing a future national policy or strategy on internationalization was analyzed in a UEFISCDI commissioned report, which included potential scenarios for developing an agency tasked with the information and promotion of Romanian higher education abroad (UEFISCDI, 2015a). Three scenarios were put forward - the set-up of a separate higher education information provision and promotion agency (similar to DAAD, British Council or NUFFIC), assigning the responsibility for information and promotion of Romanian higher education abroad to an existing agency (such as the Erasmus+ agency for UEFISCDI; similar to the Estonian model) or setting-up a special department within the Ministry for National Education and Scientific Research tasked with this mission (like in Portugal). The report also included an overview of the functions and needs that such a structure would have to address, regardless of its structure and place in the system.

2.4 Defining and addressing the research gap

Taking into consideration the existing body of research, two main research strands can be observed – research outlining the history of the Romanian higher education reforms and the influence of international norms, as well as research conducted specifically on internationalization of higher education as a process, especially in the last five years, with the explicit goal to prepare a future national policy on higher education. There are few attempts to analyze internationalization as a distinct policy, with its own stages and requiring clarity of

formulation in order to assess implementation or indeed performance, either at the national or institutional level.

The present thesis targets specifically this research gap and analyzes internationalization of higher education in Romania, as well as its rationales and drivers at national and institutional level, as a discrete policy field in a wider higher education policy transformation context. It also looks at an area which was not looked at previously, namely the potential policy misalignments between the national and institutional levels and their impact on achieving the objectives at both levels.

To sum up, this thesis is a study of internationalization of higher education policies, at both the national and institutional level, seeking to understand the policy making process and its characteristics. It does not as such seek to contribute directly to the wider literature on decision-making, but rather is principally intended to contribute to better decision-making at the national level.

The innovative character of the research is that it is conceived as a study of policy and for policy in the still poorly mapped and overly descriptive Romanian higher education policy context, which may then enable an understanding of other similar national cases. It builds on existing scholarship and my own previous work on the influence of international norms on higher education reforms in Romania and on studies on the impact of mobility or research European Union programs. Thus, the internationalization of higher education is looked at both as an international norm diffusion process, and also as a discrete stand-alone policy, with its own drivers and rationales. The contribution of institutional, national and international actors will be analyzed, in order to capture the rationales and vectors behind internationalization

activities and policies. Chapters three, four and five analyze the internationalization policies, both in the national context and the institutional landscape, by using a five university sample, covering the main types of institutions according to their missions as identified in a 2011 classification process. A particular aim of this thesis is to have better insight into how approaches to internationalization cross-cut between the national and institutional level in Romania's case, notwithstanding different drivers and taking into account the different rationales and thus the policy gaps to be expected between them.

The concluding chapter highlights the strengths and weaknesses of the national and institutional policy levels, while drawing some initial policy lessons in relation to the wider regional context.

The entire thesis builds on my previous work on the influence of international norms in the Romanian higher education reforms, as well as on my expertise working on the topic of internationalization of higher education in various projects, addressing both the national policy level, as well as institutional strategic endeavors. The analysis distinguishes itself by looking in-depth at the internationalization policies over the past two and a half decades, as well as by placing them in a wider context. This approach has allowed for moving beyond a simple analysis of policy to being able to put forward a series of recommendations on how to better strategically pursue internationalization strategies and how to avoid unintentional bottle-necks caused by the difference in rationales for pursuing this topic at the national and institutional levels, which is also the original contribution made by my doctoral research.

Chapter 3 - Elements of a theoretical framework and the contribution to the research field

3.1 Introduction

As a study of the internationalization of higher education policies and the characteristics of the associated policy making process in Romania, this thesis relies on a conceptual framework that combines elements of institutional governance theory in higher education and discursive institutionalism, in order to capture the complexity of the national decision-making process, with its multiple actors and their complex interactions influencing policy change. In this endeavor, the internationalization of higher education is looked at both as an international norm diffusion process, and also as a discrete stand-alone policy, with its own drivers and rationales. This chapter therefore aims to provide a framework for understanding internationalization as a policy problem, rooted in a policy process. The first, distinctive subsection of the chapter refers to the incremental shift in the contours that define higher education governance. The second is linked to mapping the policy process and seeing how it is embedded in and linked to emerging models of governance. In this second part, discursive institutionalism, conversely, introduces an ideational element - understanding the constitutive role of ideas, but also the manner in which ideas (norms) can be mobilised by actors to effect change.

3.2 The shifting contours of higher education governance

When trying to analyze higher education policy in general and the internationalization of the sector in particular, one issue becomes particularly relevant – who decides and what influences these decisions. The way in which higher education systems and universities are governed is indeed a decisive factor in different stages of the policy setting, from problem formulation and agenda setting to policy learning.

An increasingly globalized notion of ‘knowledge society’ becomes the dominant discourse, while the state – university relation is increasingly conceptualized as being in a state of flux (Rhoades, 1992). This means that the state increasingly acts as a market regulator, with a change in assumed role – from control to steering of the higher education system, in exchange for increased accountability of higher education institutions and a multiplied set of roles aggregated in ever-diversified mission statements. In this context, various authors warn against focusing primarily on state-university relations in trying to understand higher education systems and policy change. Ferlie et al. (2008) and Musselin (2010) underline the importance of also considering the role of the academic profession, especially in national contexts where the state and the universities share roles in employment and career advancement. In addition, a dual set of forces should be taken into account when looking at system governance: organizational and professional based (Austin and Jones, 2016).

When discussing higher education governance, it becomes critical to also look at it in terms of relationships and interactions between actors and agendas, especially in light of the increased complexity of the field. The shift towards increased institutional autonomy coupled with enhanced public responsibility, the participation of a more diverse set of actors in

decision-making and globalization have all impacted on the traditional hierarchical understandings of governance in this sector.

Shattock (2006) talks about multiple levels of governance, especially in the frame of the global restructuring of higher education systems and societal expectations, which, in turn, influence the relationship between universities, the state and supra-national actors and networks. Rhodes (2007) puts forward four elements of governance: interdependence between organizations (both governments and other actors); a network of members with continuous interaction and exchange of ideas, resources and main goals; interactions based on regulations (and trust); and a significant autonomy from the state (with the latter retaining steering capacities, to varying degrees). This latter point – the role of steering – is an important and potentially productive field in discussing internationalization in Central and Eastern Europe. This is partially due to the heavy role of the state in generating and pushing for policies with macro level implications such as internationalization (Capano, 2011).

A more comprehensive definition of higher education and university governance, also used by the OECD is put forward by Vidovich and Currie (2010: 28):

‘the structures, relationships and processes through which, at both national and institutional levels, policies for tertiary education are developed, implemented and reviewed. Governance comprises a complex web including the legislative framework, the characteristics of institutions and how they relate to the whole system, how money is allocated to the institutions and how they are accountable for the way it is spent, as well as less formal structures and relationships which steer and influence behavior.’

In recent years, several authors dealt with the influences and relationship between wider society, institutional realities, organizational interaction and their reflection in the structure of higher education governance. Scott (2001) introduces a notion of the 'institutional field' – a space that includes a cluster of organizations with similar identities, organizational forms and rules for membership. The governance of universities is, according to Olsen (2007), a mirror image of this institutional field, with its specific traits, as they have evolved through time and by various processes. Internationalization and international actors typically push towards institutional convergence or isomorphism (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983), which is viewed as a survival mechanism to create legitimacy and acceptance in the external environment.

Furthermore, in light of the changing nature of the relationship between universities and society (Neave, 1995) - with universities being expected to be more responsive to the 'external world' (Amaral and Magalhaes, 2002) - the role of the external stakeholders in university governance has grown considerably (Austin & Jones, 2016). This category includes not just governments, but also civil society, international actors and even private organizations. The shift has been seen as an opportunity to restore trust in universities and as a chance to gain access to relevant information and resources to advance the interest of universities. The weight of individual stakeholders in governance, however, is difficult to pin-point in a generalizable theory and is often original and specific to individual nation-states.

3.3 Mapping the policy process in the Romanian context

In order to capture this complex reality of higher education governance in Romania, while highlighting the multiplicity of actors and relationships in analyzing internationalization policies, a five-point star actors' model is used.

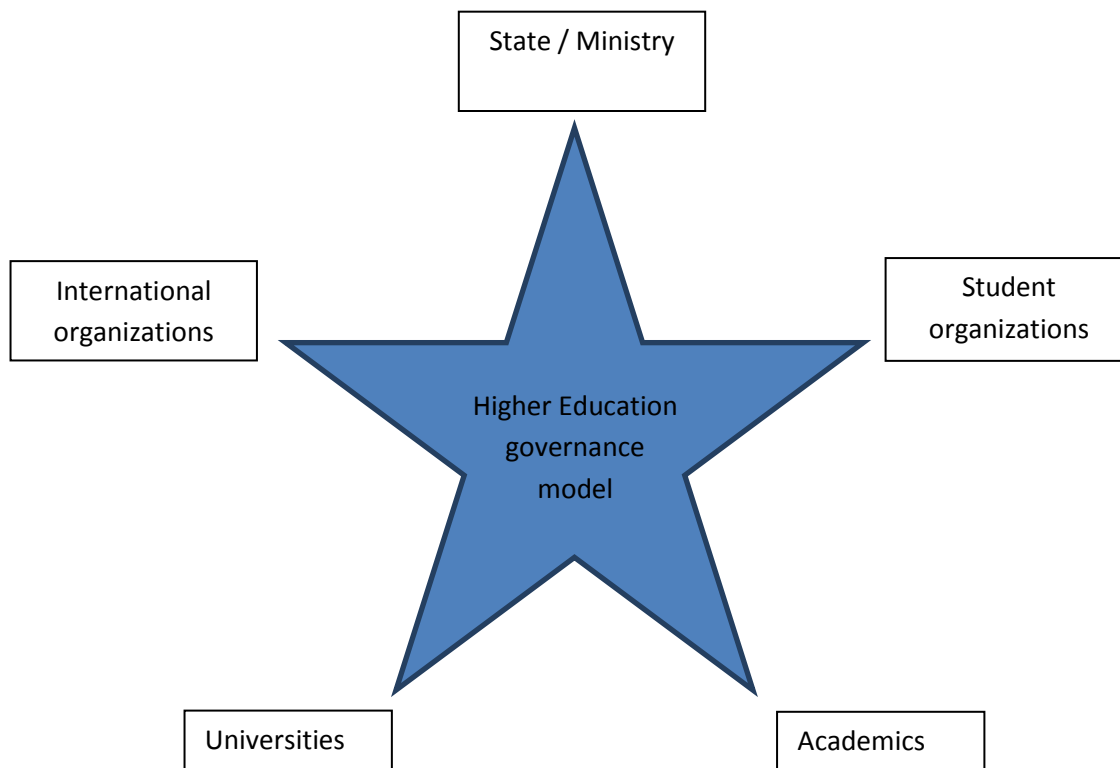


Figure 1– Higher education governance model

The decision-making model developed for the purpose of analyzing the Romanian policy field is based on the Continental European model of higher education system governance, characterized by state centered policies, reduced institutional autonomy, with strong hierarchical elements and powerful academic guilds (Capano, 2011). The strong role of the

government and the academic oligarchy is particularly emphasized by some authors (Braun and Merrien, 1999), especially in light of the double centralization effect caused by the French inspired higher education institutions, as well as the communist legacy in Romania. Such a model was naturally also seen to be a perfect fit for the centralized French higher education system, as argued by Musselin (2009), who uses it in her work on the effects of the Bologna Process on the French institutional setting (the classic 'ministry – universities – academics' triangle).

The five-star point model (Fig. 1) draws upon this Musselin triptych - applicable also to the Romanian system, in light of its common Napoleonian philosophy - while taking into account the recent history of the Romanian higher education system that featured a very prominent role of international organizations in policy changes, as well as a democratization of the sector, with new actors, such as student organizations, coming to the fore.

As demonstrated in earlier work and as detailed in chapter four, students' organizations have a particular relevance as an actor for the diffusion of European norms in the Romanian context, through assuming the role of information provision and as active promoter of the Bologna Process (Deca, 2014). Also, if taking into account the alignment of the Romanian legislative framework with the Bologna Process action line referring to student participation, student organizations may actually be placed in the internal actors category, both at the system level – through the national level federation (ANOSR) and at the university level through the faculty or university level associations.

According to Scott (1998), international organizations such as the World Bank, the OECD, UNESCO, the World Trade Organization and in Romania's case the European

Commission, shape the institutional context of universities at the global level. They legitimate governance arrangements in accordance with globally dominant narratives, such as the need for universities to be better equipped to compete in a global higher education market through 'modernization' processes and the involvement of a wider array of external stakeholders. In the Romanian national context some international organizations such as the World Bank, UNESCO CEPES and the European Commission were more than promoters of international norms, in light of the extended permeability of the Romanian system to international influences and its pro-European attitude. These organizations directly influenced national legislative changes, empowered various actors and funded and even participated in the design of reform programs (Cîrstocea, 2015), which effectively makes them a part of the stakeholder constellation.

The model acts thus as a useful frame of analysis, bringing out the five main actors influencing policy change in the Romanian national and institutional context – the state, mainly through the ministry responsible for higher education, universities, academics, students' associations and international organizations. The complexity of the relationships between those actors, as well as their changing nature, is illustrated through this five-point star model, which also may be conceived as a cat's cradle in this case.

In analyzing the interactions between these actors, as well as their continuously changing influence in shaping and implementing internationalization policies in the Romanian higher education system, various contextual elements will also be analyzed, starting from the assumption that policy consists of inter-related actions occurring in different contexts (context of influence, context of text production, context of practice, context of outcome and context of political strategy) (Bowe et al, 1992; Ball, 1994).

The choice of theoretical underpinning was motivated by the specificities of organizational governance in Romania, which make any attempt of the thesis to embed or link its findings to one single theoretical approach extremely constraining and limitative. The expectation is, from the onset, that commensurability with theoretical findings based largely on Western European and Anglo-Saxon realities will be either limited or construed in a highly particular context with limited potential for further replicability. Existing theoretical frameworks will, however, be used to develop dimensions of analysis for the Romanian policy context as part of a multi-theory approach.

Stakeholder and resource dependency theory are used to analyze the relations between actors and their dynamics, based on interests and need for access to resources, while taking into account their position in the system and their relative capacity. But since actors are 'embedded in ideational structures, which they use according to their interests' (Saurugger, 2013: 898), a third theory - discursive institutionalism - is employed to look at the ideational dimension of the policy process. Ideas or norms are both structuring the policy context, through policy frames, but are also used by actors to push for or resist policy change. The reasons for choosing these three particular theoretical approaches which constitute my adapted framework, specifically designed for analyzing the Romanian policy field, will be detailed further.

The stakeholder theory has the benefit of coherently articulating interests and interactions between those involved and interested in policy change. It relies on the importance of stakeholders for any organization, defined as 'any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization's objectives' (Freeman, 1984:46).

The identification of internal and external stakeholders that can impact negatively or positively the organization, as well as of their interests, becomes a key concern for institutional leaders. In the Romanian context, this governance model is extremely useful, given the complex actor landscape, situated in a state of flux in the post 1990 transition.

At the global level, the influence of external stakeholders in the field of higher education has significantly increased in recent decades, together with the shift in dominant discourse – from the conviction that the academia had to distance itself from society in order to fulfil its role to a call for pro-active involvement in society and an expansion of the classic research and teaching mission (the Humboldtian model) to the need for a third mission (Neave, 1995). Thus, external stakeholders are bound to have a greater influence in the affairs of the academia (Amaral and Magalhaes, 2002), especially if a university or a higher education system seeks to have societal support.

As a variation of institutional theory, resource-dependence theory (RDT) puts an even greater emphasis on the dependency between universities and their resource providers (Pfeffer and Selancik, 2003). Both theories emphasize the interdependence between organizations and their environments, but RDT assumes that universities need to interact and respond to those who control the resources, by shaping actions and decisions according to the nature of this dependence. Thus, RDT focuses on the primary concern with critical survival means, while also looking at environmental rules and regulations, as well as social forces – be it expectations, beliefs or value systems. In this frame, a university or a system can engage in changing or reducing the nature of dependency by actively engaging in shaping their operating environment or by seeking to gain more control within its limits. Organizational leadership plays a key role in

this theoretical framework, with an increased possibility to increase the organizational power, if the leadership is well anchored in the existing influence structures at the system level. In the Romanian case, the role of institutional leaders who are also policy entrepreneurs in the transformation of the higher education system was well documented (Cîrstocea, 2014; Deca, 2014) and thus RDT is suited to analyze these dynamics.

The analysis employed in this thesis is further shaped by elements of discursive institutionalism, necessary for discussing policy change at the national level and the context in which internationalization policies became a priority for national authorities. This theoretical frame put forward by Schmidt (2008) considers institutions both as a given (a context in which actors act) and contingent (a result of actors' actions and thoughts); it provides both a structural dimension (constraining actors) and a constructive dimension (as created and changed by actors) (Deca, 2014). Discourse, in this case, does not just include language or words, but it encompasses all types of communicative social practice. The approach used to analyze internationalization policies and their legitimation by national and institutional actors is a strategic constructivist one, based on the assumption made by Saurugger (2013) that it is important to see how certain ideas are constructed, but also how specific actors make use of them or indeed misuse them to further their goals.

The above mentioned theories for higher education governance draw on various other knowledge strands, such as corporate, non-profit and public governance. Each theory has its own view on the main influence factors and thus, a multi-theory approach can potentially better capture the complexity of academic governance, especially in national settings subject to multiple and competing domestic pressures and external influences, such as the Romanian

case. This particular multi-theory approach was specifically developed for the Romanian policy field, in order to provide a more contextualized governance framework meant to conceive of actor roles and strategies in the Romanian higher education sector.

3.4 Final considerations

The conceptual framework of my doctoral work relies on analyzing the system and institutional level internationalization policies in the Romanian context, as well as their interplay, by using a five-point star model of the policy field, which highlights the multiplicity of actors and acts as a 'cat's cradle' helping to analyze their complex and ever-changing relationships. Stakeholder and resource dependency theory are then employed to articulate the representation of interests, the relative capacities of actors, and their dependencies in relation to one another. The constitutive role of ideas (norms) that can be mobilized by actors to influence policy change and to construct policy frames is also looked at by employing elements of discursive institutionalism.

The thesis also provides an in-depth insight into how various actors in the Romanian higher education system and its universities were part in the shaping and implementation of internationalization policies, in light of their changing interests and position in the national and institutional power structure.

Additionally, the analysis in chapters four, five and six, as well as the concluding chapter, take into account the environmental factors that shape the behavior and strategic role of actors in the development of internationalization policies.

Chapter 4 - Internationalization in the Romanian higher education landscape - policies, rationales, strategies and actors

4.1 Introduction

As a first step in understanding how internationalization policies developed at the national level, as well as in identifying their drivers and mediating factors, this chapter is structured in four sections. Firstly, it introduces the national context and the policy reform stages that the Romanian higher education sector experienced since the 1990s, outlining, at the same time, the way in which the theoretical framework shapes the understanding of the Romanian higher education policy sub-system as a whole. The second section details the post-communist transition, while highlighting the commonalities and the specificities of the Romanian case in relation with other Central and Eastern European countries. The third section analyses Romanian higher education as an object of internationalization, following a general increase in this trend at the global level, but also in close connection with the domestic mediating factors, as well as with the intervention of international norms (the Bologna Process, EU agenda) and actors (World Bank, UNESCO-CEPES, the European Commission). Finally, the concluding section highlights the strengths and weaknesses of the national policy level with a focus on internationalization of higher education, while drawing initial policy lessons in relation to the wider regional context.

4.2 The Romanian policy context

4.2.1 Romania as a privileged site for understanding the higher education internationalization process

Romania, as a transition country from a totalitarian regime, and its higher education system, as a part of wider socio-economic developments, are considered, along with other countries with similar historical legacies in the region, a 'privileged site for understanding the processes of Europeanization and internationalization' (Dakowska and Harmsen, 2015: 5). Its democratization process, its openness towards international influences and the need to catch-up with Europe makes it a fascinating laboratory for understanding the role of internationalization as a distinctive, yet predominant public policy in a national transition phase, which included a reorientation of political priorities and new foreign policy alliances, all with clear implications for a number of related policy fields.

Romania and its higher education landscape have been transformed by two and a half decades of reforms. Since the shift in political regime taking place in December 1989 - from communism to democracy, the Romanian higher education stakeholders and other actors have sought to regain a place in the European and international arenas, as well as identify the relevant changes that would help the country better respond to external pressures.

Economically, Romania faced the pressures that come with the transition between a centrally planned and managed economy to a gradual liberalization towards a market economy. Romania boasted one of the highest growth rates in Europe, reaching 6.5% in 2003-2008. This growth has naturally been coupled with an increase in public expenditures, including on education. Unfortunately, in 2008, the global financial crisis dramatically hit the Romanian

economy. In 2009, the fiscal deficit reached 7.5% of GDP, which prompted the Government at that time to drastically limit public expenditures, cutting all public wages by 25% and canceling most benefits in the public sector. The economy bounced back with steady growth from 2011 onwards, but the public sector recovered slowly and the lack of investment in education or social programs was reflected in the number of students accessing higher education programs, particularly from rural areas (45% of young people live in rural areas, but constitute only 24% of the students, according to the National Institute of Statistics) and poor family backgrounds. The most disadvantaged areas are the North-East and the South-West, with matching results in the Bacalaureate graduation rates (Bacalaureat.edu.ro, 2016). The unemployment rate of people under 35 is 25% (UEFISCDI, 2015).

Economic pressures were accompanied by the need to build a democratic society, as well as to overcome inherent difficulties linked with corruption, inflation, migration, poverty etc. Romania became part of NATO in 2004 and of the European Union in 2007, with an impressive societal support for both strategic choices. In retrospect, one can safely say that Romanian higher education developed while being simultaneously subjected to post-Communist transition effects, Europeanization, as well as wider global trends (European Union, 2015).

In the Romanian context, internationalization of higher education can be regarded as both a lens through which to observe policy change in this sector, but also as a distinct policy concern, especially after 2000, when universities across the world started to regard internationalization as an imperative in their future strategic endeavor's (Sursock, 2015). Supra-national policy processes, such as the Bologna Process or the European Union's Modernization

Agenda were also factors for the rise of the internationalization imperative in academia, coupled with the race for becoming 'world class universities' and better positioning in international rankings. In this sense, internationalization of higher education is analyzed as a policy process, complementing existing studies which primarily looked at specific policy measures which can be associated with internationalization – mobility or the implementation of the Bologna Process - and their impact, but rarely focused on internationalization as a policy process in itself (for more information, see chapter two).

Significant changes in the higher education sector of Central and Eastern European countries following the fall of communism are not unusual, on the contrary (Dakowska and Harmsen, 2015). However, there are elements which make Romania's case unique: the role of international actors, the lack of a strong pre-Communist university tradition to act as a reference point and the interesting public-private mix of higher education provision in the context of the almost exclusive role of the Government as both a policy initiator and mediator.

4.2.2 Understanding the Romanian higher education policy sub-system

The most relevant domestic actors in pushing the internationalization policy agenda are mainly those identified in the five-point star model of the policy field described in chapter three, based on the triptych 'ministry – universities – academics' (Musselin, 2009). In Romania's case this includes the Government (Ministry of Education and a number of buffer agencies – currently UEFISCDI, ARACIS and ANPCDEFP in particular); the universities (represented collectively by the National Rectors' Council); and the academics (mainly represented by the Alma Mater Trade Union, but also by the Ad Astra researchers' representative organization). In

addition, in the Romanian policy context, one national student organization – the National Alliance of Student Organizations in Romania (ANOSR) is also a relevant actor in the reform process (Deca, 2014). This is due both to informal influence that the structure has attained in the policy construction process in higher education, but also due to a fairly extensive level of representation in government agencies and stakeholder consultation mechanisms. Relevant in the Romanian context are also international organizations, which acted as drivers of this agenda, such as the World Bank, the European Commission, the OECD and UNESCO CEPES (mainly in the 1990s). The interactions between those actors and their dynamic character have influenced the way in which the policy making process has developed in Romania, including the way in which international norms were mediated in overall higher education reforms, as well as how internationalization of higher education evolved as a discrete policy process.

Since the Romanian higher education context has historically been influenced by two major centralization influences (the French Napoleonic model and the communist influence) and included a very specific constellation of actors (five point star model), the theoretical framework described in chapter three is geared to help untangle the relations between actors in this unique national setting and to be sensitive of their capacities, positions and interests. The multi-theory approach, which includes stakeholder and resource dependency theory, provides a useful and adapted lens to look at the policy making process in the Romanian transition context, which takes into account the actors', interests, capacities and relations. At the same time, since international norms were used to further domestic interests and legitimize national and institutional higher education reforms, an ideational dimension of the policy

process is studied, by adding discursive institutionalism as a third theory to the multi-faceted approach. Discursive frames both structure the policy process, but are also actively used by actors to push for or resist to policy change.

In earlier work I identified three relevant phases of policy change in relation to relevant legislative changes. The first phase spans from 1990 to 1998 and includes the adoption of the first post – 1989 Law on Education (Law 84/1995), the second corresponds to an increased influence of the Bologna Process, from a reference point among others, to a dominant driver of policy change in the system (1999 – 2007). Finally, the third phase includes the 2008 – 2015 timeframe, in which the debates leading to the Romanian Law on National Education (Law 1/2011) took place. This law still regulates the higher education sector, albeit with a large number of amendments. This last phase also includes the timeframe in which Romania played a prominent role in the Bologna Process, namely the hosting of the Bologna Secretariat (2010 – 2012) and organizing the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) Ministerial Conference and the third Bologna Policy Forum (Deca, 2014). The key moments in the evolution of the Romanian higher education system are summarized in Table 1 below.

