THE BOLOGNA PROCESS AND THE DYNAMICS OF ACADEMIC MOBILITY: A COMPARATIVE APPROACH TO ROMANIA AND TURKEY

Authors[*]*: Monica ROMAN,*
Fatma MIZIKACI,
Zizi GOSCHIN

Abstract. *Recent changes that have occurred in the European higher education system are grounded on the options of continental countries, expressed in the Bologna Declaration, to achieve a single European space in this field by the year 2010.*

The purpose of this paper is to develop a better understanding of student mobility in the process of internationalization of higher education in a South European context.

The rationale of the study is that student mobility has long been the most important dimension of the process of internationalization of higher education. At the moment there is increasing demand for higher education, as a consequence of demographic trends and the need for new degrees and diploma programs.

The article focuses on two countries from South-Eastern Europe, Romania and Turkey. Both countries have a very dynamic higher education system, in terms of number of students and stuff, integrating in Bologna process. They also are primarily perceived as sending students countries. The key findings are linked to obstacles and solutions to overcome this obstacle. It also stresses the necessity of the two higher education systems to be more involved in attracting European students.

Key words*: Bologna process, higher education, international student mobility, Romania, Turkey*

JEL Classification*: I23, I21*

1. Introduction

Recent changes that have occurred in European higher education system are grounded on the options of continental countries, expressed in the Bologna Declaration, to achieve a unique European space in this field by the year 2010.

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[*] *Monica Roman, Professor of Bussines Statistics at Bucharest University of Economics, Ph.D. in economics, e-mail: mroman@ase.ro; Fatma Mizikaci, Middle East Technical University, NCC, Northern Cyprus, Turkey, lecturer in educational sciences, Ph.D. in educational sciences, evaluator and expert in UNESCO and EU projects, e-mail: mfatma@metu.edu.tr; Zizi Goschin, Ph.D. in economics, senior researcher at INE, e-mail: zizigoschin@yahoo.com;*

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Mobility goes in many cases together with migration and for each of them there is not a widely spread and accepted definition. Mobility is the child of academic freedom and of the irreplaceable exchange of ideas in research, as well as in teaching and study. The literature on mobility classifies the phenomenon into different types, some of which are opposition pairs [Daxner, 2007]. First of all, there is the differentiation into "forced" and "voluntary mobility". *Voluntary mobility* is referred to young students, mainly in their first career to degree, who seek diversity in their study curriculum and eventually return to their home country, either with a degree earned abroad, or ready to take one at home. *Forced mobility* is motivated by poor study condition, political repression, by bleak labour market. The forced or involuntary mobility is also associated with refugee status, gender related, ethnic, religious, language base rain-drain. From this list, it is clear that the interface between mobility and migration is blurred. What is certain is the fact that in the higher education, they are both part of a large system of brain circulation.

International student mobility involves students leaving their country of residence for a period of higher education abroad, or to pursue a related activity such as a foreign work placement or study tour.

International student mobility is defined[1] as *any form of international mobility that takes place within a student's programme of study in higher education*. The length of absence ranges from a short trip to a full-duration programme of study such as a degree. In addition to study at a foreign higher education institution, mobility can also involve a period in a workplace or other non-higher education environments. Ideally, the period of mobility should be long enough to have an impact on the student's appreciation of a foreign culture, and it should have some defined role within a student's learning experience. For many students, this includes the opportunity to apply skills in a foreign work context. However, definitional boundaries are not easy to draw, particularly with regard to short trips abroad, and especially when these do not have an explicitly educational purpose. In Erasmus programme the period of mobility is between 3 month and 12 month.

It is important to mention the recommendation to institutional, national and international organizations involved in higher education around the world that definition and data should be more compatible. Eurostat's work on statistics should be supported by common definitions and criteria and more up-to-date input by different countries.

2. International students mobility: the European model

The beginning of century XXI marked a spectacular ascent in the number of international students at world-wide level. In 2004, at least 2.5 million students of tertiary level studied outside their country of origin, compared with 1.75 million that did it in 1999, which represents an increase of 41%.

In 2004, 132 million students were registered anywhere in the world in superior education; value that is very over 68 million that did it in 1991. More than half of the students of tertiary education of the world are in two regions, Eastern Asia and the Pacific and North America and Western Europe; and each one of these regions represents more of a quarter of the world-wide total of students in this level.

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[1] *„International student mobility", Report by the Sussex Centre for Migration Research, University of Sussex, and the Centre for Applied Population Research, University of Dundee, Commissioned by HEFCE, SHEFC, HEFCW, DEL, DfES, UK Socrates Erasmus Council, HEURO, BUTEX and the British Council.*

The present situation of student mobility in tertiary education shows an interesting trend in the **European countries**, as well. The degree of mobility in tertiary education is the lowest in Estonia (0.7%), Poland (0.4%) and Lithuania (0.5%). Overall, 63.2% of the foreign students in the EU-27 originate from countries outside Europe. The highest rates (> to 80%) are to be found in Cyprus, Lithuania, Latvia, and Slovenia, as well as France and Portugal (Eurostat, Mobility of Students in Europe). Low population rates obviously reflect low inflow or one way-outgoing students in these countries.

In 2002, 2.7% of European students pursued studies outside their country of origin. Six countries are above the EU average: Estonia (5.6%), Latvia (2.8%), Lithuania (3.6%), Slovakia (6.9%), Malta (13.3%) and Cyprus (56.3%). Conversely, mobility is low in Poland (1.2%). On the whole, 78% of these students chose another European country and this percentage is above 50% in all the countries, except Estonia (50%) and Latvia (43%). Hungary and the Czech Republic send significantly more students abroad than they receive (Eurostat, Mobility of Students in Europe, www.eurostat.eu).

Less than 3% of students from the great majority of other European countries were studying abroad in 2004. The least mobile were Spanish, Polish and UK students, 1.2% of whom or less went abroad. On the other hand, Bulgarian, Greek, Irish, Maltese and Slovak students were more mobile, with between 7-10% of them studying in another European country.

3. Current state of Higher Education in Romania and Turkey

One of the important factors to bear in mind in analyzing higher education and international student mobility of the two countries studied here is that they have both to face the challenges of developing countries, in a process of reforming and building modern economies. This disadvantage is evident in the quality of higher education systems they have in place, in the ability and the capacity of their institution to attract foreign students and in the number of their institutions.

The reforms of higher education in these two countries are quite young, compared to Western Europe or United States. For example, in 1981 with the basic Law of Higher Education (Law no. 2547) the Turkish higher education system was restructured to adjust to the new social and political situation of the country. Under the present system of Turkish higher education, the main superior institutions are the universities. However there are two institutes of technology run by the State. Both public and foundation[2] (non-profit private) universities have been controlled and supervised and the programs have been regularly accredited by the Council of Higher Education.

In Romania, the reform in the field of higher education is even younger and it began right after 1989. The Constitution of Romania, adopted in 1991, is the foundation of the entire legislation in the field of education. The specific legislation, regulating higher education in Romania is represented by *the Law on Education (Law 84/1995).* At this moment, the structure of tertiary education for Romania is divided into: *day education, evening education, part-time education, learning at distance,* which is facing a rapid development during recent years.

In Turkey, the higher education institutions offer four-to-five year Bachelor's degrees and two-year Associate's degree programmes leading to Master's and/or Doctor's degrees. (In Faculties of Medicine, Veterinary Medicine, and Dentistry, the Bachelor's degree is six years in length and graduate studies are formed by medical speciality training programmes equivalent to a Doctorate degree.)