Table 1 - Key moments in the evolution of Romanian HE policies

Period	Process
Early 1990's	<p>The emergence of a private university sector and the commencement of massification lead to a rapid expansion of the HE system.</p> <p>Emerging cooperation with international actors (WB, UNESCO-CEPES, European Commission etc.) on policy development.</p>

Period	Process
1995	<p>Post-communist education law based on an Education strategy is adopted.</p> <p>Emergence of buffer agencies for funding (CNFIS) and research (CNCSIS), as governance approaches are changed.</p>
1996	<p>Romania starts taking part in the Socrates program, as part of its candidacy to European Union membership.</p>
1999	<p>Romania joins the Bologna process, initiating a transition to Bologna-compatible structures. The influence of international actors increases amid a need for knowledge acquisition and moves to adapt all policy areas to the EU <i>acquis communautaire</i>.</p>
2005	<p>ARACIS – the Romanian agency for quality assurance sets up an institutional assessment program and the legal framework allowing for alignment with the Bologna Process three cycle model is adopted.</p> <p>In the same year, student protests see the creation of permanent consultation mechanisms for national student unions, thus increasing student participation in the policy making process.</p>
2007	<p>Romania joins the European Union after a lengthy accession process. Participation to European mobility programs is gradually expanded.</p> <p>The <i>Diagnosis of the Educational System in Romania</i> report is released, followed by the National Pact for Education (in 2008), focusing on improving system-wide performance and increasing autonomy.</p>
2008/09	<p>Student numbers peak, followed by rapid declines. Pressure on funding increases for most universities (as both private and public institutions derive the bulk of their income from student numbers), in the context of the financial crisis and the subsequent drastic cuts on public salaries.</p>
2010/12	<p>Romania hosts the Bologna Process Secretariat and organizes the 2012 EHEA Ministerial Conference on 26-27 April in Bucharest</p>
2011	<p>A legally mandated classification system is set in place to determine funding and institutional mission among universities. Significant weight attached to internationalized activities such as cooperative research.</p>

Period	Process
2014/15	<p>A Blueprint for a structure to promote information about the Romanian higher education system is developed as part of UEFISCDI's IEMU project, together with 19 university strategies, creating the first significant policy framework for internationalization. The studyinromania.gov.ro website is launched as a first concrete initiative to promote the Romanian higher education system abroad</p>

Transformations - such as increasing institutional autonomy, allowing for private provision, massification and liberalization of higher education (both in terms of curricula and research) - taking place in Romania in the aftermath of the 1990 regime change have taken place in a much more limited timeframe than in Western higher education system, which meant that the Government had to rely on external legitimation to push some of these quite abrupt changes to the status-quo. This legitimation included policy framing by labelling reforms as essential steps to democratize higher education and re-join the European family, as well as an involvement of international actors (the World Bank, the European Commission, UNESCO CEPES) in the design of the reforms, including preparatory studies aimed to diagnose the system and its needs, but also in their funding (Dobbins, 2011; Dakowska and Harmsen, 2015; Deca, 2014).

Based on recommendations from the World Bank and UNESCO CEPES (Cirstocea, 2014), in the 1990s the Romanian Government initiated policy measures aimed at increasing institutional autonomy, as well as liberalizing the higher education provision. These measures opened the door for a much needed massification of higher education, in a country that was deemed one of the most selective when talking about access to higher education, with less than 10% of the age cohort having the chance to be enrolled in tertiary education programs

during the communist era regimes. The number of students sky-rocketed from around 200,000 in 1990 to around 1 million in 2008, even if in 2015 this number dropped to 500,000 (Ministry of National Education and Scientific Research, 2016). Romania's private higher education sector increased dramatically, partly because of the need to absorb the increasing demand for access, but also due to the legislative reforms made on the basis of policy recommendations of international actors, such as the World Bank, UNESCO – CEPES, the OECD or the European Commission (Deca, 2014).

In the past 25 years Romania has experienced a severe demographic downturn. The Romanian population decreased significantly, from 23.2 million inhabitants in 1990 to around 19.8 million in 2015. Accordingly, the number of pupils is estimated to have decreased by 40% between 2005 and 2015, creating an increased pressure for change at all levels of education in order to contribute to addressing the challenges of an ever decreasing active population and a strong migratory trend following the accession to the European Union.

In the 2014-2015 academic year, Romania's higher education system included 101 higher education institutions (56 public and 45 private), which hosted 583 faculties. 70% of the total number of faculties is situated within public higher education institutions. The evolution of the number of higher education institutions in 1990 – 2014 is shown in figure 2 below, based on National Institute of Statistics (NIS) data.

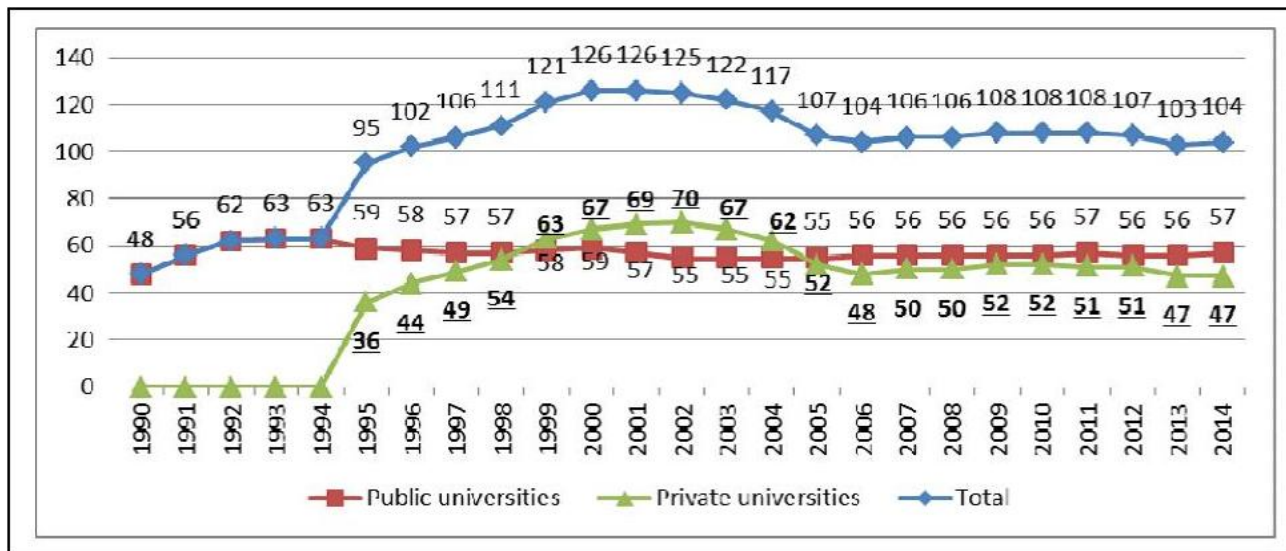


Figure 2 - The evolution of the number of higher education institutions in 1990 – 2014

The number of higher education institutions more than doubled in a decade (1990-2000), with an obvious diversification on the public/ private axis. Private higher education institutions mostly delivered programs that required low levels of investment in research or lab facilities, such as social sciences and humanities. This development was motivated by the increased demand for higher education and the high social status of those who had attained a university diploma in a previously highly selective system. The government’s answer to the increasing demands was both a liberalization of the sector, by allowing private higher education institutions to mushroom with little monitoring systems in place, as well as allowing public higher education institutions to charge fees for the places that were not subsidized by the state. This increased the competition for public and private resources, in which the institutional leadership had a key role to secure enough organizational influence and personal power in relation to the government, as the main authority distributing public funds and deciding on the legal requirements to be able to attract private sources of funding.

In terms of the territorial spread, the largest academic center in Romania is Bucharest, which hosts around one quarter of the students enrolled in public universities and more than half of the students in the private sector. Geographically, there is a balanced spread of higher education institutions on the national territory, with 38 out of the existing 43 counties (județe) having at least one university (Curaj et. al, 2014).

In 2014/2015, 541,700 students were enrolled in tertiary education in Romania, three quarters in Bachelor studies, 20% in Master studies and only 3% in doctoral programs. Over 85% of the students were enrolled in public higher education institutions (Ministry of National Education and Scientific Research, 2016). These numbers have seen a decrease since 2008 for a number of factors, which include the demographic downturn, a drop in the success rate of the Bacalaureate exam since 2012 and migration to other EU countries for work and study purposes. In addition, according to Eurostat data (Ec.europa.eu, 2016), the risk of poverty and social exclusion in Romania is among the highest in Europe – 51% of 0-17 years old children are at risk, which dramatically influences the financial ability of students from lower social-economic backgrounds to access higher education. The World Bank (2011) also points out that there is a striking difference between graduation rates of young people from the poorest family backgrounds (3.8%) and those from the quintile with the most affluent families (52.4%).

A more dramatic decrease has been registered in the graduation rates following Bachelor studies in past years, with only one third of the age cohort graduating on time. This graduation rate influences both employability chances, as well as progress to higher tertiary education levels. Even with a significant progress in higher education attainment (from 13.9% in 2007 to 25% in 2015), Romania is very far from the EU target of 40% from the 30-34 age cohort

with higher education attainment. The national target assumed for 2020 by Romania through the National Reform Plan 2011-2013 is 26.7%, the second smallest in the EU (Ministry of National Education and Scientific Research, 2016).

While the number of students has been falling in the past few years, it is important to note that greater international openness has seen an ever increasing number of Romanian students opting for studies abroad. UNESCO UIS data indicate that the number of Romanian students registered domestically peaked in 2008, while some 22,686 Romanian nationals were registered to study abroad, a little over 2% of total enrollment. As of 2014, this number had defied domestic trends and swelled to 33,259, over 6% of total tertiary level enrollments for Romanian nationals.

There is some evidence that Romanian universities have been somewhat successful in attracting more international students. UNESCO data indicate that after years of falling or stagnant enrollment among foreign students, a clear growth trajectory emerged after 2010. While in 2007 just 1% of students were foreign citizens, this share rose to over 4% by 2015, with Moldovans leading by far as the top incoming nationality (UIES, 2017). It is important to notice, however, that in every single year the deficit between incoming and outgoing student numbers has been equivalent to roughly 1-2% of the total registered domestic student population.

Table 2 - Incoming and outgoing mobility flows. Data source: UIS, 2017

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Incoming	9383	13857	10372	13459	16075	17219	21561	23559	23073
Outgoing	22314	22686	23674	25631	28690	31832	32552	33259	32347
Balance	-12931	-8829	-13302	-12172	-12615	-14613	-10991	-9700	-9274

The above mentioned evolution means that Romanian universities, which are still structured and staffed with a much larger student cohort in mind, are pressured to recruit more students. Internationalization of higher education is seen as the main solution to their sustainability problem, especially for universities that already had strong ties with foreign partners, with a number of universities indicating this as a future priority and an area of strategic investment (UEFISCDI, 2015c; Interview 8). The UNESCO UIS (2017) numbers could be indicative of some success, though the numbers for student migration flows are still deep in the red in the case of Romania.

While still a new policy area, the commitment for the internationalization of the Romanian higher education system is increasingly reflected both in the general legislative framework, if one looks at the arguments on which various education related laws were submitted for parliamentary adoption (see for example the laws and government decisions related to the set-up of the national quality assurance agency – ARACIS), but also in the management plans of higher education institutions' leaders, as well as in the mission statements of higher education institutions themselves. However, only 4-5 Romanian universities have a significant presence in international rankings and the presence of international staff and students in academic communities is rather modest (UEFISCDI, 2015), which creates a difficult starting point and partially explains why Romanian universities have failed to attract a number of students at least equivalent to those opting to study abroad.

To date, Romania still lacks a comprehensive national policy on internationalization of higher education, which would include priorities, responsible bodies and appropriate funding. In other words, internationalization of higher education in Romania never made it to the policy

formulation stage, despite its discursive importance and the various projects and activities undertaken at both national and university levels. In recent years, concrete steps have been made in this direction. A more detailed overview of these developments and their potential for contributing to future strategic endeavors will be presented in the third and fourth section of this chapter.

4.3 Post-communist transition (1990 – 1998)

This initial reform stage for the Romanian higher education system is extremely relevant for analyzing the transition of the higher education sector, due to the permeability of the policy environment to international influences and models in the search for reform directions. However, international norms were still mediated by both domestic and international actors, in order to fit the existing 'policy mood' (Wirth and Kingdon, 1985), characterized by opening of the system to wider audiences and by a process of isomorphism with what was seen as European and modern (Dobbins, 2008).

The 1990s constituted the first wave of democratization in higher education: with former state colleges being transformed into universities, while more public and private institutions were set-up as not for profit entities (using an old 1924 Law of Foundations, in the absence of a coherent legislative framework) (Damian, 2011: 59). Also, reforms consisted of 'imminent and more superficial transformations' (Bîrzea, 1997: 322), addressing issues of immediate political attention, such as the reform of the curricula content - perhaps the most anecdotal example being the shift from communist ideology to democracy as subject matters in social sciences.

The first post-communist Law on Education was adopted by the Romanian Parliament in 1995 (Law 84/1995), following a three-year debate (1992-1995). The government used recommendations coming from international actors (such as the World Bank) and examples of policies from well-established higher education systems (the French system for research and the German system for professional education) to legitimize the new law and convince a relatively reluctant parliament to change the elitist model of higher education.

The 1995 Law was based on a 'Strategy' for the transformation of Romanian universities (Eisemon et al., 1995), which was developed by a group of 'reformers' (Cîrstocea, 2014) and in consultation with university leaders, with the help of a 1991 contracted World Bank loan (the so-called Japan Grant Facility for Human Resources Development). This loan was managed by UNESCO-CEPES, a regional UNESCO office mainly tasked to build capacity in Eastern Europe and act as a broker of ideas for the internationalization of the higher education sector in this part of the world. The narrative linked to re-joining the European mainstream was instrumental in the choice of the models to follow (Deca, 2014). It is perhaps relevant that Romania did not revert to pre-communist models of universities, as did other Central and Eastern European states with a more established academic tradition and more solid links to the Humboldtian model (Dakowska, 2014; Dobbins, 2011). The government's search for existing European or international models that could be contextualized in the Romanian reform was probably influenced by the pre-communist predominance of the centralized Napoleonic model in the academic field (Dobbins and Knill, 2009), as well as by the experience and views of the policy entrepreneurs that were both socialized in Anglo-Saxon university environments and involved in projects funded by international actors such as the World Bank, which promoted an

entrepreneurial model of university (Clark, 1998). These policy entrepreneurs were in a position to influence the changes in policy and legal norms in the national context at different points in time and represent a quite cohesive group, many of them being prominent sociologists (Cîrstocea, 2014).

In addition to the first post-communist comprehensive Law on Education, the policy process in this first 1990s transition phase reveals the influence of several international actors over the Ministry of Education, as the main proposer of policy and legislative initiatives. It is to be noted that this particular ministry had a high leadership turnover. In the past 25 years, Romania exchanged 19 ministers of education (with one minister having three separate mandates in 2000, 2008 and 2012). The average duration of a ministerial mandate is around 15 months, which meant that political instability affected the capacity of the ministry to maintain a strategic long-term policy interest, despite the centralized nature of the higher education system in Romania.

At the time, UNESCO-CEPES developed a comprehensive study – ‘The White Paper of Higher Education in Romania’ (Eisemon et al, 1995). This study proposed a series of policy measures, some of them quite advanced for their time. One such example is the set-up in 1993 of the first quality assurance body in the region - the National Council for Academic Evaluation and Accreditation (CNEEA), via Law 88/1993, which was the first law passed after the 1989 events and referred to the accreditation of higher education institutions and the recognition of diplomas. CNEEA was tasked with ‘putting some order’ in the expanding private higher education sector which flourished in the confusing post-revolution years (Mihăilescu, 2007: 249). Some authors saw this as a starting point in pushing Eastern European universities

towards market logics (Tomusk, 2004:26). Also, the pre-1995 Law Strategy foresaw the need to decentralize decision-making in higher education, funding diversification, structuring a competitive framework for public funding, based on quality indicators.

The reform of the higher education sector was supported by the HER-RO9601 project. This project was negotiated in 1994/1995 and was co-funded by the World Bank, the European Union through the PHARE program and the Romanian Government. The project had three main objectives: the development of managerial skills and competencies at university level, the development of short-term university education and distance learning and the development of post-graduate studies. The project started in 1998 and ended in 2001 (Korka, 2000).

In this spirit and based on British influences regarding buffer agencies, two institutions were set-up in those early reform years – CNFIS (the National Council for Higher Education Funding) and CNCSIS (the National Council of Research within Higher Education). The members of these two buffer organizations were proposed by universities and appointed by the minister (Cîrstocea, 2014). CNFIS put forward a new method of university financing, based on the number of students enrolled, the type of program and the weighted cost of the available study domain. Progressively, performance and quality indicators were introduced, though never making significant progress in funding universities according to clear national priorities or to measurable performance (Interview 4; Korka, 2000). CNCSIS set-up a system of research application evaluations based on peer-review. The model was imported from the European Science Foundation and benefited from World Bank support. A total of 937 projects were funded in line with objectives II and III of the ‘HER-RO 9601’ project, which supported chairs and new programs in social sciences, management, gender studies and other areas which were

previously not included in the university offer. The research priorities were stable, since they were based on already agreed objectives in the frame of the project. Remarkably, these two institutions had very stable leadership (the second director of CNCSIS had a 14 year mandate and the founding director of CNFIS had an eight year mandate, followed by his appointment as honorary president). The stability in the leadership of these intermediary bodies and their financial support by international donors made them very influential in shaping public policies in higher education.

In this context, the Ministry of Education (in its different shapes and scopes in the 1990-1999 timeframe), CNEEA, CNFIS and CNCSIS represented the main actors which initiated policy change and mediated international norms. As mentioned before, individual experts acted as policy entrepreneurs and held different positions in the administration. Their socialization in external academic contexts (mostly the US, the UK and France), their disciplinary background (most of them were sociologists, but representatives of the hard sciences were also included in this group) and their international networking capital made them instrumental in the 'translation' of international trends and models in Romanian higher education policy (Králiková, 2014; Dobbins, 2008).

As documented by various authors (Cîrstocea, 2014; Curaj et al., 2004; Deca, 2014), the Government reform priorities were influenced quite significantly by the World Bank (Interview 4), in light of its presence through financial and technical assistance in a transition period. The role of the World Bank in Romania is still an important one, despite the 25 years of educational reform. During the 1990s, this institution was the main funder of reforms in developing

countries, with a main priority towards the development of human capital, which received increasing budgets from the 1970s onwards.

Romania contacted World Bank representatives in the 1990s to seek technical assistance in a number of policy sectors, such as social protection, pensions, health and education (Curaj et al., 2004: 20). Education was chosen probably due to its importance in increasing the number of trained specialists that could contribute to the transition from a centralized economy to a liberalized and competitive market-economic sector. The World Bank focus was on building a flexible training system, ensuring the employability of the workforce in an ever changing labor market, as well as the development of disciplines underdeveloped during the communist regime (e.g. social sciences and humanities). In order to support these changes, an entrepreneurial model of university (Clark, 1998) was supported, which would allow Romanian universities to be more competitive in the globalized higher education market.

At the beginning of the 1990s, an independent evaluation of the Romanian education system was conducted by the World Bank, who drafted and presented a confidential report to the Education Committee of the Romanian Parliament in December 1992 (Deca, 2014). In this report, the international organization made the case for a professionalization of the university management, as well as a reform of the funding system with a view to an increase in private funding and introducing student loans (World Bank, 2008), based on the assumption that free higher education is untenable in the Romanian context (Romanian Parliament, 1995). The role of the World Bank is still significant in the Romanian higher education debates – a telling sign is the contract for technical assistance initiated by the Romanian Government for developing and monitoring several strategies, including the Strategy for Higher Education, a pre-condition for

accessing European Union structural funds for the 2014-2020 financing exercise. The importance of the World Bank as an actor in policy reform, implementation and monitoring in Romania is further demonstrated by the fact that Romania is the Bank's biggest client on technical assistance services, with 26 agreements to provide such services concluded in 2007 – 2013 on areas such as social inclusion and reducing poverty, agriculture, climate change, competitiveness policies, education, Roma integration, transport and urban planning, as well as overall capacity building. In January 2016 a new framework agreement was signed with the World Bank, which allows the continuation of technical assistance services until 2020 (Romanian Government, 2016).

The European Union contributed to the reform process in the 1990s, by co-funding large structural projects and via the TEMPUS program (Deca, 2014). Romanian higher education institutions cooperated significantly with French counterparts in the frame of the TEMPUS program - 176 out of the total of 267 Romanian Joint European Projects were developed in partnership (Jongsma, 2002).

In the 1990s, the role of non-governmental higher education actors in the policy making process was proportional to the level of democratic maturity of the country. Thus, the only strong opposition to Law 84/1995 came from students and student associations - a large street protest with over 100,000 participants was organized by student organizations in October 2005, spanning across the main university cities. This massive public demonstration was motivated by the cuts in public funding of higher education brought by Law 84/2005, the lack of student support services, as well as the perceived low quality of higher education programs (Interviews 6, 7).

In this first phase of transition, international norms were mainly used by the Government, who acted as both policy initiator and a mediator of the international norms in domestic debates. In this sense, the Ministry of Education benefitted from the recommendations by international actors and the general pro-European attitude in Romania as a legitimizing force for reform.

The social pressure for more places at higher education institutions, as well as for relevance of the diplomas made the Government more open to the recommendations put forward by policy entrepreneurs or by international organizations, especially since these recommendations also came with financial support, technical assistance and capacity building initiatives. However, these international influences were not taken without a grain of salt – the Government had to negotiate the reforms and the provisions of Law 84/1995 with representatives of the hard sciences disciplines, which retained a historical power in the system, as well as with representatives of the university leadership and student representatives.

Romania is not unique in its condensed transition to a more autonomous, privatized and massified system of higher education. Similar processes of change in a restricted timeframe took place in other Central and Eastern European countries, in many cases influenced, to varying degrees, by European and international institutions (Králiková, 2015; Dobbins, 2014; Dakowska and Harmsen, 2015). However, there are certain commonalities and specificities that identify Romania in the region. One such specificity is the number of students attending private higher education institutions, which increased dramatically from 0 in 1990 to around 350,000 in 2008 (when the total number of students enrolled in Romanian universities was almost 1

million), only to drop to under 100,000 in 2014 (65,893 in the academic year 2014/2015). The percentage of students attending private higher education institutions dropped from over 40% before 2010 (which placed Romania closer to countries such as Poland and Estonia) to around 16% in 2014/2015 (which places Romania closer to Hungary or Slovenia). In this trend Romania was initially closer to the US or UK tertiary systems than to Western European ones, with a clear shift in recent years, mainly due to migration and demography, but also due to a decrease in the success rate at the Bacalaureate exam (following various anti-fraud measures being introduced).

The framing of the policy change discourse was similar for countries in the region – the democratization imperative, especially after the fall of the Iron Curtain, was mixed with the desire to join the European Union. Romania however experienced a very interesting strengthening of that discourse. The government used the EU pre-accession efforts and the general perception of Romania still being situated at the periphery of the European Higher Education Area to push for what it deemed as needed domestic reforms. As an expert representing Romania in the Bologna Follow-Up Group remarked:

‘We couldn’t afford to take any other course of action. Perhaps other countries, like France, could have said no if they so wished, but this was not an option for Romania at the time’ (Interview 3)

This finding is similar to those made in other post-communist candidate members to the European Union. The double pressure from being countries in transition and EU applicants made them much more open to external influence and to a normative understanding, as well as

use, of the Bologna Process reforms as part of the EU *acquis communautaire* (Dakowska, 2014; Deca, 2014).

The international organizations were active in a number of Central and Eastern European countries, but to varying degrees. In Romania the presence of UNESCO-CEPES and the strong involvement of the World Bank are distinct features, which are to be found to a lesser extent in other cases (such as Poland or Hungary).

Romania also stands out in terms of the actors which played a significant role in the higher education reform process in the 1990s. As opposed to Poland or the Czech Republic, where the Rectors' Conference was a powerful player (Dakowska, 2014), Romania had a more influential group of policy entrepreneurs, working closely with representatives of international organizations and having multiple hats in academic and political environments, as well as a more powerful student movement that reacted to the first major Law on Education in Romania. This distinct configuration of five main actors, included in the five point star theoretical model used for analyzing the Romanian policy context, makes this a very interesting case in terms of how internationalization trends were used and mediated in the domestic context. The relations between these actors have evolved, with frequent cases of multiple hats being worn by influential policy entrepreneurs – such as holding a leadership position in an international body, then contributing as a public official to drafting of legislation, while at the same time retaining a leadership position in one of the biggest universities (Interview 4). This gave organizational power to institutions able to attract and retain such policy entrepreneurs, thus enabling them to navigate the complex transition and ensure support and resources for their own priorities.

The five point star model thus also acts as a cat's cradle, by capturing these complex and dynamic inter-actor relations.

To sum up, Romania's distinct profile in Central and Eastern Europe, which encompasses both similarities with other countries in the region, as well as distinctive features, significantly influenced the process of internationalization of its higher education system. If the first decade of transition was characterized by a significant systemic permeability to international models based on the need to reform a previously centralized and elitist model specifically geared for a particular political and economic context, the next decade will be concerned with internationalization as a separate policy area, with an interesting shift in strategically using international trends by a wider array of higher education stakeholders.

4.4 The evolution of internationalization of higher education as a policy process in the Romanian context (2000 – 2015)

The third section of this chapter will look at the evolution of the Romanian higher education reforms in the 2000 – 2015 timeframe, with a focus on internationalization of higher education as a policy process, which evolved as the context became more and more influenced by general Europeanisation and globalization trends. Romania becomes an real object of internationalization, due to the high permeability to international norms of the higher education system, but these norms are mediated by various factors, which can be categorized broadly under the general headings of 'structures', 'norms' and 'actors' (Dakowska and Harmsen, 2014). Special attention will be paid to the internationalization drivers, as well as to the difference between policy intentions and the results of the adopted policy measures.

4.4.1 Higher education reforms in the context of the Bologna Process (1999 – 2007)

After the signing of the Bologna Declaration in 1999, the ministry used the Bologna Process as a larger European vehicle for domestic reform, legally framed by the laws adopted in 2004 – 2006 which focused on changing the structure of Romanian higher education in order to ensure compatibility with the ‘European model’. Thus, a three cycle structure was introduced, with a Bachelor level ranging from 180-240 ECTS, as well as a Master with 60-120 ECTS credit points (a 300 ECTS requirement in order to graduate the Master level was also part of the Law). The Diploma Supplement and the use of ECTS credits not only for transfer, but also for accumulation were also part of this Bologna Process compatibility legislative package.

When the then Minister of Education, Mircea Miclea, made public a report regarding the state of higher education in Romania, the Bologna Process started to be used as a legitimization for internal reforms. As the Minister himself underlined:

‘The Bologna Process in Romania was an opportunity to reform higher education, which was a more conservative part of the education sector’ (Ministry of Education and Research, 2005)

This came on top of an already solid reform agenda promoted by the previous Education Minister, Andrei Marga, which entailed curricular and structural changes, as well as a push towards more effective governance arrangements (Deca, 2014).

Even though the National Rectors’ Conference (CNR) did not agree with the split of the previous long Bachelor model, their resistance was not openly expressed or publicly debated. In addition, the Bologna Process was deemed by academic staff members to affect only the

recognition of diplomas, at least in the initial stages, which prompted trade unions to show little interest in the early implementation years (Interview 5). This meant that there was no real debate on the purpose of the Bologna Process agenda within academic communities or with the general public.

Besides the structural reforms and following the 2005 Bologna Process Ministerial Conference in Bergen, the Romanian Government decided to establish the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ARACIS), as an independent institution which would replace CNEEA. A legal pre-condition to the existence of ARACIS was introduced by Law 97/2006 on Quality Assurance - namely the need for ARACIS to be listed in the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR). Paradoxically, at the time the law was passed, EQAR was not yet in operation. It seems that the need for legitimation of a national agency for quality control was so great that the external reference point was crucial, even if the European Register had not yet proven its capacity to act as a clearing house for QA agencies across the EHEA. In a system with an abrupt increase in the number of public and private higher education institutions, with the support of the parliament, the government felt it needed external legitimation for any institution asked to ensure minimum standards in higher education.