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[2] *Apart from the State, only non-profit foundations can operate universities, the term 'foundation universities' applies widely both in legislative and official contexts.*

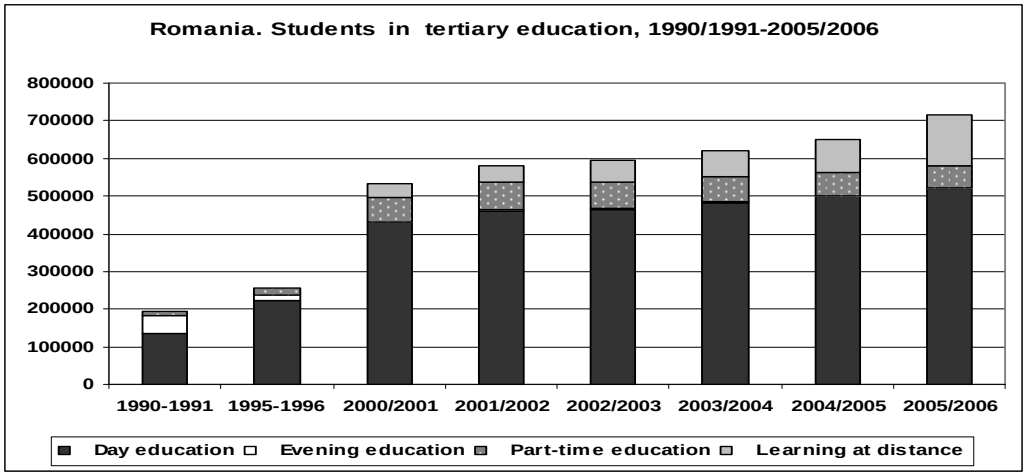
✓ **Number of students**

In Romania as well as in Turkey, the number of students evolved spectacularly during the last years.

In Turkey, in the 2006-2007 academic year there are 115 universities (85 public, 30 foundation); 2,453,664 enrolled students; and 89,329 academic staff in Turkish higher education. The number of girl students is 1,044539 while the number of boys is 1,409125. Again in the same academic year, 373,375 students graduated from higher education institutions while 636,527 enrolled newly. As for the academic staff 35,087 are women and 54,242 are men of all academic staff.

In Romania, after 1990 the number of students grew more than 3.5 times; the weight of day tertiary education raised between 1994-1995 to 87%, while evening education registered an important decrease of 18%. Concerning part-time education, it collapsed and was replaced by learning at distance form, whose weight increased (by 7.11%).

Figure 1. Romania. Students in tertiary education, 1990/1991-2005/2006



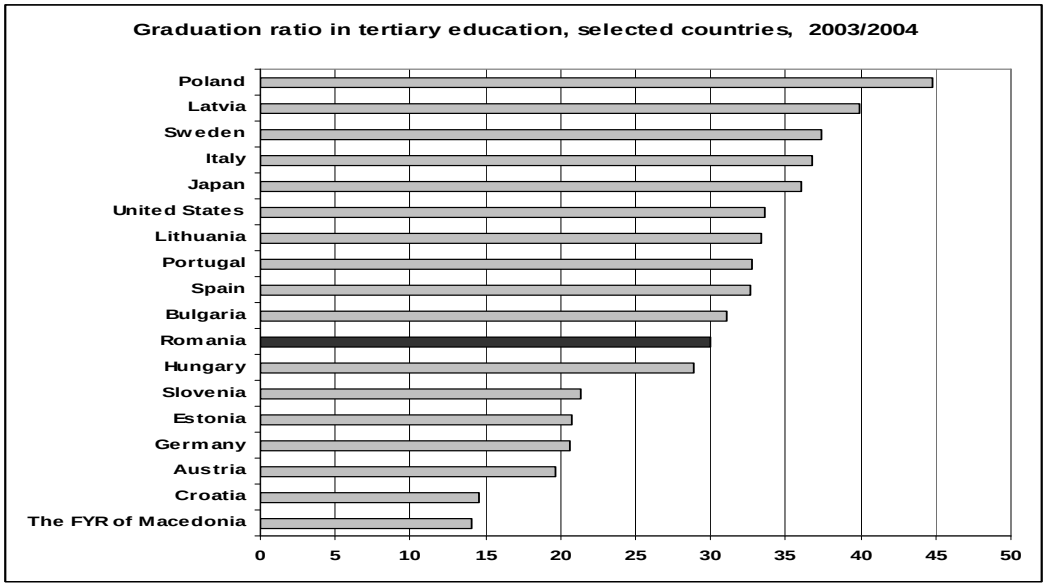
Source: *NIS, 1997; 2005; 2006.*

Starting its development at the beginning of the ’90s, **private education** in Romania serves 23% (2003-2004) of total number of students. High private education has mostly been orientated to less uneconomical areas and much successful at students and at the labor market.

The indicator of **graduates’ ratio** in Romania is comparable with other European countries submitted to analysis and very close to the developed countries such as Japan and the United States.

Compared to *Bulgaria* the indicator shows that Romania is one small step behind. Taking *Germany* and *Austria – two* of the biggest powers in Europe – one can notice that Romania is beyond their level. This means that Romanian students are interested in developing their skills, and abilities towards perfection or towards the highest level of education possible.

Figure 2 - Graduation ratio in tertiary education, selected countries, 2003/2004



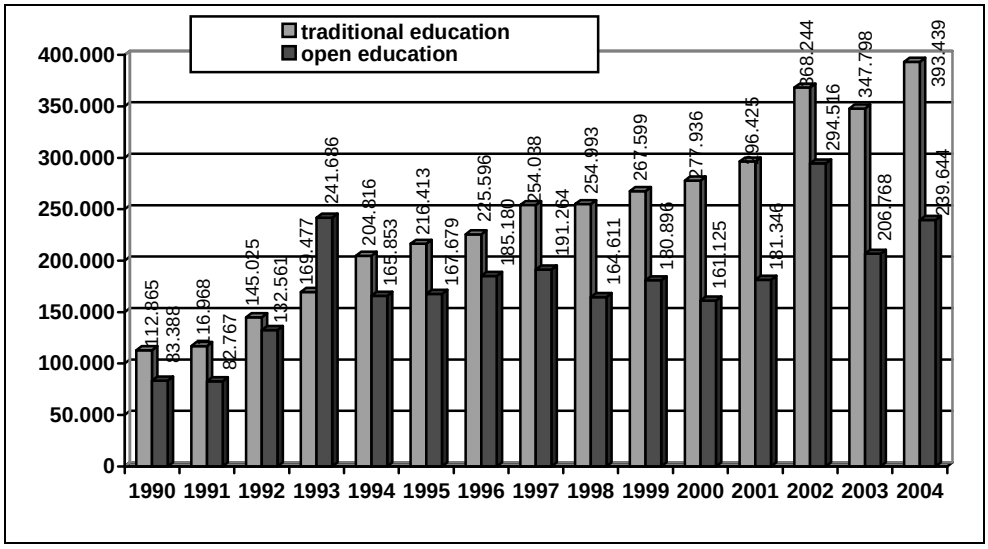
Source: UNESCO, 2006.

One particular situation noticed in Turkey is the big gap existing between the demand and places in the higher education institutions. Demand for higher education far exceeds the places available. Every year more than 1.5 million candidates apply for ÖSS, whereas the number of those who are placed in a higher education program is much less (ÖSYM, 2005). For example, in the academic year 2004-2005, nearly 1,700,000 candidates sat for the exam and about one third of them were placed in a higher education program.

The figure below illustrates the ratio of application and placement. The gap between application and placement has increased by years since 1974 incredibly.

Another major issue in access to higher education is vocational education. Programs on the improvement and enlargement of vocational education and straightforward transition (admission without exam) to higher vocational education are launched in 2001.

Figure 3 - Turkey. Number of applicants and enrolled students



***Source**: OSYM, 2005.*

✓ **Academic staff**

In Romania, the indicator concerning the number of the teaching staff involved in higher education has grown rapidly, mostly during 1995-2000, by 34%, reaching 31543 persons in 2005-2006. Almost three quarters (71.9%) of the educational staff are females, the tertiary level is the only one where men are more numerous than women. At the same time, the gender gap is diminishing. The gender structure of teaching personnel evolved spectacularly: in 1990 men teachers were 72% of all personnel and in 2006 the percentage was 57%. The rising importance of women is also noticed from the fact that out of 49 Romanian universities, 3 were managed by female rectors during 2004-2005. However, there are no significant gender differences concerning the professional qualification of the teaching staff.

In Turkey, parallel to the expansion in the number of universities and students, there has been an increase in the number of academic staff since the 1990s. Presently the number of academic staff is 89,329 of which 35,087 is women and 54,242 is men.