At the same time, the large-scale HER-RO 9601 project was nearing its end and the question of sustainability was posed for newly created structures, such as CNFIS and CNCSIS. Therefore, a new structure was created – the Executive Unit for Higher Education, Research and Funding (UEFISCSU), later transformed into the Executive Unit for Higher Education, Research, Development and Innovation Funding (UEFISCDI). This structure would take over the

Secretariats of CNFIS and CNCSIS, thus ensuring their sustainability, as well as manage various research funding public streams, according to a mandate given by the National Authority for Scientific Research (ANCS) (Cîrstocea, 2014).

Stakeholders which were very vocal in other countries (Poland, Germany, Italy etc.), such as the National Rectors' Council or the teachers' trade union, had a modest resistance to the structural reforms (Interviews 3 and 5). This was partly due to the way in which the government used the Bologna Process context as a vehicle for internationalization. The official discourse was rather centered on a negative legitimation strategy, with repeated arguments coming from Ministry officials underlining the unwanted effects of not complying with the Bologna agenda in order to solve the perceived crucial problem of the Romanian higher education system – the mismatch between the outcomes of the system and the demands of the labor market (Wodak and Fairclough, 2010: 34).

Even with the relative lack of public debate in academic circles, one particular actor made strategic use of the window of opportunity provided by the Bologna Process - the National Alliance of Students' Organizations in Romania (ANOSR). ANOSR developed national campaigns to inform academic communities about the European agenda in an accessible way - through the 'Bologna Weeks in Universities' project and several publications, such as 'The Bologna Guide' (ANOSR, 2006a) and the 'Bologna Black Book' (ANOSR, 2006b). The latter publication pointed to instances of perceived misuse of the Bologna Process action lines by universities in the attempt to further domestic goals and appear 'Bologna compliant'. Both the campaign and the publications asked for more student involvement in decision-making, at both system and institutional level, based on the Bologna Process assumption that students should

be treated as 'partners' in the reform processes. ANOSR further criticized the manner in which the Bologna Process was communicated (exclusively top-down), as well as understood and implemented at institutional level (Interview 1, 2, 4, 6 and 7). As a result, students were guaranteed participation in ARACIS quality assurance external reviews at institutional level and within the ARACIS Council.

It can thus be argued that ANOSR strategically pursued its interests by using the Bologna Process as a legitimization element for the changes they wanted in the system and as a means to further establish themselves as a relevant actor. ANOSR also acted as a mediator of the Bologna Process goals in the Romanian landscape, through its information campaigns and as a member of the European Students' Union (ESU), the representative actor for students at the European level. As underlined by a former Ministry official:

'At the national level, a coalition of government and student representatives can be identified at the time in relation to the support for Bologna Process motivated reforms, which was in opposition with the National Rectors' Council and part of the professoriate.' (Interview 2)

Based on the policy reforms and the participation of the various actors, the 1999-2007 stage in the Romanian higher education transition was shaped by top-down measures of the government, using the Bologna Process and the need for internationalization of higher education as the narratives for why change is essential. Structural reforms were branded as 'mandatory pre-accession European measures', after the Cardiff European Council Meeting (June 1998), when Romania began the pre-accession procedures. The dossier on 'Education, training and youth' was among the first completed and sent to the European Commission. The

main argument put forward by Romania to the European Commission in order to justify its convergence with European Union policies was the signing and subsequent implementation of the reforms mentioned within the Bologna Declaration (Korka, 2002: 76).

4.4.2 The post-Bologna Process phase: between the rankings race and equity concerns

Following Romania's accession to the EU and the perceived success of aligning the structural arrangements (ECTS, Diploma Supplement, the three cycle system, quality assurance and the qualifications framework) to the Bologna Process commitments, the reference point shifted from Europe (the Bologna Process) to a more global outlook, based on competition imperatives - the EU Modernization agenda, rankings and the 'world class university' (Erkkilä, 2014). The lack of performance, be it in primary and secondary education (based on PISA evaluations) or in higher education and research (Shanghai, Times Higher Education World University Ranking – THES - and other international rankings) became the main argument for reform.

At the same time, higher education institutions started to defend their interests and resources directly in the political arena, through the political positions and influence of the academic community members. Numerous cases of professors – politicians – university leaders – policy entrepreneurs have been documented both in the private and public university sphere, with a large number of Romanian parliament members being employed in and even leading Romanian universities (Udrescu, 2011). Any reform proposal would thus be filtered in parliamentary debates through the direct interest of the universities represented in both chambers of the parliament, as well as in the parliamentary committees responsible for

education. In light of their sense of belonging, several interest groups are visible – the group protecting the interest of technical universities, led by representatives of the Politechnica University in Bucharest; a second group defending the interests of private universities; and a third group representing comprehensive and research intensive universities (Interview 9). The Romanian Parliament thus became an arena for universities to directly push for domestic interests, while maintaining a minimal involvement in public higher education debates (Interview 7).

The political importance of education and research agendas increased significantly after the 2009 Presidential elections. The Romanian President set-up a Presidential Commission for analysis and policy making in education and research, in the run-up to the presidential campaign. The Commission drafted a report called ‘Diagnosis of the Educational System in Romania’ in 2007 (Romanian Presidency, 2007) and a National Pact for Education, which was signed in 2008 by all political parties and the major stakeholders (Romanian Presidency, 2008). Based on international comparisons regarding the performance of the Romanian education and research sectors in a global environment, the Pact included a series of priorities for higher education that focused on giving full autonomy to universities in managing human resources and on international evaluations for performance in both education and research sectors, as well as the introduction of student loans. The Pact was subsequently developed into a strategy. This emphasized increasing the performance of Romanian pupils in international tests (PISA; PIRLS, TIMSS), so as to situate Romania among top 10 countries in the world. It also set three objectives for the higher education sector: to have three universities among the best 500

universities in the world; to increase the research outputs by a factor of five and to triple Romania's innovation index score, in order to achieve the EU average.

On 6 January 2011, the most recent Romanian Law on Education (Law 1/2011) was adopted. The Government assumed political responsibility for this piece of legislation and stopped the normal Parliamentary adoption procedure, claiming the law would have departed too much from the provisions agreed in the National Pact, due to the interference of political interests of the opposition, who mainly opposed the key provisions of the law referring to competitive mechanisms for public funding (based on a classification of universities and an hierachisation of the study programs) and for academic career advancement.

Even with the official launch of the European Higher Education Area in 2010 and the hosting of the Bologna Secretariat in Romania in 2010-2012⁷, together with taking over the role of EHEA Vice-Chair and hosting the Bucharest Ministerial Conference, there was little attention given to the EHEA agenda in the Romanian Government's official motivation for Law 1/2011. The Bologna Process is almost solely mentioned in relation to the European Qualifications Framework, thus becoming primarily an instrument for free movement in the European Union. However, the formal motivation for the adoption of the Law referenced other international rationales mainly linked to competitiveness, such as poor performances against the EU benchmarks,⁸ PISA and Shanghai ranking results, as well as OECD recommendations.⁹ (Deca, 2014)

⁷ The Bologna Secretariat was set-up as a department within UEFISCDI, which was already seen as one of the most experienced public agencies in managing EU funded projects.

⁸ Eg.: Romania's early drop-out rate was at 23.6% as opposed to the EU average of 14.9%, the inclusion of adults within lifelong learning programs was at 1.6% compared to the EU average of 10.8% (see <http://www.cdep.ro/proiecte/2010/500/80/7/em587.pdf>, pp. 4-8), accessed at 22.07.2014

⁹ <http://www.cdep.ro/proiecte/2010/500/80/7/em587.pdf>, accessed at 22.07.2014

Law 1/2011 suffered a similar fate to that of the 1995 legal framework, namely the successive amendment through Government Emergency Ordinances¹⁰, after the change of parties in Government. After the fall of the Government which initiated this legislation in 2012 and by the end of 2015, almost 200 articles of the law were changed or erased, which greatly affected its coherence, as well as the predictability of the system. Most of the changes to the Law were geared to 'dilute' some of its most controversial provisions and were initiated by Ministers which were Rectors at the time of the adoption of Law 1/ 2011 and supported by most of the Members of Parliament. The Head of the Presidential Commission in 2007-2008, who was also a Minister of Education in 2004-2005, called these successive changes a 'restoration'¹¹ of the status quo ante. None of the ambitious goals set by the 2008 Strategy and the Pact for Education in relation to Romania's competitiveness were achieved, though there is no official evaluation to document this.

In the 2000-2015 timeframe, even if the Government remains the main proposer and mediator of international norms for domestic reform, other actors also used their power, international networks, as well as European reference points or reports done by international organizations to legitimize their positions. The National Rectors' Conference used the Bologna Process to justify its opposition to a change in the structure of doctoral education foreseen in Law 1/2011, as well as to demand more university autonomy. Similarly, students made use of the increased focus of the EU Education and Training agenda on equity in higher education to argue for more public financial support for students, as well as to continue to claim a seat at the

¹⁰ Government Emergency Ordinances (OUG in Romanian) are Government decisions which can be passed for matters of immediate urgency and have the power of a law, until the Parliament either adopts or rejects them as laws.

¹¹ <http://www.revista22.ro/pericolul-restauratiei-n-mare-masura-ni-se-datoreaza-si-noua-15313.html>

table, based on the partnership established by the Bologna Process between higher education stakeholders (Deca, 2014).

In 2011, a functional audit of the tertiary sector in Romania, developed by the World Bank and conducted at the request of the government, emphasized the importance of UEFISCDI in the overall management of the system and called for an increase in its resources (World Bank, 2011). UEFISCDI had already acted as a policy advice body, by managing a series of strategic projects aimed at the development of studies and analysis in order to support policy decisions, with a wide participation from Romanian higher education institutions and led by important figures in the management of the higher education sector in the transition years. The importance of the institution in the higher education and research sectors was also recognized by the European Commission in 2015, in the context of an attempt by a group of parliamentarians to reduce its size and importance to what it was before 2010. At that time, the European Commission called UEFISCDI 'a key institution' and recognized that the Agency has strengthened the administrative capacity that Romania needed in order to improve the management of higher education and research funding programs (Pantazi, 2015). Most of the projects aiming to advance internationalization policies at the national level and prepare future policy decisions were developed by UEFISCDI, in partnership with international actors such as the European University Association (EUA) – for a country-wide audit regarding the performance of Romanian universities according to their declared mission (in the context of the 2011 classification exercise) – and the International Association of Universities (IAU) – for a project aimed at developing a number of studies and policy documents in preparation for a national strategy on internationalization. The agency became a symbol of the concentration of

policy expertise outside of the Ministry, which in this case coincided also with the same agency having control over part of the funds for research. Some detractors called it ‘a parallel ministry’, with too much power, while supporters praised its ability to maintain a more stable policy development strategy and act as a resource center in a time of high political turnover in the Ministry (Cîrstocea, 2014: 13).

4.4.3 Internationalization of higher education in Romania as a distinct policy process

The permeability of the Romanian higher education to internationalization trends and the way in which these trends have been ‘translated’ or mediated in order to advance domestic agendas has been described in the sections above. At the same time, while the higher education sector became more and more international, through a growth in cross-border contacts in both research and other types of academic partnerships, as well as through international mobility of students and staff, the pressure to devise specific internationalization policies has manifested itself in the Romanian context as well. In its early stages, policies related to mobility or international partnerships were part of wider foreign policy trends, while in recent years the numerous university initiatives in these areas seem to require a more comprehensive approach at the national level.

History of the internationalization activities in Romania

Prior to 1989, Romania had made clear efforts to match its foreign policy goals of building alliances with countries of similar ideological orientation with its higher education approaches (Deca and Fiț, 2015). As such, the relatively low proportion of international

students enrolled in the system at the beginning of the 20th century (close to 1%) rose to around 10% of the student population in the 1980s (with 17,000 international students enrolled in Romanian universities), which placed Romania in the top 15 countries in the world in terms of foreign enrolments.

After the 1989 regime change, European Union programs and the Bologna Process played a sizeable role (see previous section) in the race to become more competitive in a European and global market. Liberalization of the economy came with a democratization of higher education and a governmental desire to compete in the global knowledge economy, with all the required changes this goal would entail. The first signs of internationalization after 1990 were linked with exchanges with the West (USA and Canada), but also with European countries as part of the TEMPUS program, which Romania joined as early as 1991. It was also with the help of EU TEMPUS funds that Romanian universities started to develop programs taught in foreign languages, such as English, French, German and Hungarian (though the latter was also an internal policy matter, as 6-7% proportion of the Romanian population are ethnic Hungarian).

The objectives of the Bologna Process, namely to enhance the attractiveness of European higher education, as well as strengthening its competitiveness, seemed to mold onto Romania's needs both for international visibility, but also for national reforms. Thus European policy objectives like recognition of qualifications, ensuring quality of provision, restructuring higher education programs and mobility were enthusiastically promoted by successive ministers of education, though not always with internationalization objectives in mind. For example, the creation of the national quality assurance agency (ARACIS) and the set-up of a

National Framework for Higher Education Qualifications were motivated mainly by domestic needs – the need to ensure relevance of higher education degrees and to guarantee minimum standards of provision, in a country where the number of higher education institutions is not justified by the demand and the issue of lack of relevance for the labor market was a constant for the past 25 years (Deca, 2014).

The European Union acted as both a catalyst for Bologna Process reforms, partly through the pre-accession negotiations and also as a donor for policy instruments supporting the internationalization of higher education, such as mobility (Erasmus, Erasmus Mundus, TEMPUS etc.), research partnerships and projects (Framework Programs and the existing Horizon 2020), etc.

Existing institutional support for internationalization policies

As the main state authority responsible for education, the Ministry of National Education and Scientific Research is the main governmental actor which plays a significant role in the internationalization of higher education. The main legal reference is the National Education Law (Law no.1/2011), which includes provisions related to higher education and internationalization. These legal provisions are usually followed-up by specific methodologies and procedures, which are adopted either through government decisions or by ministerial orders. One such example is the adoption in November 2014 of a Methodology for academic mobility by the Ministry of National Education and Scientific Research, which details the conditions under which credit mobility can take place between Romanian universities or with foreign partners. The ministry includes a General Direction for International Affairs, which is the

main unit responsible for policies in this area and for managing bilateral partnerships with other countries. It also has responsibilities for operational issues, such as issuing acceptance letters for foreign students or organizing the Romanian participation in international student fairs.

The Socrates program, in which Romania has participated part since 1996, also led to an institutional development – an agency was set up and tasked to manage student and staff exchanges, as well as projects supporting the internationalization of higher education. The SOCRATES agency was transformed in 2005 into the National Agency for Community Programs in Education and Professional Training, which is currently the Agency tasked with managing the Erasmus+ program in Romania. This agency functions under a dual subordination – to MENCSC and to the European Commission – and has a key role in the internationalization process, both through supporting mobility schemes for students and academic staff, as well as international partnerships.

In terms of autonomy regarding the enrolment of foreign students, as a significant pre-condition for internationalization, Romanian higher education institutions have to comply with certain conditions in order to be able to enroll international students and to remain within a maximum capacity set by the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ARACIS). ARACIS decides on the maximum number of students that a university can enroll per study field, according to a list of external quality indicators. It also coordinates external evaluations at both institutional and program level – both authorization and accreditation. The methodology for these evaluations includes a number of quality indicators linked with internationalization (UEFISCDI, 2015a).

UEFISCDI was perhaps the most active public institution in the field of internationalization of higher education in recent years. The agency manages a number of structural funds projects for enhancing the capacity for evidence-based higher education policies within the Romanian higher education system, including a recently finalized project on internationalization of higher education in cooperation with the International Association of Universities (IAU), which resulted in a *Framework for a Romanian Strategy for Internationalization of Higher Education*. The Framework provided a full analysis of the status quo regarding existing elements of internationalization (inward and outward mobility, partnerships, recognition, research performance), as well as SWOT analyses of the national and institutional internationalization policies (for 20 universities). Specific recommendations were made with the declared aim to further internationalization efforts and provide a basis for a future national strategy in this field. In parallel with these activities, UEFISCDI conducted three complementary initiatives that are integral elements of the Framework. These initiatives include the elaboration of the Blueprint for a Structure to Promote Information about the Romanian HE System; a portal for information provision – Study in Romania –, www.studyinromania.gov.ro; and a system of reference indicators regarding the international dimension of education that can be used to assess and measure progress in Romanian higher education internationalization (UEFISCDI, 2015c).

Since 2011, internationalization of higher education has been high on the political agenda, in connection with the desire to enhance the presence of Romanian universities in the global higher education market. Consequently, it was included as a strategic goal in the 2014-2020 overall Strategy for Tertiary Education (Ministry of National Education and Scientific

Research (MENCS), 2015), which had been developed as a pre-condition to access EU funds for the upcoming financial framework program.

In terms of other relevant stakeholders, the National Alliance for Student Organizations (ANOSR), the National Rectors' Council (CNR) and the Alma Mater Teachers Trade Union have all been active in relation with this topic. ANOSR has published studies based on student perception in recent years, with a focus on mobility (ANOSR, 2011). The National Rectors' Council has decided in December 2015 to set-up an internal working group looking at the impact of the Bologna Process on Romanian universities. Finally, the local Erasmus Student Network (ESN) and the League of Romanian Students Abroad (LSRS) branches are also active partners for universities in aspects of internationalization, such as facilitating the integration of mobile student or providing information.

4.4.3 Internationalization of higher education in Romania – what do the numbers say?

Once the Law on National Education in 2011 mentioned for the first time the principle of free movement of members of academic communities and talked about the readability of the Romanian higher education institutions through the introduction of a classification of universities and a hierarchisation of study programs, internationalization became a more important national and institutional issue.

Despite the commitments made in the frame of the Bologna Process, there is currently no unitary national policy or strategy on internationalization of higher education, but policy elements are present in various public documents (Teichler et al, 2011). For the Minister of National Education and Research who took office in November 2015, developing a strategy for

higher education internationalization is one of the priorities for 2016 (Ministry of National Education and Scientific Research, 2016).

Cross-border developments are on the rise within the internationalization of Romanian higher education landscape (Curaj et al, 2015: 201). The 2013–2016 Romanian Government Program on Education specifically points to the importance of internationalization ‘to continue to strengthen international bilateral and multilateral partnerships, foster exchanges of students, teachers, in the existing programs and developing new ways of international cooperation’ (Romanian Government, 2013). Recently, two Romanian universities (‘Dunărea de Jos’ University of Galați and Maritime University of Constanța) have opened branch campuses in other countries (Moldova and Kazakhstan). Despite a moderate increase over the past few years in degree and credit mobility, as well as in cross-border delivery of programs, Romania is underperforming in comparison to other EU countries. When compared to other countries in the same region in terms of percentages of incoming foreign students in the overall student population - like Bulgaria (3.5 %) or Hungary (3.5 %) - Romania registered very low numbers (1.3%). The only countries in Europe with lower performances for incoming mobility are Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, Slovakia and Turkey (de Wit et al, 2012: 5).

At the institutional level, in 2015 there were 7,156 international partnerships signed between 86 Romanian universities and foreign counterparts (Ministry of Education, 2016). The main foci of these partnership agreements are difficult to pinpoint, as there is no available data on this subject. Similarly, it is difficult to say how many of these agreements are active in real terms. The recent research done in the frame of the UEFISCDI IEMU project reveals that

universities do not feel necessary to reassess their international partnership agreements periodically and thus use the number as a marketing tool (UEFISCDI, 2015).

According to the Ministry of Education, Romania in 2015 had 23,574 foreign students enrolled in 77 universities. One tool to enhance student exchanges is either the set-up of programs taught in foreign languages (438 such programs developed by 46 Romanian universities) or introducing a preparatory year for those wishing to study in the Romanian language (24 universities organize such programs). Also, seven universities in Romania were involved in setting up a joint degree (14 joint degrees) and 12 were involved in the set-up of double degrees (41 double degrees).

In terms of credit mobility, according to the 2015 ANPCDEFP study on the impact of the LLP program in Romania, the numbers for academic and placement mobility are the following:

Table 3 - Erasmus mobility numbers per education level (outgoing students)

Academic Mobility (Erasmus credit mobility, outgoing)						
	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
Bachelor	2,569	2,410	2,274	73.3%	71.3%	71.7%
Master	889	936	890	25.4%	27.7%	28.1%
Doctorate	45	34	8	1.3%	1.0%	0.3%
Placements						
	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13
Bachelor	707	842	842	64.2%	70.3%	70.3%
Master	343	315	315	31.2%	26.3%	26.3%
Doctorate	51	40	40	4.6%	3.3%	3.3%

Source: 2015 ANPCDEFP report on the impact of the LLP program (ANPCDEFP & CPE, 2015)

The preferred educational level for outward mobility in Romania is definitely the Bachelor level. The most popular destination countries for outgoing mobile students from Romania were France, Spain, Italy, Germany and Portugal. The Latin language affinity probably makes the students' choice easier, due to increased language skills, as well as cultural or lifestyle similarities. In terms of the preference for a specific study field, a higher participation in mobility opportunities can be observed in humanities, business and law, as well as health.

When looking at the balance of the incoming-outgoing credit mobility flows, the number of outbound Romanian Erasmus students is approximately three times greater than the incoming Erasmus students. It is also worth noting that the number of mobility placements has increased with over 300% over the 2007 – 2013 timeframe, in stark contrast with the low increase in the academic mobility numbers – only 10% for the same time interval. This should be seen in connection with the students wish to increase the relevance of the mobility stay for future careers and perhaps even with the desire of some graduates to pursue a career in another European country after graduation.

According to the data provided by the Ministry of Education and Scientific Research (MENCS, 2015), the number of foreign students and Romanian ethnics participating in incoming degree mobility programs for students were as follows:

Table 4 - Numbers of foreign students and Romanian ethnics participating in incoming degree mobility

Year 2012 – 2013	Bachelor	Master	PhD	Specialized courses & resident students
Foreign students	10,168	434	301	488
Romanian Ethnics	7,277	1,029	99	257
TOTAL	17,445	1,463	400	745

The significant proportion of Romanian ethnic students coming mainly from the Republic of Moldova is a result of one of the few stable higher education policies of the Romanian Government in the 1990-2015 timeframe: that of supporting Romanian ethnic students via special recognition procedures and dedicated scholarships. Since 1991, a dedicated educational policy was designed for Romanian ethnic students coming from the Republic of Moldova. This policy mainly included financial support through scholarships and a special procedure for enrolment in Romanian universities. This policy has continued and even intensified once the Law on National Education was adopted in 2011. Such policy stability led to a proportion of more than half of the incoming foreign degree-seeking students in Romania being composed of Romanian ethnics. According to official data from the Ministry of Education, 8,405 Romanian ethnic students (from neighboring countries) have been enrolled in Romanian universities in the academic year 2012-2013 (UEFISCDI, 2013). On top of the dedicated scholarships and the tuition-free studies, these students are also eligible for subsidized accommodation. The number of state-subsidized places has been around 5,000 available scholarships/ year, though not all of them are claimed by eligible candidates. The extent to

which the presence of Romanian ethnic students in such great numbers is a feature of internationalization is a matter of debate. They are largely enrolled in Romanian taught higher education programs and their cultural and linguistic proximity adds little to the diversity of the student body in Romanian universities. As such, it could be argued that this program supports more a foreign relations policy than a real internationalization policy.

Other frequent countries of origin for foreign students in the academic year 2012–2013, aside from the Republic of Moldova, were Israel, Tunisia, France, Greece, Germany, Serbia, Turkey and Morocco. It is worth noting that the number of foreign students originating from Israel doubled immediately after the classification of universities came into force in 2012 (from 632 in 2011/ 2012, to 1088 in 2012/ 2013 and reaching 2071 in 2015/2016). It can thus be said that this policy measure made the system more readable for foreign students, especially coming from countries that place great value on the selectivity of the system.

12,000 incoming foreign students were enrolled in Romanian universities (2013-2014 data from the Ministry of Education). Most of them (7,400) chose medicine as their field of study (in Universities of Medicine and Pharmacy situated in Bucharest, Timisoara, Iasi and Cluj-Napoca). The large proportion of foreign students enrolled in medicine and pharmacy programs is an indication of the attractiveness of these study opportunities, especially for students that wish to later on have the chance to practice across the European Union.

In terms of the statistics related to incoming and outgoing mobility for teaching and research staff, detailed data is available up to 2013. According to information provided by Erasmus supervisory body ANPCDEFP, EU-backed mobility has seen approximately 1,000 international staff come to Romania with the aid of the Lifelong Learning Program in each year

between 2007 and 2013. Similarly to the student mobility situation, outward mobility numbers of staff are higher than incoming flows. According to European Commission data, in 2012-2013, approximately 2,400 from the total number of teaching and scientific research staff were outwardly mobile and around 1,500 were received by Romanian universities. In a somewhat troubling development, the rise in inbound mobility seen after Romania joined the EU came to a halt and was partially reversed in 2012/2013. Furthermore, inbound mobility suffered from growing 'regionalization', with the bulk of incoming staff increasingly coming from countries such as Turkey, Poland, Bulgaria or Hungary and decreasingly from hitherto high contributors such as Germany or France. The gap between outbound and inbound mobility grew from a 1.2:1 ratio in 2007 to nearly 2.5:1 by 2013, with common outbound mobility destinations dominated by Southern Europe and Hungary. According to the ANPCDEFP 2013 report, the teachers' participation rate was 10.62% for outbound Erasmus programs, which places Romania on the third place among EU countries using these types of EU grants for staff mobility (European Commission, 2014). The percentage of teachers in Erasmus program has to potential to be even higher, if it weren't for obstacles primarily linked with insufficient financial support and family reasons. In terms of overall trends, a significant decrease of incoming mobile teachers coming from Western Europe or Scandinavian countries (where most prestigious universities in Europe are located) was coupled with an increase in exchanges with neighboring countries, which provides an interesting starting point for future priorities in terms of university cooperation and good practice exchanges (ANPCDEFP & CPE, 2015).

Also, relevant for the attractiveness of the system is the fact that only 17% of the international degree-seeking students were enrolled in English taught programs in 2013-2014,

which is very low for a country aiming to profile itself as a destination for international students. In contrast, Romania is deemed an attractive destination due to the low cost of living, good study infrastructure, availability of places in study fields such as medicine, pharmacy or architecture (which are subject to numerous clauses entry requirements in other countries). The difficulty in attracting foreign students stems from a number of reasons, some linked with the availability of programs taught in foreign languages, while others have to do with the bureaucratic recognition and visa application procedures.

Romania also has a potential to become a regional destination for mobility, taking into account its performance in the Central European program for University Studies (CEEPUS). CEEPUS is a regional program for academic exchanges, running in Central and Eastern Europe since 1992, which provides monthly scholarships, free accommodation, medical assistance in case of emergency and free access to all university research infrastructure for all participating students and staff members. It is based on a reciprocity principle, meaning that each CEEPUS member country pays for the incoming foreign students and staff members, which thus adjusts the costs to the national purchasing power (as opposed to the Erasmus grants). Romania foresees 500 scholarship-months through government decision for CEEPUS exchanges and sends approximately 450-500 students and academic staff members. Performance wise, Romania is among the countries with the highest usage rate of CEEPUS scholarship-months (75% for the 2015/2016 academic year) (UEFISCDI, 2013).