✓ **Students/teaching staff ratio**

The ratio of the number of students to the number of professors is extremely important because it is a starting point for efficient policies in education and it also influences the quality of the educational process.

The link between these two elements is strongly dependent on the salaries of the academic staff; this may explain the fact that some countries spend more per student than others even when the student/teacher ratio is the same.

The students/teachers ratio can vary up to threefold depending on the country. In some countries (Slovakia, Finland, Sweden and Iceland) there are, on average, 10 students per teacher; this figure rises to more than 25 in Greece and Slovenia. In general, expenditure per student is lower in countries in which the number of students per teacher is amongst the highest and vice-versa. Other European countries (Bulgaria, Lithuania and Slovakia) clearly differ from this tendency with low student/teacher ratios (less than 15 students per teacher), yet with some of the lowest levels of teaching expenditure in Europe in 2004. On the other hand, in the United Kingdom, in which teaching expenditure was amongst the highest in Europe, the student/teacher ratio was higher at 18:1.

In Romania the ratio is 21:1 and the personnel expenses are not that big. In the interval 1994-2004 the number of students/teacher gradually increased, from 12 to 21; this was a predictable situation because the staff teaching in the same interval grew at a smaller pace than the students.

In Turkey, although there seems to be a parallel expansion in the numbers of students and academic staff, the average student/staff ratio is generally high: 31/1 in Bachelor's programmes and 56/1 in Associate's programmes. In two-year Associate's programmes (especially in certain fields) the ratio is considerably higher, being as much as 381/1 in mathematics and sciences; and 140/1 in the applied social sciences (*YÖK Report*, 2004).

4. International student mobility within Bologna process in Romania and Turkey

In Europe internationalization is presently driven primarily by the Bologna Process, directed to realization of European Higher Education Area by 2010. It implies a substantial reform of higher education beyond the 27 countries of the European Union. As a signatory state of the Bologna Declaration, Turkey has taken some special measures to improve mobility of students and academic

staff. The measures are described as follows in the *Bologna Report* published on the YÖK webpage in 2005:

- Establishment of administrative offices within universities dealing specifically with the ERASMUS Program.
- Promotion of the ERASMUS Program within universities (such as organising information days for students and academic staff, encouraging students to learn/improve a second language, encouraging the Faculty to increase their European-wide activities by signing ERASMUS agreements, participating in related networks, projects and the proposing of new projects).
- Usage of ECTS as an additional credit transfer system .
- Increasing the visibility of the Turkish universities in the ERASMUS Program (via setting up web-pages for ERASMUS activities, publication of ECTS Information packages and course catalogues).
- Increasing the number of course offerings in the English language.

Similar measures are adopted in Romania, as well (Miron, 2007).

a. Student mobility

In general, both Romania and Turkey are higher education "export" countries, sending students and academic staff abroad rather than "importing" foreign students or staff. The number of outgoing students has been usually increasing, while incoming student numbers have been declining over the years.

The percentage of Romanian students who are studying in Europe was 2.4% in 2004 and is has been moving upward during last years, so that it has overcome the European average, of 2.2%.

Although the mobility of students was not mainly in one way, many of Romanian students leave the country for study in some other country for new experiences and probably a better access to information. The most wanted destination countries, within Europe are: France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, and it is also important to notice the important number of students that go overseas, in United Stated.

Several American and European universities are attracting many of the best Turkish students, often via scholarships. (This one-way movement of Turkish students cannot be seen as mutual mobility or internationalisation, however.) There is also an availability of a "study abroad" period that enables students and researchers, registered in a "home" university, to take part of their programme abroad. For Turkish students and researchers studying and working abroad, a considerable number of them are placed in this category. Thus, one must be cautious in figuring out the numbers strictly referring to mobility.

In OECD countries, foreign enrolment increased by 34% between 1998 and 2000 and the share of foreign students from the world increased more than 60%. Quite the opposite was the case of Turkey, in which the share of foreign enrolments dramatically declined by 26% in 2004 (*Education at a Glance,* 2004). In the European countries, less than 10% of the student population is mobile. Turkey is among the twenty top countries sending students to Europe, mostly to Germany and Austria (*Statistics on Student Mobility within the EU*, 2003). Due to labour migration, these two countries host second generations of Turkish migrants enrolled in tertiary education. Thus, especially in Germany, a distinction is made between resident students with foreign citizenship and non-resident students with foreign citizenship.

Obviously, the majority of Turkish students fall into the permanent-resident group (20,201 students) while a minority (3,540 students) are non-resident foreign citizens. Therefore, it would be premature to suggest that the number of Turkish students in Germany and other European countries has risen due to the new European Education Programs launched by the "Bologna Process" and other European agreements.

Incoming and outgoing tertiary education proportions for Turkey vis-à-vis OECD countries are given in the following tables, with percentages given of all Turkish students enrolled in other countries in 2002.

Table 1

Turkey. Turkish students studying abroad in tertiary education by the country of destination (OECD countries only)

Countries of destination	% of Turkish tertiary students	Countries of destination	% of Turkish tertiary students
Australia	0.6	Hungary	0.1
Austria	3.2	Italy	0.2
Belgium	0.9	Japan	0.2
Denmark	0.3	Netherlands	1.9
Finland	0.1	Norway	0.1
France	4.6	Sweden	0.3
Germany	57.3	Switzerland	1.3
Greece	0.1	United Kingdom	3.0
Hungary	0.1	United States	25.5

***Source**: Education at a Glance, 2004. OECD*

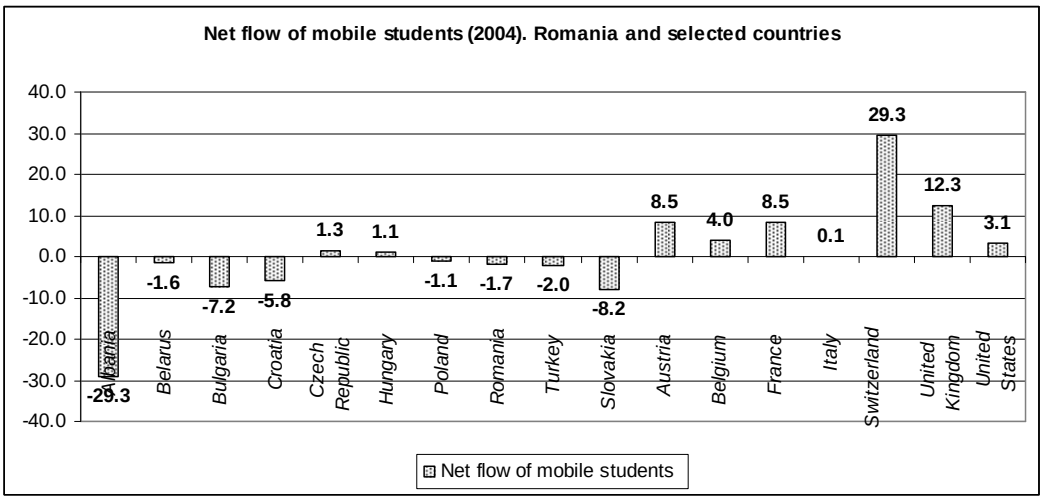
According to Table 1, the majority of the Turkish tertiary students abroad are enrolled in Germany and in the USA, followed by France, Austria and UK. Parallel to this, state and private scholarships are offered to students going to the above-mentioned countries.

Cyprus is another country worthwhile to speak in the same framework about since the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus was founded in 1975 in the island. Students and faculty are mobile mutually. In 2000/2001 academic year the number of Cypriot students in Turkish higher education institutions was 2645 (UIS Database, Foreign Students Enrolments). The governance system for Turkish higher education and functions of YOK apply for the universities in Cyprus as well, which makes the transition straightforward.

At the same time, a significant number of students from various EU countries have studied in the two countries analysed in this paper. For instance, starting with the academic year 1990/1991, several Romanian universities have offered complete study programs in foreign languages like English, French and German.