Some areas need immediate attention if Romania is to boost its attractiveness as a study destination in the research and innovation field. The Innovation Union Scoreboard 2015, which provides a comparative assessment of research and innovation in the EU28 Member

states, as well as in several other countries, categorized Romania's performance in 2015 (along with Latvia's and Bulgaria's) as in the 'modest innovators' category, at the very bottom of this category, well below that of the EU average (UEFISCDI, 2015).

A positive trend has been the increase in the number of articles written by Romanian researchers in collaboration with international researchers: up from approximately 1,400 in 2005 to approximately 2,900 in 2012. However, there was a decrease in the percentage of International Scientific Indexing (ISI) articles published in collaboration with international researchers from 2005 to 2012—from 48% to 36% (UEFISCDI, 2013).

The inward / outward mobility imbalances seen for students and academic staff are also characteristic in researcher mobility. Brain drain is a common phenomenon, with Romania among the EU countries with the highest losses of research and development staff. Romania's low employability opportunity for researchers, the unpredictability of (even contracted) research funding, as well as the low political importance attributed to the RDI impact on economic growth are all reasons for this situation.

To sum up, Romania's performance in areas of internationalization, such as inward and outward mobility, cross-border partnerships or research joint initiative is at best modest. Despite its openness to international norms and the obvious Government commitment to enhance the international attractiveness of the system since the 2008 Pact on Education, it seems that progress is slow. Even if efforts have been made to build more strategic approaches to enhance the level of internationalization of Romanian higher education (see next section), they were not backed up by political commitment or by resource allocation. A more in-depth analysis of the reasons for this situation is to be found in the concluding section of this chapter.

4.4.4 Efforts made to develop a national approach to internationalization of higher education

Even if there is no comprehensive national strategy on internationalization of higher education, several projects with EU funding prepared the ground with analysis and policy solutions for governmental decision.

In 2008 - 2011, in the frame of a UEFISCDI managed project on 'Quality and Leadership in Romanian Higher Education', an analysis on 'Universities in the context of Europeanisation and globalization' (Pricopie and Nicolescu, 2011), was developed by a team of national and international experts led by one of the most prominent experts on the Romanian landscape (who became Minister of Education at the end of 2012). This document included a SWOT analysis of the Romanian higher education system in a wider international context, but without proposing recommendations on how to move forward in the field of internationalization. In the same time frame, UEFISCDI hosted the Bologna Secretariat in 2010-2012 and managed the organizational process of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) Ministerial Conference in April 2012, thus having a team actively involved in international policy processes.

The concern for advancing the national agenda on internationalization was continued by UEFISCDI, with the support of the Ministry of Education, in the frame of another UEFISCDI project (2012-2014), titled 'Higher Education Evidence Based Policy Making: a necessary premise for progress in Romania'. Its result was a new analysis developed by a new team of Romanian and international experts looking at the 'The Status-quo of Romanian National Policies on Internationalization of Education' (UEFISCDI, 2013). This document put forward a series of recommendations for both the Ministry and higher education institutions. The experts

underlined that, at the national level, there was a need to develop a comprehensive strategy on this topic, with clear priorities and adequate resources. Concrete recommendations regarding amendments in the legislation were also put forward, in order to increase institutional autonomy, especially with regard to international recruitment of foreign academic staff and their salary levels, recognition of diplomas, visa requirements, as well as accreditation of joint programs or programs taught in foreign languages.

Finally, the most recent and comprehensive attempt at developing the internationalization of higher education at both national and institutional level materialized with the implementation of the 'Internationalization, equity and university management for quality higher education in Romania' (IEMU) project, implemented by UEFISCDI in 2014-2015, in partnership with the International Association of Universities (IAU) and the National University of Political Studies and Public Administration (SNSPA). Recognizing the need for coherence between national and institutional strategies and initiatives, the project had two main goals: assisting 20 Romanian higher education institutions in the development of internationalization strategies and providing evidence, analysis, and recommendations as key inputs for a possible national strategy for the internationalization of Romanian higher education. The project outputs included a framework for decision-makers in order to adopt in the future a national internationalization strategy, 19 strategies on the same topic at the university level, a blueprint for a structure tasked to provide information and to promote the Romanian higher education system abroad, a 'Study in Romania' web portal and a set of proposed performance indicators for measuring degree of internationalization in Romanian universities.

The 'Framework for a Romanian Strategy for Internationalization of Higher Education'

This comprehensive project report laid the ground for developing a future national strategy for internationalization of Romanian higher education. It documents the existing policy elements, their results and the current status quo, including an analysis of the past national and institutional efforts. Additionally, the Framework puts forward a number of strategic objectives and corresponding actions for developing a future strategy on this topic, such as the need to recognize internationalization as a multi-faceted process aimed to enhance the quality of Romanian higher education and research; preparing students to live and work as responsible citizens in a global knowledge society; improving the visibility and attractiveness of Romanian higher education, as well as its international standing; empowering universities to pursue comprehensive internationalization strategies; ensuring that the future national internationalization strategy is supported by and coherent with other national policies (such as economic policies, foreign relations policies or regionalization policies). It is worth noting that the Framework includes a vision for internationalization of higher education by 2025, developed in a foresight exercise that included a sample of the relevant actors. In addition, the study is supported by the analysis of the policies on internationalization of 20 Romanian universities, which also worked with the project team to develop their own institutional strategic plans. (UEFISCDI, 2015c)

University internationalization strategies

All the participating universities in the IEMU project, with one exception, analyzed their existing practices and developed in a participatory manner strategic plans for advancing their

internationalization goals. Based on self-assessment reports, expert visits and internal consultations, 19 universities developed distinct internationalization strategies and one opted to include strategic objectives for internationalization in its overall institutional strategic plan.

Among the key observations when comparatively analyzing these strategies is a predominance of top-down decision-making and a lack of experience in organizing consultations on strategic objectives that would involve the entire academic community. In addition, there is a paradoxical tendency to look at the state for designating priorities and objectives on internationalization, but at the same time universities consistently pointed to the insufficient institutional autonomy as one of the obstacles for furthering their goals in this area. A strange mix emerges, combining isomorphic tendencies with respect to international trends at the institutional level and of a consolidated state-centered governance model, which remains one of the strongest in the Central and Eastern European region (Dobbins, 2008).

The present thesis makes use of the data gathered in the IEMU project from five of these twenty universities, adding more in-depth qualitative information from the semi-structured interviews conducted. A detailed analysis of the internationalization efforts of these five institutional case studies is provided in chapters five and six.

Blueprint for a structure to promote information about the Romanian higher education system

This document provided the necessary analysis regarding how a future internationalization strategy at the national level would be supported by an institutional arrangement. Four potential scenarios were included in the conclusions, together with the

advantages and disadvantages of each option, thus providing the necessary evidence for future decisions. These scenarios included: setting-up a new agency for higher education promotion; assigning the functions of such an agency to an already existing structure (such as the Erasmus+ agency for UEFISCDI; similar to the Estonian model) or to a department within the Ministry for National Education and Scientific Research (similar to the Portuguese model). A fourth model was conceived as a combination of these first three options, with support from the universities. The report also included an overview of the functions and needs that such a structure would have to address, regardless of its structure and place in the system. The issue of Ministry capacity was raised in this study, pointing to the need to rely on existing pools of expertise in buffer agencies or in Romanian universities, which further reinforces the idea that overall lack of capacity in the system contributed significantly to the lack of national strategic endeavors in the field of higher education internationalization (UEFISCDI, 2015a).

The final results of the project were launched in a large scale conference in September 2015, with the participation of all relevant stakeholders. Both the Education Minister and the President of the National Rectors' Council endorsed the results and affirmed the interest to follow-up on the recommendations. In November 2015, the minister changed once more, with the General Director of UEFISCDI becoming minister in a new technocratic government. The former minister became the President of the Rectors' Conference and thus it would seem that the people that were openly supportive to a future national strategy on this topic would now be in a position to further this agenda. Despite the priority given to it by the ministry and by the universities, other actors do not seem to be as interested in this topic. The national students' association and the teachers' trade unions were not active in the discussions around the

internationalization of Romanian higher education, probably due to the lack of foreign students or academics in their constituencies. Overall, it seems that the concern with this topic is more widespread among national or institutional leaders than for members of the academic communities, which might be relevant when analyzing the dissonance between political statements and actual efforts to move to a real policy formulation stage (i.e. the drafting of a national policy on internationalization).

4.5 Strengths and weaknesses at the national policy level

4.5.1 Political instability, with a steady build-up of policy analysis with regard to internationalization of higher education

Frequent government and legal changes had a negative impact on the higher education system, as well as affecting the public trust in its results. The (as it is now named) Ministry of National Education and Scientific Research repeatedly changed its areas of responsibility (as well as its name), by adding sectors such as youth, sports and research. The average time in office for a minister of education was a bit more than one year, with about 20 ministers taking office in two and a half decades. Such a high political instability generated a clear resistance from civil servants in the ministry and related agencies to complying with policy changes, as well as showing the weak position of the education sector in the political concerns of successive governments (Cîrstocea, 2014).

An element of stability exists however, namely the continuous involvement of buffer agencies, such as UEFISCDI and ANPCDEFP, which had a constant interest in the topic of internationalization and relative independence in their funding, via European funds. A growing

number of projects regarding the way forward in enhancing the level of internationalization of Romanian higher education have been seen in the past five years, with important contributions from national experts and from international sectorial organizations, such as the EUA and IAU. The two buffer agencies also had more stable staff which could, in time, create a critical mass of experts and policy entrepreneurs capable of designing coherent strategic documents on this topic.

4.5.2 Differentiation of the mission of higher education institutions

Even if the diversification of the higher education system seems imperative in a system with 102 universities, and even if Law 1/2011 specifically regulates the classification of higher education institutions according to their mission and the hierarchization of study programs according to their quality, the government did not adopt a coherent policy to incentivize such a diversification process, in light of its political sensitivity and the resistance of the Rectors' National Council. Historically, most Romanian universities focused primarily on teaching and learning. Thus, most universities were dissatisfied with the exercise conducted in 2011 attempting to classify universities by mission, that is, according to their relative emphasis on research, especially since this exercise was also linked to the funding mechanism. Only twelve universities made it into the most prestigious 'research intensive' top tier, and most of them were traditional comprehensive universities, situated in the traditional university centers (Bucharest, Cluj-Napoca, Iași, and Timișoara) and with sizeable academic communities. This dissatisfaction translated into a political pressure to stop the classification exercise, which was never repeated after its first pilot phase in 2011.

The 'Universitaria' Consortium, which includes the biggest five comprehensive and research universities in Romania, has actively lobbied for more autonomy and better public financing of higher education, while arguing that such measures would increase the chance of its member universities to rank better in international league tables. Internationalization and specifically international competitiveness featured prominently among the publicly expressed positions of this university network, which could constitute an interesting future actor in furthering an internationalization policy at the national level.

4.5.3 Strategic planning

The Romanian higher education sector suffered from a lack of medium and long term strategies, which are actually put in place and followed-up in a coherent manner. This affects the ability of the government through the Ministry of Education and related state agencies to steer and monitor the system. Unfinished reforms and the difference in vision from one minister to the next generated tensions between the Ministry of National Education, the universities and their stakeholders (including students, teaching staff, researchers, trade unions, and employers), on areas such as university autonomy, diversification of the higher education sector, financing, bureaucratic procedures etc.

An additional set-back for coherent reforms is the lack of comprehensive, systematic, and publicly available data concerning the activities of the HEIs (UEFISCDI, 2015b). This issue has been acknowledged and addressed in recent years, but there is still resistance to transparent and predictable reporting mechanisms, especially from the side of universities, who see a danger in data collection systems that could influence their public funding or prestige. A

Strategy for Tertiary Education (Ministry of National Education and Scientific Research (MENCS), 2015) was developed in 2014-2015 with technical assistance from the World Bank and adopted by the Government as an ex-ante conditionality for the 2014-2020 EU financial exercise, but the plan for implementation has still not been discussed and resources (which are estimated 2.1 billion Euros) are not allotted. In addition, this strategy is not yet linked with other key strategies related to reducing early school drop-out rates, lifelong learning or vocational education and training.

Despite its limited strategic planning practices, Romania has one potential advantage – that of a slow bottom-up build-up of the priorities for internationalization. The misalignments between the national objectives and the institutional ones seem to be reduced by the slow process of consultation, the predominance of ministers coming from the higher education sector leadership ranks and the gradual capacity building efforts to enhance the institutional ability to think about their abilities and priorities when it comes to internationalization of higher education. If the national strategy building exercise comes to be based on well-researched and generally agreed institutional priorities, there is a reduced chance of misalignments of both priorities and actions.

4.5.4 Overall education attainment

Even with the massification phenomenon taking place between 1990 and 2008, Romania's educational attainment is lower than in other European nations. In 2009, 11.4% of Romanians over 25 years old had successfully completed a higher education program, placing Romania close to the modest performance of Portugal and Italy, with 11.5% and 11.9%

respectively, and in stark contrast with Nordic EU countries such as Finland and Denmark or the UK (over 30%). Neighboring countries are comparatively better situated: Hungary at 14.7%, Serbia at 15.4%, the Republic of Moldova at 16.3% and Bulgaria at 20.5%.

Taking into account the enrolment deficit highly visible in recent years, it is unlikely that Romania will meet its objective to have at least 26.7% of its adult population with a higher education diploma by 2020 (UEFISCDI, 2015b). This actually pushes most Romanian higher education institutions, as well as the Ministry of Education, to reprioritize internationalization, as a way to attract foreign students and researchers. The added demographic downturn - the population aged 14-19 years old has decreased by over 40% in the 1990-2015 (Eurostat) - and the accentuated post 2007 migratory trend are additional motives for the Romanian Government to prioritize the internationalization of higher education in the future.

4.5.5 Funding

In 2011, higher education public expenditure was situated at 0.85% of Romania's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), corresponding to the third lowest level in the EU27, after Bulgaria (0.65%) and Italy (0.83%)¹². The EU27 average is 1.26% of GDP. The same is true for per-student spending, which is also lower in Romania compared to the rest of Europe, where the average is 10,000 PPS¹³. In 2011, the average amount of per capita spending per student in Romania was approximately 4,000 PPS, compared to Nordic countries where the spending is around 15,000

¹² Source: EUROSTAT 2014

¹³ PPS is the abbreviation for Purchasing Power Standard – an artificial currency unit developed by EUROSTAT in order to facilitate comparison among the EU countries. In principle one PPS can buy the same amount of goods and services in each country. However, price differences across borders determine different amounts of local currency units in order to acquire those goods and services.

PPS per student. Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovenia and Poland provide 7,000 to 8,000 PPS¹⁴. The lack of dedicated funding for internationalization activities at both national and institutional levels is a real deterrent to put in practice any comprehensive strategic effort in this sense (UEFISCDI, 2015b).

4.5.6 Institutional autonomy paradox

The Framework resulting from the IEMU project provided an interesting insight into the paradoxical attitude of Romanian university leaders and staff towards the role of the Ministry of Education and Scientific Research in particular and the role of the government in general. On the one hand, universities insist on the need for a wider institutional autonomy (especially on financial and human resource issues), but on the other, they look to the central authorities to guide internationalization efforts, as well as resource them (with a few notable exceptions, such as the Constanta Maritime University). The tension between institutional autonomy and steering of higher education by the state is not unique to Romania, but in this case the obstacle to furthering or even formulating a coherent internationalization policy seems also to stem from a lack of capacity of the university and system-wide leadership, in both managerial and policy terms.

4.6 Conclusion

Internationalization of higher education was always a concern for decision-makers in Romania. The rationale for this concern was different, depending on each decade and on

¹⁴ Ibidem, EUROSTAT 2014

domestic pressures. Before 1990, internationalization of higher education was a supporting policy for the foreign partnerships with other like-minded states, as well as a necessary policy for aiding in economic industrialization, despite the rules restricting free circulation of Romanian citizens abroad. After the 1990s, internationalization was initially a wider concept, including mediation by the Government of international policy processes in support for domestic reform, but also a way to ensure 'belonging' in the European community. In recent years, internationalization evolved towards an independent policy area, in connection with the desire to increase economic competitiveness in a knowledge-based society.

International organizations played a major role in promoting internationalization as a policy in Romania since the 1990s, through reports or via direct support materialized in financial assistance, expertise or policy advice. At the same time, as the Romanian higher education actors (universities, students, academic staff etc.) became involved in European or international networks with a focus on internationalization, the government's use of international developments in legitimizing and sometimes even designing concrete domestic reforms (such as university classifications) started to be challenged. A telling example in this sense is the court case filed by the University of Suceava, which asked for the annulment of the legal effects of the university classification and program hierarchisation claiming lack of methodological rigor (Deca, 2015).

Internationalization of higher education in Romania is still a rather fragmented and ad-hoc process, partly due to the lack of national or institutional policies, but also due to legal instability. Frequent changes in legislation and the impressive number of ministers who took office in the past 25 years impinged on the ability of the government to support higher

education institutions in their quest for international cooperation and visibility, as well as to consolidate Romania's competitive advantages in a European and global arena. The scarce resources available for internationalization could not be fully compensated by European structural support for mobility and other collaboration initiatives. Also, even with this scarcity of available means to advance general goals (such as the promotion of Romania's higher education institutions abroad), there were almost no initiatives to pool existing resources (such as for example supporting university networks that could gather and use their own resources to specific internationalization goals).

When looking at the focus on different dimensions of internationalization, quantitative goals seem to be preferred to qualitative ones, both at the system, as well as on the university level. Frequently mentioned objectives in various public documents underline the need to increase mobility numbers, especially incoming fee-paying students, as well as the number of research partnerships or joint degrees. (UEFISCDI, 2015b) However, if we look at the number of foreign students studying in Romania, almost half of them are Romanian ethnics, which is an indication that the only policy that seemingly produced results is the support of Romanian ethnics abroad (which is probably also the most stable governmental policy in the past 25 years). Additionally, the lack of a well-resourced and coordinated strategy for recruitment contributes to the discrepancy between governmental objectives and the existing realities. The same situation is valid for research partnerships, where the low level of public support for research projects, the loss of R&D qualified personnel through migration and the lack of a coherent international cooperation strategy has a clear impact on Romania's research, development and innovation (RDI) performance.

The lack of coordination between internationalization initiatives, higher education goals and other socio-economic policy areas (like foreign policy, migration, employment, health etc.) is still a factor creating difficulties for the design a coherent national internationalization strategy. Human resource policies which limit foreign recruitment, lack of transparency of foreign policy objectives, not linking the regional development strategies with the national strategy for tertiary education are all potential reasons for the reluctance of the government to act more decisively on this matter, although there would probably be a decent level of support coming from universities and the professoriate, in light of the looming decrease in recruitment.

It can safely be argued that if we look at the internationalization of higher education from a policy perspective, the national authorities never reached a policy formulation stage, although the issue seems to be on the agenda. In the absence of a clear formulation of the desired policy, which would include priorities, objectives and resources, it is difficult to make significant progress on areas such as mobility and cross-border education provision or to mobilize support at the grass-roots level. Thus far, the drivers of internationalization have largely been policy entrepreneurs, buffer institutions and international actors, with a timid support from research-intensive universities. Any future endeavor in strategically planning this sector should take actor configuration into account, as well as the inertia in switching from a centralized system to substantive institutional autonomy.

In the next chapters, delving into the realities of five specific Romanian universities might shed a better light on how internationalization is perceived and pursued within academic communities either as a standalone policy or as a derivate from other priority sectors, as well as provide more insights into the actual need to have a national policy on internationalization.

Chapter 5 – The internationalization of research oriented higher education institutions in Romania

5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an insight into how internationalization is pursued in research-oriented higher education institutions in Romania, by looking at two study cases: the Babeş – Bolyai University (UBB) in Cluj and the Alexandru Ioan Cuza University in Iaşi (UAIC). As outlined in the introductory chapter, these two universities were selected from the sample of twenty institutions which volunteered to be involved in the ‘Internationalization, equity and university management for quality higher education in Romania’ (IEMU) project, implemented by the Executive Agency for Higher Education, Research, Development and Innovation Funding (UEFISCDI) in 2014-2015, in partnership with the International Association of Universities (IAU) and the National University of Political Studies and Public Administration (SNSPA). Since the author of the thesis has been directly involved in the project, she was provided with a diverse overview of the most interesting institutional approaches to internationalization from the 20 university sample of the IEMU project, but also from the candidates that did not make the initial selection to be a part of it.

The two particular universities which will be analyzed in this chapter represent the Alpha type of universities (according to the HEIGLO project adapted methodology), meaning that they are large public national universities, comprehensive and research intensive, with a diverse educational offer. These two universities are among the oldest in the country (Babeş –

Bolyai University in Cluj and the Alexandru Ioan Cuza University in Iași) and represent the academic epicentre of two historical Romanian provinces, Transylvania and Moldova, which have quite diverse historical and cultural backgrounds (one being part of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire and the other being under Slavic influence, with a strong connection to the Francophonie). They were also classified in the research intensive university tier in the 2011 Romanian classification exercise and are among the best ranked Romanian universities in international rankings. Their national and international standing and their pro-active attitude towards internationalization of higher education makes them 'usual suspects' in understanding the internationalization of higher education in universities considered as flagship institutions in the Romanian higher education landscape.

The analysis starts with a general overview of the position of the two case study universities within the Romanian higher education system, as well as their main characteristics. The rationale of pursuing internationalization policies is then examined, as well as how they were formulated and by whom. The chapter goes on to analyze the policy instruments used to further internationalization, as well as their outcomes. Finally, the obstacles to internationalization at the institutional level and the risks arising from existing approaches are looked at. The conclusion uncovers the drivers of internationalization for this category of higher education institutions and outlines the policy lessons that can be drawn in terms of institutional strategic pursuits (or lack thereof).

5.2 Background information: research intensive universities in the Romanian context and the rationale for case study selection

The term ‘research higher education institution’ might seem an unnecessary statement of the obvious in many national contexts, but in light of the predominant focus on teaching in Romanian universities, it is currently used nationally to designate an elite group of ‘top tier’ institutions. The terminology was used in Romania’s 2011 Education Law, when a first official classification of universities was introduced. This exercise divided Romanian universities in three tiers: advanced research and teaching, focusing on teaching and research and teaching focused universities. Even if the classification was not designed to make a value judgement of the quality of universities in each category, but to act a driver for the diversification of the Romanian higher education landscape, almost immediately the universities included in the advanced research and education category were considered to be the best in terms of overall performance. Though the entire classification exercise was legally challenged first by the Association of Private Universities and then by a public university situated in the ‘teaching focused’ category - the University of Suceava¹⁵ - the effort did reflect some of the sweeping informal categorizations existing among Romanian higher education institutions (Deca, 2014).

For the purpose of this thesis, I have selected Transylvania-based Babeş-Bolyai University in Cluj-Napoca (UBB), the country’s largest higher education institution according to the number of students, as well as ‘Alexandru Ioan Cuza’ University in Iaşi (UAIC), the dominant higher education institution in the North-East region. Both are among the older institutions of

¹⁵ Both legal battles were won in court by the Ministry of Education. For more accounts on this issue see: <http://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-esential-17016842-clasificarea-universitatilor-fost-declarata-legala-inalta-curte-casatie-justitie-ministerul-educatiei-castigat-procesul-universitatea-stefan-cel-mare-din-suceava.htm>

higher education existing in Romania: Cuza is the oldest Romanian university, founded in 1860, and Babeş-Bolyai was founded in 1872 before switching to being a Romanian public university only after Transylvania merged with Romania in 1918/1919 (the original institution moved to Szeged, in Hungary).

Among Romanian universities, UBB stands out due to its officially embraced multicultural character. The presence of Hungarian and German language tracks automatically facilitates cooperation with academic higher education institutions in countries such as Hungary, Austria or Germany, even though their initial rationale was a desire to reflect the multi-ethnic realities of Transylvania (Interview 10). Furthermore, the North-West region in which it is situated has seen a considerable development in cooperation with the outside world in numerous fields and is one of the most dynamic in the country¹⁶. It has attracted considerable foreign investment in areas such as IT, which rely on a steady supply of higher education graduates. The airport is second to Bucharest in terms of international connections, reflecting these growing international links.

The university itself is the largest in the country, according to the number of students. UBB enrolls students in 21 faculties which are located in different parts of the city of Cluj-Napoca and has 12 extensions in many important regions across Transylvania (UBB, 2015). According to data from the National Council for Higher Education Funding (CNFIS), in 2015 the university had 35,782 students. This is roughly 7% of the entire student population in Romania, which is a considerable achievement in what is a rather centralized country such as Romania, with over 100 higher education institutions. The university has a broad spectrum of study fields,

¹⁶ <http://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-arhiva-1257325-cele-mai-bune-zone-pentru-afaceri-din-romania.htm>

ranging from humanities to business, science and theology of various faith groups. The engineering, medical, agriculture and arts branches in Cluj are distinct and autonomous universities.

The Iași-based UAIC would seem to be, upon a superficial glance, a less viable candidate for international openness, at least from the perspective of its contextual situation. The institution is located in Romania's poorest region (the North-East) close to the border with the Republic of Moldova. While this localization might initially look like an opportunity to attract students from and develop cooperation with another Romanian-speaking country, government policies limit this by funding places for Moldovan students via a national quota system distributing them across the entire country. Furthermore, as Moldova is not part of the European Union, there are certain limits to funding cross-border cooperation, and we can see this in the fairly small number of Moldovan students present at the institution (UAIC, 2012).

With regards to its structure and demographic profile, UAIC is the fourth largest university in the country behind the UBB, the University of Bucharest and the Bucharest Polytechnic University. According to CNFIS data updated in October 2015, the university has 23,585 enrolled students across the three cycles. The university is structured into 15 faculties which cover fields which mainly cover business, humanities, science and theology. Like in Cluj, medicine, agriculture and engineering studies are conducted in Iași within distinct and independent universities.

What both institutions have in common is the prestige associated with being the largest and oldest universities in their respective regions. They have also tended to do well in quality assessment exercises and in the 2011 classification exercise discussed in the previous chapter,

with both universities part of the advanced research and teaching university tier. UBB and UAIC are also part of the elite 'Universitaria' consortium of elite research oriented comprehensive universities,¹⁷ and their rectors often have national level visibility and prominence.

As discussed in the introduction, the motivation of dividing universities (for the purpose of this thesis) into research oriented comprehensive higher education institutions and other types of institutions is the desire to see whether a more prominent research focus within the institutional setting facilitates a more rapid and comprehensive move towards the development of institutional-level internationalization policies. Research is an important dimension in discussing internationalization, as it is already an activity that is highly defined by cross-border cooperation between researchers in different countries. The existence of European research funding (which favours cross-border projects) and moves to better reward research published in important international journals have mediated a rapid shift to more general internationalization via the facilitation of changes in work habits among the academic community, including teaching.

5.3 The need for internationalization policies

Identifying the needs behind the development of internationalization policies is a difficult undertaking, due to both rapid changes in the Romanian higher education landscape, paradoxically coupled with a track record of incrementalism in implementing particular policy priorities, such as internationalization or equity in higher education (Curaj et al., 2015). Reviewing the IEMU project self-assessment university reports, interviews and institutional

¹⁷ <http://universitaria.ase.ro/>

strategies, we see that the rationale behind the initiation or development of various institutional policies is given in a rhetorically heavy, but content-light manner, with an abundance of buzz-concepts, such as 'excellence', 'prestige', 'connection with the wider community', 'world class research', etc. In this regard, a significant aid in identifying the issues that have pushed recent transformations is an in-depth analysis of the Romanian higher education landscape, and its impact on institutional realities.

Going back to the strategies and documents provided by universities (UBB, 2012; UBB, 2014; UBB, 2015; UAIC, 2013), a stand-out element in the discussion surrounding internationalization seems to be the desire by Romanian universities to enhance their prestige. The ideas of excellence in research and other academic activities, as well as the importance of international cooperation in guaranteeing quality and institutional visibility are predominant both in defining institutional strategic objectives (particularly for UBB), but especially in their discursive construction. While both UBB and UAIC are arguably among the most prestigious universities in Romania and are more likely to perceive themselves as standing out in the Romanian higher education landscape, the growing visibility of international rankings has been a considerable blow to their image in Romania, as well as abroad. As discussed in the previous chapter, the emergence of rankings has transformed them into an influential imperative for reform, but also into a benchmark for excellence. These issues are visible in both national and institutional policies; for example with constant references to the idea of a 'Global top 500' university, though the exact international league table to be used is never explicitly stated in most documents. We see numerous references to international rankings in UBB's 2012-2016 strategy, including the explicit strategic goal of becoming a global top 500 university (Interview

8; UBB, 2012). UAIC is more moderate in defining its goals, but does emphasize the need for greater international visibility for its research work (UAIC, 2007: 3). This was detailed in its institutional strategy in terms of prioritizing cooperation with international research networks and publishing research work within key international journals (*ibid.*).

In the case of big comprehensive research universities, the demographic pressure is felt to a lesser extent than in other cases. However, the pressure to be better positioned in the international arena gives rise to increased needs for funding, which are currently not covered by public funds. In this context, the financial rationale for internationalization in the form of attracting foreign, fee paying third country students is quite prominent. As one interviewee from one of the research oriented universities mentioned:

‘The idealistic reasons for furthering internationalization policies within our university are our global outlook and our desire to respond to needs that go beyond our national context. However, there is also a pragmatic reason – our university needs students to support a number of our higher education programs, due to the demographic decline and migration. That is why we are trying to attract more fee paying students, especially from non-EU countries, in light of the additional revenues they bring.’ (Interview 8)

All of the priorities above encourage institutional bodies such as departments and faculties to increase the level of international cooperation. This international focus is further reinforced via pressures emerging from the national level. For example, the very definition of reference standards in Romania’s education law (Law 1/2011) is defined in terms of ‘global and European benchmarks’ (Annex to the Law: 48). That is, excelling beyond the basic standards needed for university accreditation is directly linked to meeting global standards, though

further definition is lacking. This discursive strength of the idea of associating international cooperation with excellence and prestige has even greater consequences if we take into account the pressure to downsize the higher education system due to changing demographics.

5.4 The formulation and development of internationalization policies

When it comes to policy formulation, universities tend to argue for their strategic choices in terms of institutional vision for international openness, quest for excellence and advancement of human knowledge, rather than the need for domestic differentiation as such. To some degree, prestigious universities such as UBB and UAIC also draw upon their rich history to formulate current policy as a follow-up to their academic traditions. Nevertheless, the way in which internationalization has influenced institutional management and strategic planning differs between the two institutions to a considerable extent.

The Babeş-Bolyai University (UBB)

The Babeş-Bolyai University was arguably Romania's most outward-looking institution starting with its very inception. In a communist Romania that often embraced nationalism as part of its ideological core, the institution (created by the merger of the Romanian-language 'Babeş' with the Hungarian-language 'Bolyai' university) maintained a full Hungarian language study track.

UBB started creating structures to deal with international cooperation as soon as the Revolution opened up Romania to the world. In 1990, an International Relations unit was created, directly subordinate to the Rector's Office. As contacts with international parties

developed, this unit was expanded to become the Centre for International Cooperation (CCI) and a Vice-Rector for International Affairs was tasked to oversee its activity, in cooperation with a dedicated committee for internationalization of higher education in the university senate. The CCI has a very broad mission and deals with the recruitment and integration of international students within the institution (UBB, 2014). Starting with the election of the new Rector in 2015, the CCI reverted to the direct responsibility of the Rector, which considers this policy as one of the priorities of his mandate. Since 2014, the CCI includes three separate offices: one dedicated to the Erasmus program (as recommended by the European Commission), one dealing with international partnership agreements and one in charge with the recruitment of foreign students.

The full formalization of internationalization policies in UBB is very recent. The internationalization strategy was only adopted in 2015. Before that, international cooperation was mandated by the institution's strategic plans, which were drafted by the designated rector and approved by the institutional senate. The plan adopted in 2012 mentioned internationalization in several points, but this was largely a form of mainstreaming of other areas and activities. These included:

- Increased internationalization of studies by encouraging greater international mobility for both students and staff and by further developing programs in foreign languages.
- Increasing number of joint degree programs.
- Attracting more international teaching staff.
- Ensuring greater international visibility for the university and its study programs and fostering greater competition in the admission of students.

- The participation by students to both national and international scientific projects and events.
- Ensuring that international quality standards in research are respected throughout the institution's research activities.
- Encouraging researchers to publish mainly in internationally recognized journals.

However, by looking at the entire document, we can conclude that many of these advances were geared towards a primary strategic goal of ensuring the university's position as a leading national institution in terms of prestige and research output. A meta-goal of the strategy included an improved placement in international rankings, with UBB aiming for a spot in the global top 500 (the ranking system is not mentioned, though in Romanian public discourse the most prominent benchmark is the Shanghai ranking). At the same time, the expectation is that internationalization will foster exchanges of good practices and even favour a harmonisation of the curricula according to international trends (Interview 10).

The institutional-wide internationalization strategy itself was adopted only in 2015, and it has a set of more explicit goals than the overall management strategies. Some of these can be interpreted as solutions bound to help mitigate the important issues of prestige and demographic decline mentioned before, though they are not mentioned as such in the strategy.

The overall objectives include:

- Improving UBB's international visibility. This objective makes explicit references to the U-Multiranking criteria.
- The internationalization of the curricula. This objective emphasizes joint degrees and programs in foreign languages, as well as more interdisciplinary programs.

- Increasing the number of foreign students. This objective emphasizes the need to identify specific student recruitment pools (from abroad) and to further develop the use of tools such as Erasmus+.
- The professional development of students and staff. This objective focuses on the use of mobility to improve the education offered to students and staff training.

The strategy also lists the responsible bodies for implementation, and offers an assessment of the current situation and explicit provisions for activities and initiatives broken down by objective and person responsible. It also lists those activities already undertaken by UBB which can be further opened up to international participation or used to attract more international partners, students and networking (UBB, 2015).

Another key point in the strategy is that it officially commits resources to internationalization. 1% of the equivalent of the 2014 institutional budget is slated for use on internationalization-related activities, amounting to roughly 4,000,000 RON per annum (some 900,000 Euros). However this amount is not at the CIC's disposal, which makes CIC less financially autonomous than other structures in the university (e.g. faculties). (Interview 8)

The Alexandru Ioan Cuza University Iași (UAIC)

UAIC, by contrast, has opted for a mainstreaming approach, in that despite its participation in the IEMU project (which included a signed agreement by the participating universities that they would develop an institutional internationalization strategy), it refused to develop a specific internationalisation strategy, instead opting to mainstream internationalization activities across its administrative, educational and research-focused

activities. This approach was preferred as the university sought to have a comprehensive internationalization policy, which is mainstreamed across all institutional missions. According to the UAIC self-assessment report (2013), the main transversal objectives include:

- The initiation of new academic cooperation agreements with renowned universities in view of developing mutual programs of academic training;
- Increasing UAIC participation in international educational and scientific research programs and projects;
- Increasing the number of international academic exchanges, visits of invited professors and participation in international scientific events;
- The development of an active role and participation in the events and actions initiated within the multiple international partnerships and organizations in which UAIC is a member with a view to exerting its influence in European educational policies;
- Increasing the number of courses in foreign languages.

Within the same report, UAIC repeatedly emphasized their mainstreaming approach, and despite the seemingly secondary role that internationalization has among institutional policy areas, the results that UAIC has managed to attain are fairly substantial by Romanian standards.

Actors

When discussing the transition between policy, strategy design and its effective implementation, it is important to look into the actors involved during the initial design stage.

This is critical, as it potentially offers explanations with regard to attitudes among the academic community towards internationalization activities.

In UBB, the existence of a developed unit with international relation functions meant that actors were often brought together via their institutional relations with the CCI. During the early development of the internationalization strategy, the CCI was directly coordinated and subordinated to the Vice-Rector for International Relations and the Rector of the University. All international activities managed by CCI were monitored by these institutions. Depending on the type of activity, other UBB administrative structures were involved in the evaluation and monitoring process (e.g.: cooperation with Germany or Hungary might also be monitored by the Vice-Rectors responsible for the German or Hungarian lines of study). CCI collaborated and communicated with other university units including: Senate, Rector's Office, Vice-Rectors, faculties, Department of Communication and PR, Research Department, Institute for Doctoral Studies, European Programs Office, Fundraising Office, Alumni Centre, cultural centres, and centres for modern languages (UBB, 2014). It is important to note that administrative structures within universities have been reformed after 2012, with a smaller management team giving the rector a more central role in developing internationalization policies. Faculties and departments have some autonomy in establishing their own policies and strategies with regards to internationalization, though these might require the approval of the responsible Vice-Rector or the Rector.

Some UAIC faculties stand out in terms of their commitment to internationalization, such as the Political Science, European Studies or Economics Faculties. This could be explained

by the internationalized nature of the disciplines, as well as due to the international networks that various staff members have built over the years (Interview 10).

Since 2014, the CIC included three different departments – the Erasmus office (at the request of the European Commission, which apparently insisted on separate Erasmus offices within each university); an international partnership agreements’ office and a recruitment office for both foreign students and staff (Interview 8).

In UAIC as well, the main driver behind the formation of internationalization policies seems to be the central administration of the university, which includes the Rectorate, the Academic Senate Committee for International Cooperation and the CIC. The section of the UAIC strategic plan referring to internationalization was developed by a team under the coordination of the Vice-Rector for International Relations, and comprised of the members of the Council for International Relations and staff from the Department of International Relations. The final form of any previous institutional strategic plan has been approved by the University Senate (UAIC, 2015).

5.5 Implementation of internationalization policies, tools and funding

Responsible structures

As mentioned before, UBB has dedicated structures responsible for internationalization activities, while UAIC tends to use a mainstreaming approach and thus distributes the internationalization workload between its various departments and structures. The Centre for International Cooperation (CCI) is the main body responsible for international affairs being previously coordinated by a pro-rector (UBB, 2014). More recently, activities pertaining to

internationalization will once more be under the direct supervision of the rector, as internationalization activities gain more prominence via the use of the new internationalization strategy. CCI has also been expanding, with both the number of employees and volunteers growing over the past few years. It currently includes 12 permanent staff members and eight part time employees, which makes it one of the biggest departments of this type in a Romanian university.

In UBB, faculties and departments may set their own goals regarding internationalization and may set their own agenda in achieving these goals. When internationalization-related initiatives are done in the name of the university, an approval from the Vice-Rector in charge with international cooperation is required. The CCI centralizes all the information related to internationalization and external cooperation across the university, thus enabling the central management to have a clear overview of all international activities undertaken at all levels (UBB, 2014).

UAIC, despite the low commitment to the use of formal structures dealing with internationalization policies, does have certain consultative bodies, such as the Council for International Relations, a consultative structure of the UAIC Administration Council which assesses the activity of international relations and may advise on the review of the current internationalization policy and propose concrete actions and activities of international cooperation (UAIC, 2014).

UAIC also has a Department of International Relations which is formed of the European Programs Office with six full-time employees and a Partnerships Office with three full time employees at the time of the drafting of the IEMU self-assessment report (UAIC, 2014). The

Department of International Relations (DIR) is also the structure responsible for implementing internationalization activities. DIR is a central structure whose activity is coordinated by the Vice-Rector for International Relations. DIR carries out its activity with the support of the Faculties and their representatives in charge with International Relations (*ibid.*).

The gap between the lack of a coherent internationalization strategy and the notable (by Romanian standards) results that the university has achieved can be partially explained by the importance of individual efforts. This was highlighted in the IEP assessment of the university from 2012, in which the study visit team noted that

‘internationalisation seems to be partly the result of individual initiatives. The team recognises that the university supports those initiatives and regards them as important contributions. In several cases the Team was told that it was possible to turn them into stronger institutional links. Nevertheless, the Team considers that the University should devote greater attention to develop a consolidated structure to support and promote these internationalisation activities more profoundly. Individual initiatives are certainly important and reveal the dynamism of internal members, but they are not sufficient if the university wants to be consequential in making internationalisation a strategic objective.’ (IEP 2012: 19)

This was also confirmed in interviews, where it was found that there are two particular reasons for the very good performance of UAIC. One is leadership continuity – the current Vice-Rector in charge of Internationalization is at his third mandate and was also one of Romania’s Bologna Experts for a number of years. At the same time, the scarcity of financial resources in this North – East region probably pushes the university to make use of every funding

opportunity, such as the former EU Lifelong Learning program, the current Erasmus+ and Horizon 2020 schemes, CEEPUS, as well as Francophonie support through AUF/ OIF.

European programs and their impact

A key aspect in fostering international links is ensuring a higher degree of international mobility for Romanian students. While Romanian higher education itself has roots in the habit of 19th century *boyars* or nobility to send their sons to study in prestigious French, British, Austrian and German universities, the advent of communism had severely disrupted academic mobility between Romania and most other European countries. The preference was for supporting incoming degree mobility with like-minded countries on the same side of the Iron Curtain and Romania was in the 1980s one of the most successful countries in this respect.

After the 1989 Revolution, these links were slowly re-established, but the key tool in fostering international student and staff mobility is by now the Erasmus program in its various forms. Using data obtained from Romania's Erasmus agency ANPCDEFP (2015), it is safe to pinpoint to UBB and UAIC as some of the most active universities in facilitating outgoing short-term mobility for both students and staff and in at least attempting to facilitate potential incoming flows. UAIC and UBB have been the two most successful universities in using Erasmus funds in the 2007 – 2013 EU financial exercise (ANPCDEFP, 2015)

UAIC has been particularly active in the Erasmus-Socrates program, starting activities within the scope of the program as early as 1997. By the time it compiled a self-assessment report for the IEMU project, almost 4000 UAIC students had spent one or two semesters in one of the EU/EEA/candidate country partner universities. Almost 900 teaching mobility placements

had been organized in 15 years. About 800 incoming students and 900 teaching staff from other European countries had studied or taught at UAIC within the Erasmus framework (UAIC, 2013).

These achievements are even more significant when placed in a national context. In terms of outgoing students in credit and placement mobility, UAIC stands out among Romanian universities. Over 10% of Romanian students engaged in outgoing mobility through the Erasmus program between 2007 and 2013 were from the university. This share considerably exceeded the university's share of the national student population: despite being the fourth largest higher education institution, UAIC is the number one sender of students on credit mobility as per the latest available data (ANPCDEFP, 2015). UBB has had a somewhat poorer record, but still noteworthy when compared to many other public universities. Per capita, it sends out more students than HEIs such as the University of Bucharest or the West University of Timisoara, which are some of the other large comprehensive universities. In global terms, it is the second largest sender of students in outgoing mobility programs. UAIC and UBB are the universities which sent out most students on the academic mobility Erasmus program in the 2007 – 2013 timeframe.

However, a large gap between outgoing and incoming mobility flows can be documented. Both universities attract considerably fewer teaching staff and students than they send out, reflecting a chronic imbalance in the attractiveness Romania asserts as a would-be destination for academic mobility (ANPCDEFP, 2015).

Programs in foreign languages

Multiculturalism is one of the 'core pillars of UBB', according to the self-assessment the university produced as part of the IEMU project and this is reflected in the large number of

programs in languages other than Romanian (UBB, 2014). The institution provides educational services in three official lines of study (Romanian, Hungarian and German language lines), but offers programs and courses in other languages, including English and French. The three lines of study are autonomous and function in a cross-departmental fashion. They are organized at each level (department, faculty, university) and represented at all levels in which a line of study is active (the smaller German line, for example, does not cover as many academic areas as the larger Romanian and Hungarian ones). UBB also hosts Italian, Polish, Chinese, Russian, English, Austrian, Portuguese, Korean and other cultural centres, libraries and institutes. Overall, the university offers a total of 253 accredited or authorized undergraduate programs: 153 in Romanian, 75 in Hungarian, 10 in German, 12 in English and three in French, and 265 accredited master programs: 175 in Romanian, 40 in Hungarian, 37 in English, six German, six in French and one in Italian (UBB, 2014).

UAIC has a considerably less extensive tradition when it comes to the development of programs in foreign language. For example, in 2012, out of 86 functional study programs only four were in foreign languages, including three in English and one in French (UAIC, 2012). However, for master studies the number of programs available in foreign languages extends to 18 out of a total of 118, of which 15 in English and three in French. PhD programs, however, benefit from extensive international cooperation, with no fewer than 68 PhD candidates studying under joint supervision. France dominates international partnerships available for PhD studies, which seems natural in light of UAIC's extensive involvement in the AUF programs.

International partnerships

UAIC has excelled at using direct bilateral partnerships to lead to improve international connectivity, with more than 260 signed partnership agreements. The university is also a member of the Coimbra Group, EUA (European University Association), IAU (International Association of Universities) and AUF (L'Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie). These partnerships enabled about 1500 UAIC students and faculty members to benefit every year from study, teaching and research mobility sojourns abroad and to participate in various international academic events as of 2013 (UAIC, 2015). As of early 2015, 96 of these partnerships were still active (UAIC, 2015). The distinction between signed and active partnerships is important, as it is rather rare among the reports submitted by universities within the IEMU project, and seems to indicate a preoccupation for a quality-focused assessment of internationalization as opposed to a purely quantitative approach.

UBB also extensively uses international agreements and partnerships as part of its internationalization efforts. The total number of partnerships listed in the IEMU self-assessment report was 167, for the academic year 2014-2015 (UBB, 2014: 7). This is in addition to over 500 partnerships concluded for cooperation as part of Erasmus-related mobility schemes. It is important to note that the number of active international agreements has seen a slow decline over the past few years, with the total falling from 189 in 2012-2013 to 177 in 2013-2014 and to only 167 for 2014-2015 (*ibid*).

Budgeting

The issue of budgeting is difficult to discuss, given that many of the activities pertaining to internationalization policies are mainstreamed into other activities and budget lines.

With regards to UBB's provision of funding for the CCI, there has been a slight decline in the allotment of funds for internationalization activities over the past few years, though other resources – including CCI volunteers and employees involved in internationalization-related activities - have been increasing. In its IEMU self-assessment report, UAIC mentioned an allocation of some 50,000 Euros per annum for explicit internationalization-related activities, in contrast to the roughly 100,000 provided on average by UBB for the CCI alone.

However, the UBB funding component within the internationalization strategy goes beyond the direct CCI budget. Some 900,000 Euros were slated for internationalization activities according to the internationalization strategy. Of these, no more than 25% would be the direct contribution for CCI salaries, with the biggest overall share (nearly 40%) going to activities designed to attract greater numbers of foreign students to Cluj. Most of the activities designed for this purpose tend to have a heavy orientation towards marketing and public relations, which would reinforce the conclusion that internationalization policies are mostly geared towards increasing the international standing of the university.

Comparative outcomes

UAIC has obtained fairly good results in terms of promoting international mobility for its students. As mentioned before, the 2,611 students which took part in Erasmus during the 2007-2013 LLP implementation period made UAIC the top global sender of students to credit mobility

and one of the top senders in relative terms. While there are far fewer incoming students, their number has nearly doubled from 2012/2012 to 2013/2014. The university has also managed to keep a population of full-time foreign students that has been growing at a rate of some 10% per year in the past few years (UAIC, 2013), with international enrolments in the 2013-2014 study year nearing 5% of the student population. It is important to note that with Moldova and Ukraine being two of the top countries of origin, it is likely that at least some of these flows are fuelled by enrolments by ethnic Romanian students from abroad.

With regard to staff, there remains a large imbalance between outgoing and incoming, though the latter number is growing very fast. The number of partnerships is rather high as well, indicating both the strength of individual initiative as well as the importance of participation in networks such as the *Francophonie*. This includes several joint degree programs and Erasmus Mundus degrees.

As stated before, the number of outgoing credit mobility students from UBB has been fairly stable over the past few years, and the university has had the second highest number of outgoing mobile students in the country (ANPCDEFP, 2015). In contrast to UAIC, the number of credit-seeking incoming students in UBB has fallen by some 40% between 2011/2012 and 2013/2014, standing at just 135 in the latter year (UBB, 2014). Both the number of outgoing and incoming staff has seen drastic reductions in the case of UBB, with the former registering an approximate 75% fall between 2011/2012 and 2014/2015. The number of incoming staff – standing at 132 in 2014/2015 – remains higher than at UAIC, but the trend is the opposite (the fact that the university needs to keep permanent positions open so that it can provisionally

attract foreign academic staff might add to this decreasing trend). In fact, the two universities have achieved nigh-on parity considering the larger size of Babes-Bolyai.

The full-time foreign student population in UBB has had a mixed evolution over the past few years. While the number of bachelor and PhD students has been falling, the number of foreign students enrolled in master programs has nearly doubled.

The number of international partnerships and agreements in which UBB is involved has also been falling slowly over the past 3 years, though comparability with UAIC cannot be fully guaranteed due to the lack of any concrete definition of what an active partnership means (in Romania, many partnerships are not formally dissolved upon cessation of their active stages).

5.6 Obstacles and risks

Both universities are confronted with various obstacles in their quest to become more internationalized. Some of these are internal, and often result from the nature of present staff, curricula and capacity. The changes needed for making programs attractive to foreign students, from financial allocations to changes in the language of provision, fueled some resistance to pursuing internationalization goals from the side of both administration and teaching staff members (Interview 8). However, it was noted that internal opposition to pursuing an internationalization agenda is fairly limited, due to the perceived urgency to attract more foreign students for maintaining teaching jobs and the prestige of the university. The concerns which are voiced are usually linked with preferential resource allocation, the quality of the incoming students and the need to teach in a foreign language (Interviews 10 and 11). Finally, the reluctance to prioritize some initiatives coming from specific faculties or departments over

other is characteristic to large comprehensive universities, with a strong sense of collegial governance, as is the case with UBB and UAIC (Interviews 8 and 10).

Many are, however, extrinsic. These often result from state policies (or lack thereof) and are largely centered on bureaucracy and immigration rules and policies (UEFISCDI, 2015).

The national legislation with regard to visas and work permits is an issue when it comes to attracting international students and staff respectively. It is important to remember that Romania does not have streamlined immigration policies or procedures for international students from outside the EU/EEA/CH area, thus leading to considerable delays and problems in obtaining a temporary residence visa, especially recently, in light of various terrorist incidents and the Syrian migration phenomenon. While both universities mentioned within their IEMU self-assessment reports the need to set priority regions for the recruitment of international students, current national policy does not allow for the facilitation of visas for non-EU/EEA citizens and the government does not have a national set of priority regions that the universities could concentrate on. The recent developments linked to the rise in terrorist attacks across the world makes this process even more difficult, especially for non-EU students.

A particularly problematic issue is the reform fatigue and resistance to change, as well as the bureaucratic burden that Romanian universities are confronted with as a result of the creation of new system management processes such as quality assurance. The issues surrounding the implementation of quality assurance policies (Geven and Maricut, 2015; Geven et al, 2014) are a valuable example of how political priorities of the state do not always result in genuine support and meaningful transformation at institutional level even when they are transformed into effective policy. UBB in particular pointed out the dangers of a bureaucratic

system at national level that provides little guidance for universities, while setting very tight deadlines. They also criticized frequent changes in procedures, which creates obstacles towards tabling long-term plans. UBB also mentioned that when asked to decide upon particular situations, the Ministry takes too long to respond or sends incomplete answers (UBB 2014; Interview 8).

Another obstacle that was brought up by the responders is the lack of an accreditation framework enabling joint degrees to be set-up. The situation is dealt-with by ARACIS, the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education in a rather ad-hoc manner, according to one of the coordinators of international departments:

‘Even if a large scale, multi-national project was developed in order to work on an evaluation framework for joint degrees at the Master level, which was supported by EU funds and included 8-9 universities from partner countries, ARACIS never pushed for the legal changes that would have allowed for this new framework to be applied. When ARACIS evaluators look at joint degrees, they sometimes turn a blind eye to some national criteria which don’t make sense for a program with two or more universities involved as partners.’
(Interview 8)

There were also concerns with regard to the feeble regulatory framework on double degrees or mobility, which hinders the efforts of universities to be more proactive in drafting their internationalization policies.

The length of the recognition process, especially for diplomas issued in non-EU countries, was also raised as a deterrent for attracting foreign students and staff. Another obstacle was deemed to be the lack of national financial incentives for universities that want to

pursue internationalization. Finally, universities raised the lack of correlation between the boundaries of institutional autonomy in Romanian legislation and the financial and human resource leeway that the universities need in order to be competitive in the global arena.

In terms of obvious risks, it is perhaps noteworthy that most internationalization activities at the institutional level are supported by European funds or regional mobility schemes. An over-reliance on EU programs means that universities have little opportunity to include in their strategy anything departing from the EU set goals and hampers comprehensive and coherent internationalization strategies, which would require that attracting EU funds be a means to an end and not a goal in itself.

5.7 Conclusion

As leading research higher education institutions, both UBB and UAIC are at the forefront of international cooperation efforts by Romanian universities, and have tried to mainstream international activities as part of their strategies, policies and practices. To a large degree, European integration has made this a natural next step for some of the most prestigious domestic universities, which now increasingly have to construct their image in a context of comparability with institutions from across the continent.

However, if we look at the structures developed for internationalization, we can say that the entire process has been largely driven by extrinsic factors such as European integration or by the perception of internationalization as a tool in tackling existing or emerging problems. European cooperation associated with deeper integration by Romania into EU structures has often been a key tool in fostering greater international openness. Even here, it is not so much

the innovative approach to engagement in the Lifelong Learning Program or – more recently – in Erasmus+ that has brought the added value, but the intensity with which participation in these programs has been pursued. Even so, it is important to remember that the intensity of this participation is relative only to the Romanian context, which remains one of overall weak mobility flows in comparison to the size of the Romanian higher education system (ANPCDEFP, 2015). Attempts to differentiate between universities within a shrinking higher education system that competes for fewer and fewer students and resources has made internationalization a potential tool in strengthening recognition for top institutions such as UBB and UAIC.