The mobility of students (income and outgoing) it's one of many sources of the problem of brain drain and brain gain. According to OECD data, in 2004, 9730 foreign students were studying in Romania, and almost half of them were female (44%). It is worth to mention that most of these students were coming from Central ad East European countries, and more than 4200 were coming from the closest neighbour, Republic of Moldova. The outbond mobility rate was 3.2%, which compared to the inbond mobility rate of 1.5% leads to a negative net flow ratio of 1.7%. The situation is common for most of the countries from Central and Eastern Europe, which are student providers for Western countries, rather than student receivers. On the other hand, net flow ratio is positive in Western Europe, as well as in United States.

Figure 4. Net flow of mobile students (2004). Romania, Turkey and selected countries



***Source**: Adapted from OECD 2006.*

At the same time, a number of students do come to Turkey for higher education. As concerns them, among the OECD countries, the foreign students Turkey hosts are mostly from Jordan and the Russian Federation, followed by Greece (See Table 2).

Table 2

Turkey. Foreign students studying in Turkish tertiary education by country of origin (2002)

Countries of origin	% of foreign tertiary students in Turkey	Countries of origin	% of foreign tertiary students in Turkey
Australia	0.4	Jordan	3.4
Austria	0.1	Paraguay	0.1
Egypt	0.7	Russian Federation	3.3
Germany	0.2	Tunisia	0.1
Greece	2.6	Zimbabwe	0.1
Israel	0.5		

***Source**: Education at a Glance*, 2004, OECD.

As can be seen in the table, the outgoing movement of Turkish students is more towards the European countries and the USA, while incoming students are mainly from Russia and Arabic countries.

b. Academic staff mobility

The two prominent intensifications in the mobility programs cause a slight increase in the numbers of academic mobility as well. Turkey exports and imports faculty in the eastern region: 2074 invited/visiting scholars in Turkey and 879 scholars in these countries (Guruz, 2003). There are also cooperate foundations and universities: one in Kazakhstan and other in Kyrgyzstan. As for the research projects, 84 partnership projects have been signed since 1998. In Romania, academic staff mobility is quite law at this moment and there are no available statistics for it.

c. Study programs

As signatory states in the European programs of mobility, Turkish and Romanian universities welcomed instruments for recognition and mobility (ECTS, Lisbon Convention, Diploma Supplement, NARIC/ENIC network), as stated in the Salamanca Convention, in a positive and flexible way (Salamanca Convention, 2001).

In 2002, for the administration, promotion, supervision and evaluation of European education programs, a National Office under the State Planning Organization was opened acting as National Agency. A comparison of the past years to 2000s shows that the interest of Turkish universities, by the recognition of ERASMUS, has risen in mobility of students and teaching staff, ECTS, intensive programs, development of curricula.

In Romania The National Office for Student Grants Abroad was created in January 1998. It manages grants through which the Government of Romania supports Romanian students, in order to study abroad for relatively short periods of time.

After 1998, over 9,000 students have participated to ERASMUS mobilities. During the academic year 2002/2003 45 universities participated in ERASMUS activities, involving approximately 2,400 students.

Table 3

Romania. Dynamics of participants in the Erasmus Program

Year	Number of institutions	Number of students
1998-1999	30	1250
1999-2000	32	1497
2000-2001	40	2000
2001-2002	45	2110
2002-2003	45	2400

Source: *Ministry of Education and Research, 2006.*

Student and teaching staff exchange programs were set beginning with 1991 within the TEMPUS program between Romanian universities and universities in EU countries.

Higher education institutions in Romania have been involved in SOCRATES and LEONARDO da VINCI programs since 1997. Starting in 1998 Romanian universities have taken part in projects developed within the CEEPUS Programme (Central European Exchange for University Students Programme) that promote student mobility for full academic studies, master's and doctorate programmes, as well as exchanges between teaching staff and researchers.

Socrates program with its training and promotional packets is also coming into the Turkish University's agenda. Sixty three promoters were appointed by the Turkish National Agency to promote Socrates and Leonardo Programs in all universities. They were given a training seminar in May 2003. Additionally a campaign was planned with 84 local meetings and 7 regional conferences. The program Leonardo da Vinci also enables universities to build up and strengthen cooperation with the industry. Turkish Universities are still in the round of recognition and adaptation of the program.