Of course, while internationalization has gradually made its way into institutional strategies and discourses, there remains a clear and visible implementation gap. Growth in student mobility numbers has seemed to stagnate towards the end of the LLP cycle in Erasmus implementation, and certain indicators (such as international partnerships) show a diminishing intensity with regard to international cooperation (particularly for UBB). This is probably at least to some extent the result of a lack of proactive, strategically coherent internationalization policies that can be systematically implemented at institutional level. Even when objectives are formulated, they are often framed as an international dimension to existing activities, rather than as clearly defined and realistic objectives set for institutional administrations.

Nevertheless, at the level of internationalization that currently occurs in Romania, it seems that the proactive involvement of university staff and coordinators in setting up international agreements and enhancing cooperation has been able to compensate for the lack

of overall capacity and strategic approach. This is best reflected in UAIC's superior dynamics, despite the complete lack of any strong institutional framework for internationalization.

In both institutional cases, it can be documented that internationalization is also seen as a compensating policy for demographic and public funding declines, while also being regarded as a way to move up the pecking order, both nationally (in light of the provisions linking the classification exercise to public funding disbursement), as well as internationally – both UAIC and UBB make frequent use of their standing in various international league table as one of their main selling points in general presentation and marketing campaigns.

Despite the use of internationalization policies as a way to compensate for the lack of institutional differentiation in the national context, as well as for offsetting budgetary and demographic concerns, both universities also displayed a deeper understanding of the more comprehensive nature of the concept and recent developments prove that a more diversified policy could be pursued in the future. In the case of these two universities, activity-based internationalization strategies seem to slowly be evolving to early stage comprehensive internationalization policies.

Chapter 6 - Internationalization of non-research intensive higher education institutions in Romania

6.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an insight into how internationalization is pursued in three higher education institutions in Romania that belong to the categories of ‘institutions focused on teaching and research’ and ‘institutions focused on teaching’, according to the 2011 classification exercise. The chapter looks at three study cases: the West University in Timișoara (WUT), the Romanian-American University (RAU) and the Constanța Maritime University (CMU). These three institutions were selected from the twenty university sample in the IEMU project, which means that they volunteered to work on their own internationalization strategy. The diversity of their mission and profile, as well as their pro-activity with regard to internationalization policies makes them relevant for deepening the analysis of institutional approaches to internationalization policies in the Romanian context, with a potential wider relevance. They also provide a different point of view from the ‘classic’ internationalization model at the university level, which primarily belongs to research intensive and comprehensive universities (see previous chapter).

The analysis starts with a general overview of their position within the Romanian higher education system, as well as their main characteristics. The rationale of pursuing internationalization policies is then examined, as well as how they were formulated and by whom. The chapter goes on to analyze the policy instruments used to further

internationalization and the actors responsible for their implementation, as well as a very brief overview of their outcomes, as much as they can be captured in light of the recent focus on internationalization policies. Finally, the obstacles to internationalization at the institutional level and the risks arising from existing approaches are again looked at, similarly to the approach used in the previous chapter. The conclusion comparatively draws on the specific nature of internationalization pursuits for these three examples of higher education institutions and outlines the policy lessons that can be more generally drawn, while taking into account their relevance for the wider Romanian context.

6.2 Background information and case study selection

The three universities dealt with in this chapter represent different models of institutional organization, have different institutional missions and overall strategic objectives, and cover a more limited range of studies than the comprehensive research universities discussed in the previous chapter. While the three institutions differ in their ambitions, goals and profiles, they are united by the fact that they did not make the 'cut' to the top tier of 'research higher education institutions' as defined by the 2011 classification exercise. They are all post Second World War institutions, with two of them founded in their current institutional setup only after the 1989 Revolution, thus being part of the universities that appeared during Romania's transition-era participation boom.

Nevertheless, the complex rationales, identities and activities associated with this institutions help paint a more complex picture of the factors that have made

internationalization an appealing policy choice for university managers in Romania, as well as regarding what influences their internationalization strategies.

The first of these three institutions, the Constanța Maritime University (CMU) is one of the country's specialist universities, being the only non-military institution specialized in training naval merchant marine officers in the country. Situated in Romania's only major coastal city, it is a very new public university, having gained independence from the militarized Naval Academy (Institute) only after the 1989 Revolution. The institution trains naval personnel for commercial operations, while the Naval Academy has maintained a parallel existence training Romania's military naval personnel. The University – even before participation in the IEMU project - was probably one of the most internationalized in the country, at least in certain areas, due to the very nature of its programs and practical training. All graduates need to be capable of communicating in a multicultural environment and have usually had international practical training by the point of graduation, as Romania's drastically reduced commercial navy means that the vast majority of graduates end up training with and working for international employers. The institution is also highly distinct in the Romanian higher education landscape, thus reducing the possibility of having any meaningful domestic inter-institutional cooperation, again encouraging the university to seek partnerships abroad.

The West University of Timișoara (WUT) is, structurally, rather similar to the 'Babeș-Bolyai' and 'Alexandru Ioan Cuza' universities discussed in the previous chapter. It is a comprehensive institution dealing with a broad range of fields including various branches of science, humanities, arts and theology. Currently, the WUT has 11 faculties with several departments in each. The largest faculty is currently the Faculty of Economy and Business

Administration. It is the largest university in its development region (the Western region) and is a member of the prestigious *Universitaria* consortium. However, it does have a series of elements differentiating it from the institutions discussed in previous chapter. First of all, it is a much newer institution, only having been established as a full-fledged university in the 1960's, on the backbone of a previous teacher training institute. The institution is also smaller than its Transylvanian and Moldavian peers, having a total student population of only 13,823 students as of 2015 (CNFIS 2016). It also differs in its ambition, since one of its stated goals is to be a regional leading university¹⁸, thus taking advantage of its proximity to Romania's Western borders with Serbia and Hungary.

The Romanian-American University (RAU) is part of a range of institutions that constitute Romania's private higher education sector. The initiative of the establishment of the Romanian-American University belonged to Prof. Ion Smedescu, who founded the institution in 1991 and oversaw its expansion, while at the same time heading the Romanian-American Foundation for the Promotion of Education and Culture. The educational model promoted at the Romanian-American University was modelled after what were seen as American principles of management, based on the efficient organization of activity, a 'tenacious sense of duty', cultivation of labor, self-respect and respect for others and fair competition (RAU, 2014). The university – unlike many others private HEIs – has a reputation for excellence, particularly in the realm of economics studies. It remains fairly small and focused on its campus in Northern Bucharest, and has been actively engaged in projects aimed at enhancing various aspects of higher education policy, including IEMU.

¹⁸ <http://www.uvt.ro/ro/uvt/mesajul-rectorului/>

6.3 The need for internationalization policies

Given the different nature of the universities covered in this chapter, their motivations for pursuing internationalization do not fit into a single monolithic pattern, and while looking at the preambles and visions associated with their internationalization strategies, we see this differentiation quite clearly. All three universities were more or less straightforward in describing their motivations, perceived strengths and threats with regard to developing internationalization policies and activities. Their smaller size in comparison with the previous two case studies (UBB and UAIC) allowed for a more streamlined approach to internationalization policies, while remaining close to their wider mission.

6.3.1 The quest for prestige, financial sustainability and carving a niche in the higher education spectrum

For WUT, the motivation for internationalization seems to be rather similar to that of the comprehensive universities discussed in the previous chapter. This is, at least, the impression given by a review of the institution's strategic documents. WUT mentions its performance in international rankings (QS in particular) as well as achievements, infrastructure and suitability to be key cornerstones in further developing internationalization policies. These aspects are discussed in the first part of the preamble to the internationalization strategy, thus indicating the high priority which the current institutional administration addresses to issues of prestige and positioning within the hierarchy of Romanian and European higher education institutions (WUT, 2015).

This is, of course, largely explicable with reference to WUT's position within Romania's university system. As a regionally dominant comprehensive university and via its membership of the *Universitaria* consortium, it is expected that its ambitions or self-perceived place in the higher education landscape would mirror its larger peers in Cluj and Iași. Indeed, its situation in one of the country's most developed regions, with local traditions of multiculturalism, proximity to major European development hubs (Timișoara is closer to Budapest or Belgrade and as close to Vienna as to the Romanian capital) put a similar type of pressure on developing a high profile that we see in the case of UBB. As one interviewee underlined:

'It would be inconceivable to not focus on internationalization, from a survival perspective, but also as Timișoara needs to be connected to the world as an academic centre, similar to Iași or Cluj. Democratically, for the past two elections of the WUT leadership, the academic community chose a managerial plan which highlighted internationalization as a main goal. In addition, international partnerships are key to enhancing the quality of WUT programs' (Interview 12)

6.3.2 The demographic pressure

The same demographic pressures that apply to UBB and UAIC apply, of course, across the entire higher education landscape. However, the way in which each of the institutions is affected differs considerably.

In the case of WUT, as a rather regional university, its income streams are heavily dependent on the demographic outlook of the West and to a lesser degree the South-West region. While the county surrounding Timisoara (Timiș county) is the most demographically

stable area outside the capital (INS, 2013), the greater West and South-West regions have some of the worst demographic outlook in the entire country, with a very low birth-rate (INS, 2016) and with numerous areas formerly dependent on mining (Hunedoara, Caraş-Severin and Gorj counties), depopulating at a rate that is now rapidly reducing the available pool of students within WUT's traditional recruitment basin.

RAU has also seen risks spike as the demographic downturn started to change population structures. The downturn wiped out a large part of the private higher education sector (CNFIS, 2015), with many universities downsizing several-fold over their initial student populations. The reasons are not difficult to grasp, as the stable number of state-funded study places in public universities meant that an ever growing share of the secondary school graduate cohort could now have access to fully subsidized education in public institutions, even in relatively prestigious ones. RAU, however, never fielded the same operational model seen in a large part of the private sector, and focused on full-time studies concentrated in its Bucharest campus with a primary focus on attaining excellence. Nevertheless, as a fee-charging university, the demographic crunch presents a risk as more and more of the secondary education graduate cohorts have free-of-charge study places available in some of the most reputable public universities.

CMU has a different context yet again compared to the other two universities. As the university targets the formation of students for a specific range of professional activities, its attractiveness is highly dependent on the market demand for its graduates in the global crewing and naval engineering employment markets, having the possibility to compensate for demographic swings to some degree. The report prepared for the IEMU strategic planning

meeting indicated that the CMU does not have the problems with the overall decline in student numbers seen in the case of most Romanian HEIs, since the well-paid jobs that graduates are able to access after graduation ensured that CMU maintained and even increased its student numbers (UEFISCDI 2014 – SPM CMU).

6.3.3 Recognition by a global labor market

This is a factor that is highly specific to CMU as a university, in that its professional nature and the international scope for employability that it gives to its graduates makes the university dependent on maintaining its competitiveness as a supplier of skilled graduates for the global maritime industry. We can see this reflected in the preamble of its internationalization strategy, in which the institution discusses both the key issue of maintaining and updating professional standards (part of which are regulated by the International Maritime Organization). CMU's take on being internationally competitive is backed up by its own perception that its capacity to keep standards high and costs low are strong factors in enabling it to compete in the niche market of international naval studies (CMU, 2014).

A similar rationale linked to the attractiveness for the labor market is to be found at RAU. The university, in as much as it analyses its current strengths and weaknesses with regards to internationalization, seems to be focused on exploring both international models and practices, as well as in bringing international staff and training its own staff to become more internationally aware. While the bulk of the Romanian higher education system has seen professional mobility (by teaching staff) increasingly focused on regional partners and Southern

Europe (ANPCDEFP & CPE, 2015), RAU has been focusing mobility efforts on creating ties with prestigious higher education systems such as those in the UK, Ireland or Finland (RAU, 2015). The structures and centers that have been developed at RAU (discussed below) are an indication of the anticipative strategic thinking, with booming interdisciplinary areas, such as Asian Studies being embedded within the institution.

6.4 The formulation and development of internationalization policies

Within the three universities, the existing traditions of internationalization were reflected upon and further developed into comprehensive internationalization strategies as part of the IEMU project. As we shall see below, each institution brought its own take on internationalization, basing their strategic orientation on existing strengths and experience.

CMU

As part of the IEMU project, CMU developed an internationalization strategy titled ‘CMU Strategic Plan of Internationalization’, which was approved in December 2014. The strategy has several parts and in its preamble it states as transversal goals the expansion of already existing achievements, including the opening of a branch in Kazakhstan and the training of several hundred Nigerian students in maritime transport and engineering (CMU, 2014). The strategy also emphasizes the role of research in fostering international cooperation (though CMU has a rather limited track record in this sector), as well as the importance of transnational partnerships such as membership of the International Association of Maritime Universities (*ibid.*).

The strategy sets out four major objectives, as follows:

1. The internationalization of the university and the promotion of a culture of internationalization within its premises
2. Increasing the visibility of the CMU in research
3. The internationalization of more teaching programs
4. Attracting more international students and internationalizing CMU's domestic students, administrative and teaching staff

The strategy also prescribes a series of 'actions' which it lists in a non-prioritized order. While the strategy does specify a timeline for the various envisaged actions and the would-be sources of funding, it does not detail operational budgets for these actions and specifies that they will be executed and modified as suitable, based on the approval of annual operational plans¹⁹. Those responsible for each action include the rector, vice-rector in charge of international affairs or the corresponding institutional department. The actions themselves are heavily focused on marketing, improving visibility and enhancing cooperation via international networks and alliances to which CMU is already a party. As we shall see later on when discussing tools and implementation, the unique dimension that CMU offers in its strategy and internationalization policies is linked to its capacity to strike peer-to-peer deals with transnational partners eager to train various populations of future merchant marine naval officers and naval engineers.

¹⁹ It should be noted, that the existence of rather variable annual budgets when discussing university funding tends to limit the will of institutions to agree to multi-annual commitments.

WUT

WUT has also developed an extensive internationalization strategy, which includes both priorities and measures. The university also deals with internationalization in other strategies (such as the overall management plan) and via initiatives at faculty and department level. Overall, the main directions of WUT's internationalization efforts, as detailed in the WUT self-study exercise (2015), include:

- Increasing the number of bilateral agreements with higher education institutions both within and outside of the European Union;
- Increasing the number of partnerships with higher education institutions, as well as research institutes, companies or other organizations from both the EU and outside;
- Increasing the number of incoming students and staff (academic and administrative) both within and outside of the European Union;
- Increasing the number of outgoing students and staff (academic and administrative) both within and outside of the European Union;
- Improving international student services by providing bilingual documentation and communication (B1 level of English to be required for all personnel involved in international student services);
- Increasing the number of jointly supervised PhD students (international joint-supervision);
- Developing joint degree or double degree programs at the masters level, as well as more programs in foreign languages that would be suitable to an international audience;
- The development of partnerships with cultural and economic organizations and institutions at the local and regional level, as well as abroad;

- Increasing the number of international events such as conferences, symposia, workshops, concerts, exhibitions and others held at WUT;
- Increased participation by students and staff to international events, conferences, symposia, etc;
- A rise in the number of ISI-indexed publications with UVT affiliated authors;
- The creation of a WUT International Summer School;
- Increased membership in higher education and/or research consortia and associations;
- The participation in higher education international fairs focusing on regions or countries with a large pool of potential international students;

The priorities described above were grouped as part of the internationalization strategy in three thematic areas, which include ‘internationalization at home’, [attracting] ‘international students’ and ‘internationalization of research’ (WUT, 2015). This thematic grouping was probably influenced by the concepts and tools used within the IEMU project. These priorities were further subdivided into more specific objectives which addressed individual priority. For example, the ‘internationalization at home’ area included several goals, further divided into activities. To give an example: Area 1 – Internationalization at home, contains Goal 1 – design a framework for internationalization at home, which in turn contains three objectives. The first objective is ‘the organization of international events’, which in turn contains two activities. Activity A sets a goal of organizing one international event in each faculty, while Activity B sets the goal of organizing a university-wide ‘Summer Academy’. All of the activities designated a person responsible and estimate a budgetary requirement (WUT, 2015). As a strategy, the budgetary allotment has a guiding character and should not be considered as an actual

budgetary commitment however. Romanian universities do not, in fact, employ multi-annual budgets.

The WUT internationalization strategy is currently being revisited, as a measure to adapt it to recent perceived needs, such as language training for professors teaching in foreign languages (Interview 12).

RAU

By its very nature, the Romanian American University already mainstreams some aspects associated with internationalization within the IEMU project, especially the ‘internationalization at home’, which was facilitated by the heavy use of English and internationalization-friendly American structural and managerial models. This is highlighted by the existence of centers and departments such as the Department of Asian Studies, the ‘Murray Rothbard’ Centre for Political Economy and Business, the IATA RAU Authorized Training Center (ATC), the Japanese-inspired Creative library Bucuresti and others (RAU, 2014). These centers are largely inspired from current international practice and offer students and researchers access to international content and practices.

Nevertheless, like in the other universities, the participation in the IEMU project has aided RAU in developing a comprehensive internationalization strategy. It is to be noted that out of the internationalization strategies discussed in this thesis, RAU’s is the most extensive and detailed. The document is highly analytical, indicating an understanding of the wider context. It starts with a review of the current situation and recent evolutions in both European

and domestic higher education, before discussing some of the strengths, weaknesses and features conducive to internationalization existing within the RAU itself (RAU, 2015).

After the very extensive analytical component (over 40 pages long, significantly larger than many institutional strategies in other universities), the document follows the structure used in other universities, with areas divided into goals, later divided into objectives and individual activities. Budgeting is non-normative, in a manner typical of Romanian universities, despite RAU having no restrictions on spending its own budget, due to its private nature.

The seven broad areas covered by the strategy include (RAU 2015):

- Area 1: International atmosphere and partnerships.
- Area 2: International experience of students.
- Area 3: Academic programs and curriculum.
- Area 4: International students.
- Area 5: International staff.
- Area 6: Staff training for internationalization.
- Area 7: Research and scholarly collaboration.

A point of originality for the strategy stems from the heavy orientation towards internationalization at home, which seems to indicate a desire to further strengthen the already built-in advantages the institutions displays when engaging in internationalization efforts.

Furthermore, the focus of the leadership was placed on using international experiences to enhance quality and build a certain multicultural attitude within the academic community, as well as a sense of responsibility for the wider national interests of Romania:

‘Of course, we have to make a point as a Romanian-American university, though our links with Europe have gotten closer as well due to Bologna. I believe that the best business schools are in North America, and we want to learn from the best. We also believe that if you want to have international networks, you need to help build it also with the aid of your internationally mobile students. Hence the advantage of having student mobility. We also believe that these students, upon graduating, help further Romania’s overall development.’ (Interview 13)

6.5 Implementation, tools and funding

The implementation of internationalization strategies is still at an early stage, so this section will have to largely deal with the actors charged with furthering internationalization strategies, as well as with an overview of the implementation of internationalization activities in the era preceding the development of formal strategies. Some of the structures that had previously existed have been expanded to take up increasing roles as part of internationalization strategies, but the lack of multi-year budgeting means that it is not yet clear how prescribed activities will be followed-up.

6.5.1 Actors involved in the implementation of institutional internationalization strategies

The strategies developed by all three institutions have a diversity of actors responsible for implementation, with provisions for a trickle-down of responsibilities towards lower levels. The development of the strategies is largely the result of executive intervention within the three institutions, but implementation sees (or should see) the engagement of a wider array of institutional actors.

Within the CMU, the main responsibility for implementation lays with the Rector, the Vice-rector responsible for international relations and the International Relations Office. There are exceptions, or rather extensions of mandate. Research-themed internationalization efforts are partially supervised by the Vice-Rector responsible for research, while an envisaged Maritime Center is given priority in the development of certain programs. The Erasmus office is involved for Erasmus+ related activities, and the IT department and deans are also included when activities are heavily reliant on an online presence or are to be undertaken within the individual faculties (CMU, 2014).

A similar setup and allocation of responsibilities exists in the WUT (WUT, 2015). A detailed interview undertaken at the institution highlighted the key role of the Department for International Relations (DRI) in day-to-day management of internationalization activities, in proposals to update and enhance internationalization policies and in their effective implementation (Interview 12). The interview also highlighted the importance of the Senate commission responsible for internationalization, which includes a student representative, thus constituting the main form of student engagement in internationalization activities (other than token participation as volunteers, which is often standard practice for various activities undertaken in Romanian universities).

RAU also has a similar organizational structure, with an International Affairs Department headed by a director overseeing the entire set of internationalization activities at operational level (RAU, 2015). The department has a special branch dealing with international students, as well as distinct branches dealing with European and American programs. It also oversees the activity of the Asian Studies Centre, thus having some content responsibilities and making the

scope of the activities coordinated by the main international department somewhat broader than at WUT or CMU.

6.5.2 The development of responsible structures

As detailed when discussing the development of strategies and responsible actors, the impulse towards internationalization often comes from the executive branch of university administrations, though *de facto* implementation usually rests with various bodies, mostly internationalization departments within each university.

The RAU details the structure of relevant departments in its international strategy. The departments responsible for implementing the internationalization strategy or other activities with a trans-national component are centered on the International Affairs Office consisting of: European Programs Office, International Students Office, American Programs Office and the Department of Asian Studies. In addition to these departments, each school has a designated coordinator for Erasmus activities and RAU has previously signaled its intent to designate a coordinator for international affairs with more extensive responsibilities (RAU 2015).

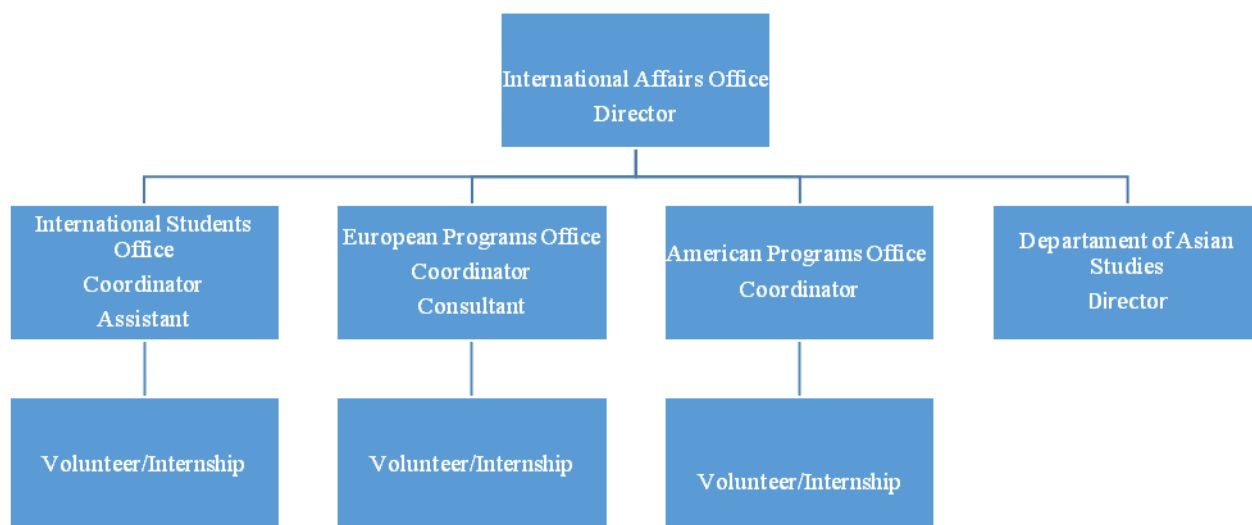


Figure 3 - International department structure RAU

A peculiar feature to be found among academic structures within RAU is the existence of special centers and departments with content focus, including an array of structures focused on what is described in other countries as ‘Asia literacy’²⁰. These departments aid in the development of scholarships and in catalyzing research activities that in turn contribute to the development of international cooperation via research channels, hence their inclusion among the structures in charge of implementing the internationalization strategy.

CMU has rather similar structures, with a Vice-Rector having a portfolio associated with international relations and a separate International Relations Office handling most of the administrative burden associated with internationalization activities (as per CMU Strategy). There are separate responsible departments for Erasmus, Maritime cooperation and a Vice-Rector responsible for research activities that has taken over part of the tasks associated with internationalization. However, there is a considerable overlap when looking at their portfolios.

²⁰ Fostering greater knowledge of and with regard to Asia.

The *de facto* dominant element in WUT's internationalization activity management seems to be the Department for International Relations or DRI. This department manages day-to-day activities, and has the responsibility of overseeing managerial and operational issues, as well as of reporting to higher-level management structures. Initiatives linked to new policy or strategic developments also seem largely to originate from this department. However, in day-to-day activities associated with internationalization, Erasmus coordinators and faculty-level actors are often key drivers in ensuring that 'things get done' (Interview 12).

Broadly speaking, the three universities keep to a pattern that can be seen across Romanian institutions which took part in the activities of the IEMU project, having a small number of staff in a few administrative departments dealing with the bulk of internationalization-related activities. A member of the institutional executive has overall responsibility in ensuring oversight (e.g. a vice-rector) and there are less active bodies in the university senates. Most of the dedicated structures were quite small, according to the self-assessment reports provided for the IEMU project (WUT, 2014; RAU, 2014; CMU, 2014b):

- CMU had three permanent and one part-time staff involved, as well as two volunteers;
- RAU had recently increased the number of staff working on internationalization to five (from three) and that of part-time staff to two. The Department of Asian Studies had six full-time and one part-time staff members;
- WUT employs three staff members within the DIR itself, but also relies on the work of volunteers and interns.

6.5.3 European programs

European programs remain a key tool in the development of internationalization within all three universities, which use Erasmus+ funds and have used its Lifelong Learning program based predecessors. The intensity of participation in Erasmus related activities of course differ from one institutional context to the other.

WUT, for example, has had a low intensity of participation in Erasmus+ according to ANPCDEF 2016 data, though recent trends indicate that an increasing number of partnerships have been followed up by a higher share of students and staff benefiting from mobility opportunities through the Erasmus+ opportunities (WUT, 2016).

The CMU is a stand-out university with regard to the use of mobility opportunities provided by the Erasmus framework. The number of students who are engaged in study or placement mobility abroad is very large when compared to the size of the university. Indeed, throughout the cycle of the Lifelong Learning program implementation (2007-2013), CMU was able to send a similar number of students abroad as the much larger WUT (ANPCDEF data). It is important to note that the overwhelming share of outgoing mobilities at CMU were placement rather than study mobilities, in light of the mandatory on-board practice requirement necessary to be able to obtain a maritime officer international certificate (CMU, 2014b). This indicates that the institution has been able to adapt the high turnover of practical internships required by international maritime training to the Erasmus framework, by using its partnerships with international shipping companies that offer training places on board commercial vessels for on-board practice. This predilection for Erasmus work placement mobility is rather unusual in the Romanian context, most universities preferring academic

mobility. This preference is based on a traditional use of the former Erasmus program, as well as on insufficient partnerships between universities and companies in other countries, in addition to a lack of the type of specialized administrative staff within Romanian universities that would be needed to allow for a mix of study and placement mobility in more higher education institutions (Interview 12).

RAU has a distinct European affairs office under the direction of the International Affairs Office, and is one of the few private institutions that have a significant participation in Erasmus-related activities. RAU has not had a particularly high intensity of Erasmus mobility, but when measured against the overall performance in the private university sector, the institution stands out. The imbalance between incoming and outgoing Erasmus students used to be high, but the number of incoming students has steadily increased. English taught programs were identified as the key to this positive development (UEFISCDI, 2015d).

6.5.4 Cross-border higher education delivery

CMU is one of the very few universities to have managed to open branches abroad. Specifically, it operated a branch within the Caspian State University of Technology and Engineering in the city of Aktau, Kazakhstan. The two programs that CMU obtained authorization for were operated in a modular system, with teaching staff from Romania visiting the institution for two to four week periods and teaching within the facilities provided by the Kazakh partner university (CMU, 2014). The branch however ceased its operation in 2015, despite significant investment from both partner universities, due to a political change at the

national level in Kazakhstan and a general re-orientation towards Russian higher education institutions for developing joint programs.

6.5.5 Direct international agreements for student mobility

The CMU stands out for the use of another strategic tool, namely direct agreements for the training of foreign students within domestic CMU facilities. Thus far, such training has been provided for almost 200 Nigerian students, who have been enrolled in formal English language programs after a direct deal was struck with the Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (CMU, 2014). Further negotiations were pursued immediately after for the enrolment of a further 125 Nigerian students as well as towards expanding the scheme by opening another partnership with Tanzania (*ibid.*).

These partnerships are a direct result of the need for qualified manpower in naval engineering across the world, and with its accessible costs and adherence to STCW and other specialized standards for the maritime industry, CMU has a very appealing 'product' for both students and governments. However, the university encountered difficulties with respect to its cooperation with state authorities in charge of visa and residence permits. Even if the agreement with the Nigerian Agency specified that CMU would enroll 800 students over four years, the national limitations on the number of foreigners that could be granted a visa prevented reaching the full potential of this agreement. Much like its Kazakh branch, these direct agreements are largely unique developments in Romanian higher education and point to a general lack of cooperation and information sharing between state authorities and higher

education institutions with respect to the national restrictions on cross-border cooperation in the field of higher education.

6.5.6 Funding

Within the strategies, all three universities have allotted funding for internationalization activities. Some of the funding (e.g. linked to EU programs) is largely provided by external mechanisms and comes from external sources. Domestically, however, none of the universities have been able to *de facto* allot financing for internationalization activities in a multi-annual fashion. However, all three strategies do display funding estimates for the various actions they prescribe, giving decision makers at least an overview of the resources required by a proper implementation of internationalization-related activities.

Previously, funding directed at internationalization was limited, with the most common expense being the salary cost of permanent staff working on internationalization. This was limited to just a few full-time employees. The exception to this is the RAU, which has had a dedicated budget even before its participation in the IEMU project. This budget, however, decreased from roughly 35,000,000 lei in 2011 to some 28,000,000 lei in 2013 (RAU, 2014).

6.5.7 Comparative outcomes

For WUT, the development of strategies and more proactive approach on behalf of the DRI has led to some tangible results. For one thing, the number of international partnerships has seen considerable growth, spearheaded by bilateral partnerships within the Erasmus+ framework (WUT, 2016). After seeing some of the most sluggish growth in outgoing mobility for

students in the 2007-2013 LLP exercise (ANPCDEFP data), the number of outgoing students now seems to be rising sharply with a clear year-to-year increase. From 149 outgoing students in 2012/2013 (after next to no growth since 2007), WUT boasted 260 students engaged in outward mobility in 2015/2016 via Erasmus+ (WUT, 2016). Outgoing staff mobility was also at a record-high level, albeit that the year-on-year evolution showed less clearly increasing trends.

Incoming mobility also showed a positive dynamic, especially for students. With 150 incoming students in 2015/2016, WUT shows a better than national average incoming/outgoing ratio, indicating successful efforts to attract more international students for credit mobility (*ibid.*).

RAU has seen particular success when it comes to the international mobility of staff, with a significant number heading for Anglophone countries (perhaps not surprisingly in light of its institutional specificity). Among the favorite countries for outgoing staff are found: United Kingdom (23 in the academic year 2010-2011, 10 in 2012-2013 and 11 in 2013-2014), Ireland (11 in the academic year 2013-2014) and Poland (seven in the academic year 2013-2014). The university did record some mobility pathways with declining enrolment, for example a noticeable decrease in the number of outgoing staff was registered for Finland, with numbers of mobile staff falling sharply between 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 (RAU, 2015). RAU also has had over 100 international students enrolled each year in full-time programs in the past few years. While the Republic of Moldova seems to be the largest provider of international students, the institution has a great diversity of origins among its international student population, with all continents except Oceania being represented (*ibid.*) The university has also

seen the number of partnerships rise in the past few years, from 32 in 2011-2012 to no fewer than 82 by 2013-2014 (RAU, 2014).

However, when results are discussed in relative terms, measured against the size of the institutions concerned, CMU seems to be the clear leader in terms of outcomes. As discussed previously, the large number of students departing in placement mobility has made the institution a *de facto* champion in Erasmus implementation (ANPCDEF data). With a large number of international full-time students, CMU also boasts one of the highest levels of non-European student enrolments among Romanian universities, if we do not take in consideration medical universities. This is, of course, a direct outcome of its outreach to foreign authorities and ability to negotiate direct agreements for student mobility, despite its modest achievements in terms of research performance (CMU was classified in 2011 in the third band – namely universities centered on teaching, which effectively meant lower research outputs). In its case, the international character of the higher education programs and the leadership ability to pursue international partnerships have balanced its education and employability oriented institutional mission.

6.6 Obstacles and risks

As previously discussed, obstacles in the way of implementing internationalization policies include poor practices regarding multi-year budgeting, partly generated by existing national legislation and despite the steep financial commitments associated with internationalization.

At institutional level, other factors come into play, often linked to domestic structures or the availability of specialized staff, but not only. In some cases, experts mentioned attitudes as problematic issues. For example, UEFISCDI experts noted that:

‘one of the key obstacles for RAU in terms of recruiting international students seems to be a lack of confidence in promoting the institution and Romania as an attractive destination’ (UEFISCDI, 2015d: 17).

In the case of RAU, the interviews also pointed to internal obstacles related to pressure exerted on the academic staff by internationalization related tasks or standards:

‘The overwhelming majority of staff support internationalization and benefit from it. [...] While some might be less enthusiastic, I doubt there is active dissent. Maybe what could bother at times is the rhythm that we ask of teaching staff: for example giving deadlines on building up a portfolio in foreign languages or on having international experience. This pressure might push some staff out of their comfort zone.’ (Interview 13)

In some other cases, there seems to be a lack of agreement with regard to how institutional internationalization strategies should play out, in terms of responsibilities and desired outcomes (UEFISCDI, 2014 CMU SPM). These different domestic visions were deemed by UEFISCDI experts to be a potential risk towards the implementation of internationalization strategies. In the case of WUT, the interview undertaken there pointed to different levels of support for internationalization policies between the different faculties and departments, but also to the issue of competence and capacity, with some departments having management problems that hindered DRI’s cooperation with them (Interview 12).

The same interview pointed to issues of poor DRI funding and the problem in accessing and communicating with Ministry representatives. This Ministry has also been blamed by other institutions for a lack of support for internationalization activities, for example non-existing funding and cumbersome bureaucratic procedures, as well as a lack of culture in supporting universities in their internationalization endeavors (UEFISCDI 2014 CMU SPM).

The issue of bureaucratic procedures was exemplified in the RAU SPM report (2015) via the problem of protracted admission procedures and tight schedules. The report noted that while applications by foreign students can be submitted at any time of the year, universities cannot send them for processing to the Ministry of Education until spring - the regular timeframe of domestic Romanian application. This situation impacts on the administrative capacity to take admission decisions in time and communicate them, so that students can organize their departure for Romania, especially when visa issues and other permits can constitute further obstacles.

The lack of a national strategy on internationalization, with clear objectives and priorities, as well as designated responsible bodies and transparent funding mechanisms was also mentioned as a big problem to step up internationalization efforts, especially by WUT and RAU. CMU was more adamant about the need to increase the level of *de facto* institutional autonomy (especially in terms of financial autonomy), in order to allow for more institutional efforts. As a longstanding member of the CMU institutional leadership mentioned:

‘We would be happy if the Ministry would leave us alone and let us spend our own resources as we see fit. The only help we would need is of diplomatic nature, especially in cases such as we encountered in Kazakhstan, where our cooperation did not end for

academic reasons, but for political ones. [...] No internationalization efforts coming from Romanian universities can be fully successful if the state authorities in charge of Romania's foreign policy are not on the same page and do not provide the necessary support for institutions that have been able to build their own opportunities in the international arena.' (Interview 14)

6.7 Conclusions

When looking into the factors that have spurred internationalization efforts among smaller Romanian universities, we see a great deal of diversity and considerable path dependency linked to the individual profile of each institution. Small institutions with heavy levels of specialization such as CMU are seemingly immune to some of the recent plights of Romanian higher education (such as falling student numbers and funding). This is due to their popularity and financial stability being strongly linked with the popularity of their topical orientation. CMU in particular is an example of how professional activities and networks can represent a vital bridgehead towards greater internationalization, to the same degree if not more than research endeavors.

In the case of WUT, the growing importance given to internationalization activities seems to be bearing fruit, especially when comparing recent trends with the rather poor outcomes (with regards to mobility, in particular) of the 2007-2013 timeframe. Of course, the short period for which we have data is insufficient to draw fail-safe conclusions, and further evaluation of the impact of new internationalization-focused policies and structures is needed. Nevertheless, there is early evidence of WUT becoming a potential example of an institution

which has used the adoption of an internationalization strategy and coherent management as a way of reversing a previously modest record with regards to international cooperation, as well as an instrument to enhance the quality of its teaching and research.

Lastly, RAU constitutes a unique case of an institution that had already been advanced with regard to 'internationalization at home' even before the IEMU project was first implemented. However, despite a number of areas in which the university can boast significant achievements, the scale of its internationalization effort does not match its domestic openness towards trans-national practices, content topics and cooperation. This can be connected to the reluctance to promote Romania as a study destination, but also perhaps to the particular nature of private higher education in Romania, both in terms of its perceived prestige, but also with regard to the different legal frameworks in which it operates.

All three universities have undergone a reflection process while being involved in the IEMU project, which had different results – WUT is set to review its internationalization strategy, with the aim of achieving a greater overlap with the expectations of the academic community, while CMU remained set on its top-down approach to strategic planning.

Chapter 7 – Key findings and research limitations

7.1 Key findings

A first set of findings deals with the factors and rationales behind the development of internationalization at both national level and within institutional settings. These are often different, but contribute to creating a complex landscape of intermingling push and pull factors that have led to the fragmented and often ad hoc internationalization process we currently find in Romania.

From the side of Romanian authorities, discussing internationalization needs to be embedded within the wider context of European integration and membership in the European Higher Education Area, as well as from various domestic needs as identified by public authorities. The institutions created in order to facilitate the use of European structural funds and the implementation of EU policies and strategies (such as UEFISCDI or ANPCDEFP, as described in Chapter 4) have often been at the forefront of the organization of public events or the development of domestic strategy frameworks that have encouraged internationalization of various academic activities.

At the government level, the efforts for promoting internationalization as a policy were largely encouraged by the Ministry of Education – at least discursively – in the context of a concerted effort aimed at classifying universities and hierarchizing study programs or in the attempt to support universities to diversify their income streams by attracting fee paying third country students. Taking into account the classification of internationalization rationales put

forward by de Wit (2002), the economic rationale for internationalization seems to be prevalent in the case of national authorities, with attention also being paid to maintain political partnerships with countries considered as priorities in the frame of Romania's foreign policy (such as Moldova, the European Union, Asia and the Middle East). Social and cultural rationales have a limited influence, with the exception of Romania's involvement in the Francophonie. But while internationalization was included in the main strategic documents concerning higher education, the government is still at times seen as an obstacle to internationalization due to the bureaucratic problems associated with international student recruitment, among others.

As discussed in the chapters (5 and 6) focused on higher education institutions, many Romanian universities have an explicit goal to improve their domestic and international standing and see themselves as potential frontrunners in terms of excellence in the national higher education systems. This line of thought seems to be particularly evident in the research intensive universities founded in the 19th century and is reinforced by the increasing Europeanization of Romania and the emergence of non-national benchmarks in describing what 'excellence' and 'performance' represent.

More importantly, universities are now facing a rapidly changing world, which often leaves them facing challenges that were rare in the earlier transition era. Romanian higher education is currently suffering from a crisis spurred by the interplay of demographic decline, rising dropout rates in secondary education (among the already diminishing cohorts) and their interplay with a funding system that is strongly linked to the number of enrolled students. This goes both for public universities as well as for private institutions, which draw the bulk of their funding from tuition fees.

These multiple factors have aggravated the financial situation of many institutions after 2009, as student numbers have halved across the country and as political pressure and resistance towards taking tough decisions on employment have seen few successful efforts in restructuring the system. Furthermore, as the battle to attract students intensified, the importance of prestige and of creating attractive study programs brought the value of internationalization to the forefront of institutional thinking. As we saw in both institutional strategies, reports and interviews, internationalization becomes a useful instrument for universities from multiple facets.

First of all, it offers the possibility of compensating for funding loss via the recruitment of more international students and the collection of tuition fees. Even European Union students (who are not charged higher fees) would be a considerable resource if enrolled in foreign-language programs funded by the Romanian government, as they still benefit from an increased share of the public funding quota (since programs taught in foreign languages are better publicly funded than those in Romanian).

Secondly, it offers opportunities for the diversification of activities, with the development of research links abroad being a prerequisite towards attracting funding and improving research output. As career advancement in Romania is now increasingly linked to research output and involvement in projects funded via international (European) grants, this is also a valuable effect of internationalization for members of the academic staff.

Thirdly, internationalization feeds into the issue of prestige and positioning within the Romanian higher education system discussed above. While there have been no successful measures to downsize the higher education system, the classification effort undertaken by the

Ministry of Education in 2011 has been pointing in the direction of conditioning public funding according to performance based hierarchical mechanisms, which encourages a resource and prestige based competition among higher education institutions. Even if the immediate linkage of the university classification exercise with the funding mechanism has been delayed, in light of the successful lobby of the National Rectors' Conference, it is to be expected that at least part of the public higher education funding will be awarded in the future based on performance related to assumed mission. Any such effort would likely employ criteria that would put the more internationalized universities at an advantage via what is likely improved research output and more autonomous funding via international student fees. Furthermore, international partnerships offer access to direct cross-border funding, in particular for research. This could potentially become a complementary source of funding to student tuition fees and also help further strengthen the somewhat secondary research component of Romanian universities. All of these in turn help boost institutional prestige, thus potentially attracting a greater share of the diminishing secondary school graduate cohorts and helping create a virtuous circle for institutional activity and funding. This type of external pressures highlight the characteristics of a resource dependent governance model in Romanian higher education, in which the steering mechanisms used by the government tend to have a sizeable effect on institutional strategies, as well as functional adaptation.

With regard to the actors driving the internationalization process, they are different depending on the level of policy making. From the national level, the process is partially driven by technocrats and experts involved in organizations dealing with European cooperation, the IEMU project being one such example with almost 30 Romanian and foreign experts on

internationalization involved at the national level alone. The National Rectors' Conference and the student organizations are not particularly active on this topic, probably due to the unequal priority given to this topic within their membership and the relatively limited exposure of most academic communities to foreign staff and students. Similarly, the lecturers' trade unions are non-existent in this debate, despite their affiliation to Education International. One of the researchers' representative associations stands out however in terms of interest in internationalization policies – Ad Astra – but this was to be expected given the large number of researchers of Romanian origin working abroad who are members of this association and the difficulties that such researchers face in trying to pursue their research interests in Romanian universities or national research centers.

Within higher education institutions themselves, there is a significant degree of variation. Transformations associated with internationalization are quite often generated by individuals managing to engage their departments in pushing through cooperation agreements abroad or using personal networks. The focus on improving the functionality of international relations departments or other staff-based bodies dealing with internationalization does however lead to significant improvements in the outcomes of cross-border cooperation, including mobility and research partnerships, as it became obvious in the analysis of the five institution sample from the Romanian context. However, there is no particular institutional configuration that is more conducive to internationalization, at least according to the analyzed sample.

The resistance of university staff is limited, as internationalization is often conveyed as a policy that would help the university survive in an increasingly competitive environment and

remain financially solvent. With little to no alternatives to this discourse, internal resistance is limited to protests linked to the way in which internationalization affects the faculty comfort or power position (due to an increased need for international research profiles). Resistance is thus more obvious for some disciplinary fields more associated with a national identity (e.g. law and history) or in case of a sudden requirement for programs to be taught in foreign languages in departments with not enough staff members with foreign language teaching abilities.

However, one of the main drivers behind internationalization in Romanian higher education is entirely external. European integration and participation in the Bologna process have considerably influenced policy discourse in higher education and have enshrined new and powerful discourses on the role of universities and activities they undertake. This was further cemented by the existence of European funding which has been accessed by domestic Romanian institutions to promote policy reforms in areas such as internationalization. At this time, it is safe to say that European discourses, policies and programs, backed up by structural funds, have given discourses such as internationalization both the legitimacy and the support needed to gain a spot in higher education policy concerns in Romania. This is a clear example of the reinforcing nature of the relationship between internationalization and Europeanization in the case of the Romanian higher education system.

Despite the existence of numerous drivers behind the process of internationalization, the entire process never seems to have reached the stage of policy formulation at the system level, beyond a mere tokenistic aspect of drafting policy supporting studies and analysis at the national level and strategies at the institutional level. Indeed, the role of formal strategies appears to be somewhat limited in driving greater international openness, though this facet is

difficult to analyze due to the recent timeline of the creation of said strategies. At the managerial levels, individuals in top positions seem to have the capacity to improve the focus on internationalization without having the backing of a systematic strategy, as can be seen from the case of UAIC Iasi University. This indicates that institutional policy in many Romanian universities is still highly dependent on the willingness of key staff to push through changes, taking on the role of policy entrepreneurs. Also, the relative lack of mobilizing power of strategic documents is not confined only to the higher education sector. Most public policy areas in Romania were 'forced' by the European Union requirements linked to the 2014 – 2020 financial exercise to design strategies in which the priorities would be clear and thus EU funds would be used for achieving a clear set of measurable objectives. However, since Romania did not have a culture of strategic planning or of designing and monitoring long term objectives, most strategies were drafted in a short timeframe, often with the help of international actors, such as the World Bank (through the technical assistance instruments) and had very little legitimacy, being largely drafted without public consultation and without a clear budget or list of responsible bodies. In this context, strategies, including those referring to higher education, can be seen as belonging to the 'world of dead letters' (Falkner and Treib, 2008), in which European or international norms and requirements are transposed in a superficial and politicized manner, with foreseeable shortcomings in implementation.

Indeed, one of the peculiar characteristics of the Romanian higher education policy formulation process, as opposed to other cases in Europe, is the over-reliance on international actors. The fact that the World Bank is still a frequent supplier of technical assistance for designing national strategies (see Chapter 4), particular policies (such as a proposal for student

loans), as well as implementation plans, is an indication of the low self-esteem and weak capacity of the government, as the main proposer of public policy documents in the national landscape. Some of this trend is motivated by the low attractiveness of jobs in the public sector (due to low wages), but there is also the influence of the informal preferences of funding bodies, such as the European Commission, to receive strategy proposals bearing the signature of international bodies or organizations. Similarly, key policy measures, such as the 2011 university classification exercise, were developed in close cooperation with actors such as the European University Association (as part of their Institutional Evaluation Program, as members' service used in this case for a government mandated system evaluation). The development of national studies and policy proposals for internationalization of higher education was also done in cooperation with an international body, namely the International Association of Universities (IAU), albeit with mixed Romanian – foreign expert teams. This continuous tendency to legitimize key and controversial policy measures or strategies with cooperation with foreign bodies or actors is a symptom of both low capacity in the system, as well as of a habit of using international norms and actors to legitimize political agendas less popular in the domestic context (policy download).

Nevertheless it should be noted that the international engagement of Romanian universities is trending positively. Both student and staff mobility are growing – even if the starting point is quite low – while the number of partnerships is increasing, with more and more universities focusing not just on numbers, but also on the quality of partnerships. Mobility numbers for students are more impressive in relative terms, as decline in student numbers mean that the share of mobile students within the remaining population is rising even faster.

And this goes beyond EU-facilitated credit mobility, with the number of international students taking up full-time studies in the country having more than doubled in the past few years. Moldova, Israel, France, Tunisia, Morocco and other countries have become major sources for incoming students (UIC, 2017), and rising student numbers indicate that even the limited inroads towards international openness and individual initiatives have been having a noticeable impact.

The important role of individual initiative means that a quite prominent element of institutional practices is linked with efforts to socialize in university networks or internationalization related events. The expertise and exposure gained by engaging in a number of such venues (such as EUA, IAU and EAIE events and trainings, higher education fairs) seems to be a major driver in gathering the support of both administrative, as well as academic staff for internationalization policies.

Many universities now have formal internationalization strategies, though it remains to be seen whether they will give more structure to the individual-driven internationalization drivers seen in many institutions. Looking at the successful example of the UAIC university in Iași, which did not have a formal internationalization strategy, but insisted on mainstreaming objectives linked to this policy area in the overall university strategic plan, it is probable that formal strategies would only lead to significant improvement if they are backed-up by a commitment from leadership, resources and expertise in how to transform them into working documents.

It is also noteworthy that the universities most active in the internationalization debate are also those which are either in a pole position due to their profile (such as research intensive

universities) or due to their already existing performance in the sector (e.g. the Romanian-American University or the Constanta Maritime University). Also, the influence of individual universities is reliant on policy entrepreneurs who are part of their academic communities (see for example the pro-activity of the Rector of the University of Suceava in developing a regionally oriented internationalization strategy, which goes beyond higher education and includes potential branches in Ukraine or Moldova).

Universities have mentioned a series of obstacles towards developing internationalization policies and strategies, and many of them have to do with government bureaucracy and red tape. Nevertheless, there are also domestic institutional restrictions to contend with, such as staff with limited communication abilities in foreign languages.

7.2 Research limitations and encountered problems

As any research project, the research work leading to the present thesis encountered some difficulties, partially limiting its scope and extent. Many of the limitations derive from the lack of extensive research existing on Romanian higher education, as well as poor data collection practices.

First of all, the limited availability of Romania-focused higher-education research literature makes the commensurability of this thesis with wider theoretical work somewhat limited. This is difficult to overcome at this point as the research discussing the Romanian context is only slowly expanding. Secondly, this led to a greater role for non-academic literature, including reports, self-assessments, strategy documents and others. While these have the benefit of being highly focused on internationalization, they fail to provide the analytical rigor present in academic literature and lack a critical outlook on said policies. This

made interviews and cross-comparison of documents necessary wherever available so as to guarantee the objectivity of the main findings.

It is also important to note that the outcomes of this thesis reflect the situations within the case universities only. It is not an attempt at producing an exhaustive mapping of internationalization practices at institutional level. The selected sample of universities indicates a diversity of approaches across the three different types of universities, as classified by the Romanian Government in 2011 according to their missions. These diverse mission profiles have led to somewhat different motivations behind internationalization, and it is likely that a systematic mapping of the phenomenon would yield even broader results.

While the problem of limited literature was anticipated at the onset of the project, a significant obstacle was posed by the limited availability of data of various kinds. The scarcity of data existing on the Romanian higher education system was expected to some degree, but other problems arose due to the lack of national standards for data collection on numerous issues. For example, institutions do not always discard inactive partnerships from the total tally when discussing international cooperation. There are also stringent limits on the availability of information such as demographic details surrounding the student body, various budgeting issues or quantitative assessments on the impact of various institutional strategies. This is however changing more rapidly and throughout the past few years more and more data channels have helped to somewhat mitigate the negative impact of information scarcity. For example during the final months of the thesis writing process, demographic data on student recruitment patterns was published for the first time in a systematic fashion, thus helping point

out the specific impact of demographic decline on individual institutions and their recruitments basins.

A particular problem visible in both interviews and institutional self-reporting was the lack of internal reflection on policy outcomes and the role of management decisions in changing institutional realities or behaviors. Certain interviews were thus less helpful than expected in determining the role of specific instruments and policies in generating institutional change or in shifting practices on internationalization. In general, university leaders felt that the lack of predictability in the field of general higher education policy in Romania, coupled with political and legislative instability, makes any long-term strategic approach that the universities could have almost futile.

7.3 Implications of findings

The first key finding of the present thesis refers to the drivers for the growth of interest for internationalization. These are centered on the simultaneous processes of European integration, demographic decline and ensuing funding cuts. In Romania, internationalization is to a large degree the fruit of context rather than institutional foresight or long-term planning. This, in turn, implies that certain fragility exists in how internationalization policies are further pursued. However, it also indicates that some of the factors stimulating internationalization – and in particular the quest to attract more international students – are likely to become a constant within the higher education landscape. The demographic decline is unlikely to be transitory and at least in the short term there is no indication that the funding system will change and eliminate the pressures generated by declines in student enrolment.

Another critical finding is the nature of internationalization as a legitimate (or, rather, as a legitimized) discourse within higher education policy. At this point, it is safe to say that while certain aspects of internationalization are embraced and encouraged – particularly mobility and international research partnerships – a genuine commitment to comprehensive internationalization policies within universities is difficult to identify outside the scope of European programs and funding. There are, of course, exceptions, but these are often linked to highly specific types of universities (such as medical or maritime institutions), which have become attractive for international students or institutional partners. In essence, there is – at this point – no reason to believe that efforts aimed at internationalizing universities would continue should support from European-level actors be reduced.

One leitmotif that is repeated in both parts of the literature and in interviews is the tension between discursive support for internationalization from the side of the government and the perceptions within institutions. This often takes the form of resentment directed at bureaucracy and red tape. For example, while the government has facilitated the growth and implementation of European mobility schemes such as Erasmus, universities continue to accuse public institutions of placing numerous obstacles in the face of efforts to attract full-time international students. One often quoted example is the slow speed of processing visa applications on the backdrop of a restrictive legislation on admissions, forcing students to struggle with tight margins if they are to arrive in time for their first classes. These findings indicate that there are factors within Romanian public policy that actively limit the capacity of Romanian universities to attract full-time international students or staff, in particular from countries which face stringent visa scrutiny procedures and in the recent context of terrorist

threats. This is also proof of the lack of coordination between different areas of public policy, notably in this case being foreign affairs or immigration policies and the policy on internationalization of higher education. There is a generalized problem with a lack of institutional capacity at both the ministry and the university levels; the ministry lacks sufficient and qualified human resources to support universities, while universities, with notable exceptions, lack the capacity to develop and implement strategic plans for furthering their internationalization efforts. This extends also at the level of the National Rectors' Conference, which is remarkably silent on most issues related to national obstacles signaled by IEMU participating universities.