5. Challenges and opportunities

The social dimension of the Bologna Process is a necessary condition for the attractiveness and competitiveness of the European Higher Education Area. This implies making quality higher education equally accessible to all, and stress the need for appropriate conditions for students so that

they can complete heir studies without obstacles related to their social and economic background. The social dimension[3] includes measures taken by governments to help students, especially from socially disadvantaged groups, in financial and economic aspects and to provide them with guidance and counselling services with a view to widening access. At numerous meetings and seminars it has been concluded that among the obstacles to mobility, issues related to *visas and social security protection for students and staff engaged in mobility, recognition of study and work periods and lack of financial incentives* are some of the most commonly observed problem areas. Beside this, language and cultural aspects are regarded by many specialists as a barrier in student mobility.

In Romania, for instance, one of the most important consequences of joining European Union on January the 1st is the liberalization of access to all EU countries, based now on identity card. This present situation is a huge progress compared to the years before, when obtaining a visa was often a big challenge for Romanian students. There are also European countries in which case a visa in needed (Russia, Ukraine), and countries from North America, which are often targets for mobility of Romanian students (US, Canada). In such cases, the application requirements for getting a visa or a residence permit can be very detailed and time consuming as well as expensive.

Issues related to insufficient *financial support* are common Turkey and Romania, but in many other counties as well. However, the effect of inadequate financing had a diverse effect from country to country. Two financial support mechanisms for international mobility may be distinguished in Europe, namely financial support earmarked specifically for mobility and 'mainstream' national financial support that is portable. Romania awards financial support specifically for mobility but without any portability of national support.

The finance obstacle can be removed by an increasing participation in Tempus, Erasmus, Erasmus Mundus, Leonardo Programmes and bi-lateral agreements between countries and higher education institutions.

In all countries *language* is a barrier to student mobility. Turkey enjoyed ethnic and linguistic ties with five states - Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Turkmenistan – which seemed to provide a solid foundation for its playing an influential part in shaping their economic development, political direction, and external relations. Romanian students, as shown before, are studying both in Anglophone and non-Anglophone countries and they do not seem to have a linguistic problem. According to the study conducted by Open Society Foundation[4], it seems that one third of the students believe that most of their colleagues would have no problem understanding a course in another language, and another third believes that half of their colleagues would be able to deal with such a situation. The study also noticed that the courses in English (contemporary lingua franca) are absolutely rare outside the faculties with teaching in this language. So it is necessary to introduce more language courses to assist inward mobility, together with increasing provision in English and other widely used European languages.

Though the above issues constitute the bulk of student mobility obstacles, we should not forget the *cultural and attitudinal factors* standing against mobility, as well as the lack of information and various administrative barriers, which can also hold back mobility. We should notice that the religious factor appears to be relevant for changing patterns in student flows from Islamic countries.

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[3] *Key issues for the European Higher Education Area – Social Dimension and Mobility Report from the Bologna Process Working Group on Social Dimension and Data on Mobility of Staff and Students in Participating Countries, Ministry of Education and Research, Sweden, 2007.*

[4] *Comsa, Tufis, C., Voicu, B. (2007),* Romanian Academic System, Students and teacher's opinion, *OSF, www.osf.ro*

6. Concluding remarks

The Bologna process has a great impact on higher education policy and on the course and program structure at many education institutions. The mobility factor will considerably affect the future of higher education and its benefits must not be neglected.

In spite of the absence of a comprehensive data collection on the social dimension of higher education, the data provided by national and international institutions can nevertheless deliver valuable information. In fact, we conclude that, in Romania, as well as in Turkey, student mobility is facing a dimension not met before and is increasing during the last years. If we take into consideration the inflow and outflow of international students, there is a net negative flow.

The key findings are linked to obstacles and solution to overcome this obstacle. They also stress out the necessity of the two higher education systems to be more involved in attracting European students. In order to promote mutually mobilising students and academics, promotion of language skills, international curriculum development, portability of loans and grants for foreign students and researchers, exchange programs, joint branches of international education programs should be envisaged. Students and teaching personnel should be refrained from the present obstacles, i.e. visas, work permits.

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