Another significant finding is the role of motivated individuals with leadership positions (or so-called policy entrepreneurs) in driving through internationalization efforts including partnerships, mobility agreements and professional cooperation accords. This makes internationalization vulnerable to role changes among faculty and staff involved in decision-making processes. There is little guarantee that the effectiveness of individual internationalization efforts would be constant, should the key actors be removed from the decision-making process. This is an inherent weakness of a system that is not based on clearly formulated and accepted policy, but rather on ad-hoc local initiative. In this sense, most of the national and institutional level internationalization efforts are activity based, rather than comprehensive.

When discussing internationalization from the perspective of a policy cycle, we see that it lacks maturity, especially at the national level, with an uneven situation at the institutional level. There is little in the way of national-level policy formulation, despite the EU funded

projects run by different government agencies in recent years, and internationalization is not an explicitly stated expectation from universities (though, as we have seen, it is encouraged in an implicit fashion). While higher education institutions have advanced somewhat towards policy formulation and even implementation, evidence that this is a dominant practice in Romania remains weak. In light of the still centralized and resource-dependent governance tradition in the national system, a more explicit national policy and strategy would probably boost the institutional interest and strategic outlook on this policy area. Similarly, the formulation of a national policy, with a certain degree of stability, is likely to positively influence the priority given to internationalization at university level and encourage the build-up of more professionalized layer of staff aiding this process, especially in the still-centralized Romanian higher education sector.

Chapter 8 - Policy recommendations

Most of the recommendations of the present thesis are applicable to the Romanian context. While there is a great deal of contextual similarity between Romania and other transition countries in South-Eastern Europe, it is important to note that countries in the region do not engage in any policy integration beyond the implementation of EU regulations and adoption of Bologna action lines. Nevertheless, some of the issues covered in the thesis do have a level of relevance when looking at policy development in transition countries, especially in the European case in which the role of supranational bodies and processes looms large.

Based on the findings of the empirical chapters and their implications for the future of internationalization within the Romanian higher education system, several recommendations for better policy making in the field of internationalization of higher education can be formulated at this time.

8.1 The development of realistic and adequately resourced internationalization strategies

One recommendation directed at universities is to try to think about internationalization policies in a more systematic way, be it as separate documents or as part of institutional-wide overarching institutional planning documents and give clear and long-term responsibilities to specialized structures, as well as proper resourcing. While some of the institutions that have been particularly dedicated to improving international ties have shown considerable results despite the use of a largely *ad-hoc* approach, there is a great risk that these policies and

practices will not continue in the long-run unless they become embedded not only in institutional culture but also in managerial practice. This implies the development, implementation and actual monitoring of internationalization strategies, as well as the mainstreaming of internationalization in other institutional plans and activities. In the long run, this will help universities be less dependent on extraordinary individual initiative and to develop predictable, practical and continuously improving mechanisms in fostering greater international openness.

A true internationalization effort is also likely to require national-level strategies, tackling macro issues. The link with foreign and economic policy in deciding on focus regions/countries, as well as perhaps on focus fields of study (see for example the success of medicine, pharmacy and engineering in attracting foreign students in the Romanian context) need to be defined, and as Romania grows more affluent and labor shortages are likely to form, differentiation needs to exist for those institutions and programs which are likely to attract international talent. A national-level internationalization strategy would also need to promote better coordination between government bodies, buffer agencies and universities, so as to overcome bureaucracy and the lack of a national set of incentives for successful higher education institutions in this area as limiting factors.

8.2 A reform of funding and staffing practices

A key system-wide recommendation is to develop multi-annual funding for various institutional activities, including internationalization. Public universities in particular are funded via an annual budget that is dependent on student numbers, and can see their funding fluctuate based on admission variations, demographic changes and the share of students

passing their baccalaureate examinations. It is not surprising that universities have a limited appetite towards making concrete commitments on funding internationalization activities beyond basic staff salaries for the international offices (often dealing more with Erasmus student exchanges than with overseeing comprehensive efforts). A possibility to mitigate this problem would be the use of multi-annual budgeting and the existence of guarantees by government authorities on the funding of various cross-department activities such as internationalization-related practices. In order to avoid conflicts with the other budgetary priorities, steps could be taken to reform the way in which funding is allotted to higher education institutions via dedicated funding to strategic activities, which allow for flexibility in defining institutional strategic approaches to internationalization that fit the overall mission of the university. This could be extended beyond internationalization to areas such as infrastructure investment or staff development, and could potentially enrich the scope of institutional development activities within public universities. While little of this would apply to private institutions, these could potentially benefit from public grants if they further the public agenda on international cooperation in higher education, though one needs to anticipate that such a course of action could prove controversial in the Romanian public sphere.

In terms of attracting foreign professors and researchers, the main obstacle in public universities lies with the public salary grid which prevents universities from being able to design attractive recruitment packages. This is a structural issue that needs to be dealt with by a change in the national normative framework, but that would surely have the support of institutional leadership.

8.3 More commitment to internationalization from the side of public authorities

At the national level, Romania needs to develop its own state-level mechanisms and tools in furthering internationalization. These could be centered on the existence of a single body dealing with the representation of Romanian higher education abroad, but can also be expanded to the development of scholarship schemes, marketing campaigns and communication with state actors on legal and regulatory changes. Such an agency could, for example, bring renewed impetus towards streamlining various problematic procedures such as recognition and could help cluster efforts aimed at internationalization within a single body. The agency could also simplify the communication between universities and the Romanian public authorities by reducing the number of distinct interactions currently in place.

Finally, the agency could assist in the process of capacity building, since the lack of capacity was one of the key obstacles to the development and implementation of strategic and comprehensive internationalization policies at national and institutional levels.

8.4 Facilitating access pathways for international students

Universities blame red tape and bureaucracy as making the recruitment of international students particularly difficult. This is largely caused by the fact that Romania does not operate a distinct admissions regime for non-nationals. For example, while many international universities inform students on admissions many months before first classes start, Romania forces them to go through the same admissions calendar as nationals, with formal notifications sent just weeks before courses start. This leaves precious little time for students to sort out visas, funding, housing and other practicalities. As Romania already has numerous obstacles in increasing inbound mobility (including prestige issues), the elimination of such unnecessary

obstacles is a key necessity. International students should be eligible for conditional offers, advanced notification on admissions and accelerated access to special visa categories. Many of these procedures have been developed by countries with internationally engaged higher education systems and are not difficult to adapt to the Romanian university system.

8.5 Further focus on internationalization at home

Universities need to transform themselves in order to be able to increase the level of international cooperation. The share of programs in foreign languages remains low, presenting a barrier in the face of staff and student mobility. As Romanian is not a prominent international language, the share of staff and students who can teach or study in Romania is considerably reduced, with participation in a one-year language training course being often problematic. Universities should invest more in the training of existing staff, requiring linguistic competence certification for new staff, translation of online information in key international languages and in guidance services.

8.6 Considerations for a potentially wider context

Romania shares a number of characteristics with other countries in the region, such as the broad historical and geo-political context of post-communist transition, while also retaining a number of specificities. It dramatically increased the number of students and higher education institutions after 1990, much like in the rest of Central and Eastern Europe, but it saw a distinctly large expansion of its private higher education sector, which is unlike most other European countries. The Romanian democratization process, which was coupled with EU and NATO accession processes and a shift towards a market economy, was strengthened by a stable

pro-European attitude of the population and a very strong cultural link with other Francophone countries. In this context, the Romanian authorities sought international legitimation and models for higher education reforms, similar to other governments in Central and Eastern Europe, but the extent to which international norms were translated in the system heavily depended on the actors mediating their understanding and sense of urgency.

The limited resources and tradition in pursuing strategic internationalization policies in the field of higher education, doubled by a lack of a colonial past or the use of a wide-circulation language, bring Romania closer to other countries in the region in being more open to international and European influences rather than having domestically developed frameworks for internationalization. At the same time and as underlined in chapter four, Romania, together with other countries in the region with similar cultural and historical pasts, are considered to be 'privileged sites for understanding the processes of Europeanization and internationalization' (Dakowska and Harmsen, 2015:5). This enables a broader understanding of the role of internationalization as a distinctive public policy within the higher education sector, itself a unique laboratory of reforms.

The distinctive actor constellation in the Romanian context which includes the government, universities, academics, student organizations and international bodies is well served by the five point star model, which also allows for a 'cat's cradle' view in helping to analyze their complex relationships. The interests of these actors changed at different times, similar to their involvement and capacity, in close connection to access to resources, which led to a different mobilization of international norms in legitimizing these interests. The multi-theory approach detailed in chapter three allowed for a complex review of their interests,

capacity and discursive use of international norms, as factors in their involvement in the design and implementation of higher education reforms and the internationalization of the Romanian higher education system.

Looking at the Romanian case, but also drawing on its place in a wider regional configuration, several considerations can be drawn with relevance to a broader context. One such consideration is the applicability of simple governance theories based largely on Western European and Anglo-Saxon realities to complex national contexts, simultaneously subjected to external pressures, such as countries in Central and Eastern Europe or other regions in transition towards democratic regimes. These theories are likely to be applicable to a very specific developed country profile and might be limited and limiting in analyzing more challenging national realities. That is why the multi-theory approach employed for this doctoral thesis might prove useful in analyzing other policy fields. Obviously, some of the overall conclusions however are heavily influenced by the specificities of the Romanian context and thus cannot be generalized to a broader region or set of countries.

The diversity of university missions should be reflected in internationalization policies

Despite the still popular world-class university model, the research undertaken in the Romanian context has shown the success of non-conventional approaches to internationalization at the level of universities. Surprising performances in areas such as international partnerships, student and staff exchanges, cross-border higher education provision and setting up joint degrees were visible in universities that depart from the research intensive profile that dominates international rankings. The European call for diversification of

higher education institutions missions, in order to answer to different societal demands and address various student profiles, has resulted in a very different way of approaching internationalization of higher education in Romania. There are thus many ways to achieve performance in internationalization practices, as a reflection of the assumed objectives of a university and this particular trend is less captured in the existing literature, as well as in national evaluation frameworks. These research results are likely to be relevant for other higher education systems with a fair degree of mission differentiation at the university level.

The need to minimize the over-reliance on international funds and technical assistance of international organizations

Central and Eastern European countries, in their unique process of shifting from one political influence area pre-1990s to the European construction, have been uniquely open to international influences and actors. These influences still persist to date, even though the position of these countries in general and of Romania in particular have changed, sometimes significantly. A clear danger emerges, in the form of an over-reliance on European Union funds or on policy nudges from international bodies, as well as the continuous use of technical assistance, without developing a stable and critical mass of people with expertise to design and implement internationalization policies. The need to internalize the policy formulation processes, as well as to question international norms and influences becomes obvious, especially when looking at the formalistic approach used thus far in the field of higher education internationalization and the relative slow motion progress in designing a real national approach, in consultation with relevant internal stakeholders. This conclusion seems to

be reinforced in the Romanian case by the unusual presence of some international bodies, such as the World Bank, which normally only offers technical assistance to developing countries (with no other country in the European Union benefiting from this service).

Limiting over-regulation based on European policies or international norms

The association of international or European policies with national agendas on higher education has led to an over-normative interpretation, leading to inflexible implementation, without a real grounding in the intended benefits and purpose of the reforms. Such an approach triggered a lack of ownership, foot dragging resistance from the grassroots level and left institutional autonomy in tatters (see for example the implementation of the three cycle system inspired by the Bologna Process, which completely erased the previous short and more professional cycle corresponding to EQF level 5, or the university classification inspired by U-Multirank, heavily contested by most Romanian universities). The process of higher education democratization in the region has changed from a heavily centralized system to a more decentralized one, with an increased institutional autonomy, but with little capacity to manage this autonomy and design strategic documents supporting the unique nature of each institution. Investment in capacity building and going through a full policy cycle, including the monitoring of policy implementation and policy learning are essential to build ownership and to avoid the risk of double discourse or loose coupling for key priorities, such as higher education internationalization.

Improving the national role in the global discussions on internationalization and fighting double discourse

After becoming an EU member, Romania had a lower level of integration pressure, but the reluctance to actively engage in ‘policy upload’ was still visible. Rarely has Romania had an active role in shaping European level policy discussions, with a few notable exceptions during the time in which it hosted the Bologna Process Secretariat (2010 – 2012) or the pre-2010 UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education Forum. This is partially caused by the inertia of the Communist reporting culture, in which people would say what those asking for reports or opinions would want to hear, not what the situation actually was. In addition, in order to make sure that nothing threatens Romania’s path to European integration or that the country is not looked down upon by dialogue partners, Romanian officials often use a double discourse, by supporting what is perceived to be mainstream European opinions in international meetings and presenting a more domestically tailored discourse to national audiences. This limits Romania’s ability to properly discuss and internalize discussions linked to international trends and also makes it a weak player in the global debates on internationalization of higher education, usually dominated by major players (the US, Australia, the United Kingdom, Germany, the Netherlands, China etc.). This is certainly not a unique national feature and the policy recommendation to enhance the capacity of those involved in policy making, as well as to increase the legitimacy of their mandates in external fora, is applicable to a regional audience.

The double centralization legacy

Romania's university model is based on the French Napoleonic state-centered tradition. The already existing strong role of public authorities was reinforced by the 50 years of Soviet-inspired communist university culture, which severely limited institutional autonomy and academic freedom. In other words, the effect of a historic French – Russian influence on the Romanian academic tradition is a heavily centralized decision-making system, with limited involvement of stakeholders in decision-making and reduced ownership on top-down policy measures. This double centralization legacy is very difficult to change even in 25 years of transition to a more democratic society, despite the legal changes and the international influences shaping the Romanian system. Comprehensive and inclusive internationalization policies are typically based on a high level of autonomy and thus the combination between the lingering centralized academic culture and the lack of capacity at both national and institutional level constitute a formidable obstacle in shaping comprehensive and strategic internationalization policies in the Romanian context. Overall, future research avenues could study in more depth the link between limited institutional autonomy and the development of effective internationalization policies, as well as the connection between the presence and influence of international actors in national systems and the international competitiveness of these higher education systems.

Chapter 9 - Conclusions

The present thesis aims to be a study of policy and for policy, in order to seek a better understanding of the drivers, rationales and impacts of internationalization of higher education policies in the Romanian setting, as well as the strategic uses of internationalization policies by both national and institutional actors. In broad terms, the thesis analyzes the internationalization policy framework in Romania, while also looking at institutional practices and the role of various stakeholders in spearheading the drive towards greater international and European openness.

The starting point of the thesis consists in a review of the internationalization of higher education as a concept and reviews some of the theoretical work discussing this topic. An important introductory discussion is the differentiation between internationalization *per se* and regional trends such as Europeanization, which are particularly relevant in the Romanian context. The thesis follows this up with a brief discussion of the characteristics of transition countries as cases for policy analysis. This discussion aims to clarify several contextual aspects but also to set boundaries with regard to the extent to which a policy analysis focusing on Romania can be replicated in other similar contexts.

Following the contextual discussion, the scope of the research project is delineated and the focal points for analysis are defined. The thesis focuses on the contribution of institutional, national and international actors, in order to capture the rationales and drivers for, as well as the obstacles to, furthering internationalization in Romania. Overall, the research has a double objective, partially looking into understanding and analyzing internationalization as a national

and institutional policy process, but also at ways to pursue higher education reforms that further aid the internationalization of the higher education system.

After setting out the research goals, the thesis undertakes a more comprehensive review of the main theoretical work on the topic of internationalization. It briefly reviews the historical aspects of the phenomenon, before looking into the diverse body of theoretical work that currently underpins research on the topic. The discussions expands the previous review of internationalization and Europeanization as distinct yet related policy processes and discusses their relationship to the wider phenomenon of globalization, which has multiple dimensions and constitutes a key background development fostering the ever stronger push towards international openness in universities.

The theoretical chapter also reviews literature discussing the main rationales and drivers for internationalization, both at the national and institutional levels, as well as recent trends that define internationalization policies and practices. This section of the thesis puts forward an adapted theoretical framework for understanding internationalization as a policy problem, rooted in a policy process. The framework combines different strands of institutional governance theory in higher education — stakeholder theory, resource dependence theory and discursive institutionalism — in order to capture the complexity of the national policy field. The subsequent section of the chapter tries to identify suitable models for analyzing the national policy field and adapted policy process, with its unique actors' configuration, as well as the interactions between them. As there has been fairly little research work on the topic in the Romanian context, there is no initial bias in existing literature towards one specific model. A particular focus was set on mapping the policy process, taking as its point of departure the

Musselin triptych (the classic 'ministry – universities – academics' triangle). This was redefined and adapted to the Romanian context, which features a very prominent role for international organizations in policy changes, as well as a democratization of the sector, which sees new actors such as student organizations gaining increasing levels of prominence. A five point star-shaped model is thus developed in specific relation to the Romanian context, with the qualification that it mainly reflects the policy environment after 2005, when the emergence of comprehensive quality assurance and the creation of permanent consultation mechanisms for student representatives transformed the landscape significantly. It is also worth noting that the star model should be rather understood as a 'cat's cradle', reflecting a dynamic situation, since the relations between actors and their continuously changing positioning in the system warrant a more adaptive approach.

The chapter discussing the domestic Romanian policy environment (chapter 4) examines the applicability of theoretical work to the national context, while at the same time using primary data collected from interviewees and databases to identify the intricate synergies that foster the development of internationalization. The chapter also introduces some of the key government practices and delves into some of the potential rationales behind the renewed interest in developing internationalization strategies and policy frameworks.

A more in-depth follow-up looks into internationalization efforts in several key universities, matching different institutional profiles and located across different regions. For the reader, this section offers the best glimpse into institutional-level policymaking in Romania, and it reflects the diversity of practices that currently exist. There is no uniform managerial culture in Romanian universities, and among the sample institutions both formalized and

comparatively informal practices exist and are used to further internationalization in diverse ways and emphases.

In both the national and institutional setting, it is clear that there is a growing willingness to work on internationalization, but the policy development process does not really reach (or, to some degree, side-steps) policy formulation. This is of course problematic when looking at future potential policy continuity, though looking into this topic would require a longer research timeframe. The section also looks into some of the mechanisms and tools that Romanian higher education institutions use when undertaking internationalization-related activities. These often reflect back on policy, given the role of instruments often developed to foster compliance with EU membership requirements in furthering both Europeanization and internationalization.

Before concluding, the thesis offers a series of policy recommendations, which are specifically applicable to the Romanian context, but can be expanded when looking at other transition societies, specifically those in Central and Eastern Europe. One such recommendation refers to the need to develop realistic internationalization strategies that are backed by all relevant stakeholders and parties (or at least a large part of the national and institutional stakeholders) and are suited to national contexts. Funding practices and staffing policies are also an important dimension, given that many of the problems with developing internationalization stem from the lack of both human and material resources or the lack of institutional autonomy (stemming from the centralized governance model still in use). Training for staff and greater leeway in the use of funding could potentially aid institutions in eliminating some of the obstacles. Going beyond the institutional level, the role of public authorities in

fostering internationalization remains important, given that certain practical issues are within their competence. In the Romanian case, the facilitation of access pathways for international students remains an important issue, given that Romania's fairly low attractiveness is compounded by what are fairly cumbersome admission and recognition procedures.

One last key aspect that is a leitmotif for this thesis but a somewhat natural consequence of decades of international isolation (or rather directed cooperation with 'friendly' states) is the importance of increasing the level of internationalization at home within Romanian higher education institutions. A comprehensive transformation making universities adept at working with both international students and staff is needed in order to enable a friendly and open atmosphere, and to offer international students a sense of belonging to the wider academic community. Currently, international students and staff are not fully integrated into university life and often suffer from poor access to certain services. Internationalization at home further needs to extend to curricular issues and focus on improving the quality and international relevance of educational delivery.

Lastly, the thesis extends a series of recommendations to countries that share a similar background or context with Romania. These recommendations include a greater need to reflect the diversity of institutional missions when discussing internationalization policies, but also a need to reduce reliance on international stakeholders and actors. While the transfer of know-how is crucial to a certain point, especially for countries that have limited experience with internationalization, drafting a policy agenda on the topic needs both domestic legitimization and realistic assumptions on existing national realities. Limiting over-regulation, and reducing

double-discourse (and tokenistic implementation of foreign practices) are other key elements in ensuring a healthy and inclusive construction process for internationalization policies.

All of the above have hopefully helped the reader to improve his or her familiarity with the Romanian higher education landscape and have managed to present a convincing account of the complexities of constructing public policies in Romania. The main conclusions reflect some of the problems and issues that are faced by transition countries in general, which are often confronted with the need to work on multiple policy fronts and face competing pressures in largely unfamiliar territory.

For myself, writing this thesis has been an opportunity to reflect on the ways in which policy processes that I have had the chance to be involved in personally are shaped at all levels, while looking at the way in which the internationalization of higher education has developed as a policy process (despite its usual perception as a goal in itself). The reactions of universities and the degree of dependency on international organizations, as well as the influence of governance models, are often not apparent for the casual Romanian observer, but become all too obvious once a comprehensive analytical framework is used.

At the same time, writing this thesis has provided me with the opportunity to question the assumption that furthering the internationalization of higher education is necessarily a desirable objective in all cases and for all institutions. De-coupling internationalization from the specificity of a higher education system, its relative position in an international arena, as well as from the overall aims pursued, is a sure way of not making full use of the potential that it can have as a policy process. At the same time, isolation is no longer an option for any higher

education system or institution, which is perhaps why my interest in this topic from both a professional and academic point of view is bound to remain strong for many years to come.

List of interviews

Interview 1: Higher education ministry official 1998–2000, conducted on 29.03.2013.

Interview 2: Higher education ministry official 2005–2007, conducted on 01.04.2013.

Interview 3: Ministry official 2001–2005, Romanian representative in various European fora, conducted on 01.04.2013.

Interview 4: Ministry official 1991–1992, member of the Presidential Commission on Education and Romanian BFUG representative, conducted on 03.04.2013.

Interview 5: Academic staff trade union official representative, conducted on 05.04.2013.

Interviews 6 and 7: National student federation leaders, 2008–2012, conducted on 4–5.04.2013

Interview 8: Head of International Relations Department within a Research University, conducted on 26.04.2016

Interview 9: Law professor and high ranking civil servant, conducted on 11.02.2016

Interview 10: Vice-rector for international relations, comprehensive research university, conducted on 07.02.2016

Interview 11: Director of government agency, dealing with mobility and EU programs, conducted on 10.06.2016

Interview 12: Head of International relations department, regional university, conducted on 26.04.2016

Interview 13: Rector of private university, conducted on 16.05.2016

Interview 14: Vice-rector of public and education focused university, conducted on 20.03.2015

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Annex 1 – List of Romanian universities, according to the 2011 classification exercise

Category I universities, classified as ‘Advanced Research and Education Universities’, include:

- Bucharest University
- “Babes – Bolyai” University of Cluj-Napoca
- “Al.I. Cuza” University of Iasi
- Academy of Economic Studies of Bucharest (ASE)
- Cluj-Napoca University of Agriculture and Veterinary Sciences
- “Carol Davila” Medical University of Bucharest
- Medicine and Pharmacy University Iasi
- Medicine and Pharmacy University of Cluj-Napoca
- Polytechnic University of Bucharest
- “Gh. Asachi” Technical University of Iasi
- Technical University of Cluj-Napoca
- Polytechnic University of Timisoara

Category II universities, classified as ‘Education and Scientific Research Universities’, include:

- West University of Timisoara
- University of Craiova
- “Transylvania” University of Brasov
- “Ovidius” University of Constanta
- Lower Danube University of Galati
- “Lucian Blaga” University of Sibiu
- University of Oradea
- National School of Political and Administrative Sciences of Bucharest

- University of Agriculture and Veterinary Sciences of Iasi
- University of Agriculture and Veterinary Sciences of Bucharest
- University of Agriculture and Veterinary Sciences of Timisoara
- “Victor Babes” Medicine and Pharmacy University of Timisoara
- Medicine and Pharmacy University of Craiova
- Technical Construction University
- Medicine and Pharmacy University of Targu Mures
- Military Technical Academy of Bucharest
- "Henri Coanda" Air Force Academy of Brasov
- "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" Police Academy of Bucharest
- “Carol I” National Defense University of Bucharest
- "Mircea Cel Batran" Naval Academy of Constanta
- "Mihai Viteazul" National Information Academy of Bucharest
- "Nicolae Balcescu" Land Forces Academy of Sibiu

Category II institutions, classified as ‘Universities of education and artistic creation’, include:

- National Arts University of Sibiu
- Architecture and Urbanism University of Bucharest
- "I. L. Caragiale" National University for Art and Cinema of Bucharest
- “Gerge Enescu” Art University of Iasi
- National Music University of Bucharest
- Art and Design University of Cluj-Napoca
- "Gheorghe Dima" Music Academy of Cluj-Napoca
- Arts University of Targu Mures

Category III universities, classified as ‘Education Centred Universities’, include:

- "Aurel Vlaicu" University of Arad
- "Stefan Cel Mare" University of Suceava
- "Valahia" University of Targoviste
- Oil and Gas University of Ploiesti

- Constanta Maritime University
- "1 Decembrie 1918" University of Alba Iulia
- "Titu Maiorescu" University of Bucharest
- Romanian-American University of Bucharest
- "Vasile Alecsandri" University of Bacau
- University of Pitesti
- "Eftimie Murgu" University of Resita
- "Dimitrie Cantemir" Christian University of Bucharest
- "Constantin Brancusi" University of Targu Jiu
- Sports University of Bucharest
- North University of Baia Mare
- Ecological University of Bucharest
- University of Petrosani
- "Vasile Goldis" West University of Arad
- "Partium" University of Oradea
- Emanuel University of Oradea
- "Apollonia" University of Iasi
- Spiru Haret University of Bucharest
- Hyperion University of Bucharest
- "Petru Maior" University of Targu Mures
- "Dimitrie Cantemir" University of Targu Mures
- University of Science "Gheorghe Cristea"
- "Tibiscus" University of Timisoara
- Romanian-German University of Sibiu
- "Andrei Saguna" University of Constanta
- "Mihail Kogalniceanu" University of Iasi
- Protestant Theological Institute of Cluj-Napoca
- Pentecostal Theological Institute of Bucharest
- Baptist Theological Institute of Bucharest

- ARTIFEX University of Bucharest
- "Danubius" University of Galati
- "Constantin Brancoveanu" University of Pitesti
- "Petre Andrei" University of Iasi
- "Avram Iancu" University of Cluj-Napoca
- "Bogdan Voda" University of Cluj-Napoca
- "Nicolae Titulescu" University of Bucharest
- "George Bacovia" University of Bacau
- "Athenaeum" University of Bucharest
- Dragan European University of Lugoj
- Business Administration Institute of Bucharest
- "Mihai Eminescu" University of Timisoara
- Finance and Banking University of Bucharest
- George Baritiu University of Brasov
- Bioterra University of Bucharest