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Statistical Data Regarding the European Higher Education Space in Romania

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Abstract

The overall education system and especially the higher education one, is a main component of the social system, being subordinated and integrated within the structure of the society. In this perspective, the higher education system in Romania, due to the accession in EU, is no longer just depending on the internal structure and national inputs, but is also influenced by external impulses and social policies. In this context, the paper aims at presenting the evolution of the Romanian higher education system within the European Higher Education Space. Education system, perceived as a whole, refers fundamentally to the institutional form of the education, including all the stakeholders involved or interested in education. Taking into the consideration the main features of the education system, such as its national, historical, political and strategic characteristics, the development of the education system represents a priority for the socio-economic progress. Furthermore, the education system evolves in relation to the economic and cultural specific context of each country. In this regard, there are common features and also differences among the educational systems within the European Space, which are related to socio-economic and cultural conditions of each country.

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This paper is aimed at presenting in a logical sequence the achievements in this respect, from both perspectives, i.e. legislative improvements and statistical indicators illustrating the outcomes of the process. By addressing the legislative aspects, it has been stressed the alignment to the European initiatives. The quantitative aspects emphasize the progress in the implementation of the Bologna process in Romania.

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A Introduction

Nowadays, the Bologna Process integrates 47 countries - all of which are parties to the European Cultural Convention and committed to the goals of the European Higher Education Area. An important feature of the Bologna Process is that it also involves a wide palette of stakeholders: European Commission, Council of Europe, UNESCO-CEPES and representatives of higher education institutions, students, staff, employers and quality assurance agencies. The main actual objective of the Bologna Process consists in improving the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) based on international cooperation and academic exchange that is attractive to European students and professors as well as students and teaching staff from other parts of the world. The process plays a major part in the development of the European knowledge society, contributing simultaneously to strengthen the sense of the European identity and citizenship. Romania is participating in the Bologna Process since its launch in 1999. From then until now, it has been adopted a comprehensive legislative framework for the education system in order to be in line with the objectives of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

B General Framework of the Bologna Process

Bologna process begins a year before the signing of the Bologna Declaration. On 25 May 1998, the Ministers responsible for Higher Education in France, Italy, Great Britain and Germany signed the Sorbonne Declaration. The purpose of this act is to harmonize European Higher Education system architecture. The statement focused on the need for convergence regarding the overall framework of qualifications and the phases of study in a European area of higher education. The stated goal can be achieved by establishing a common system of higher education based on specific learning steps in higher education, i.e.: Bachelor, Master, PhD, as well as by strengthening and facilitating the mobility of students and teachers. The common approach facilitates also the recognition of qualifications and academic qualifications within the European space.

On 19 June 1999, the ministers responsible for higher education from 29 states have agreed to support and promote the idea of creating the European Higher Education (EHEA) Area by 2010, by signing the Bologna Declaration with the same name.

Table 1. General Framework of the Bologna Process

Objectives	Goal/ legislative framework and progress indicators for the Romanian higher education system
A. A system of degrees easily to be recognized and compared	<p><i>Goal:</i> This objective aims at introducing a common related degree in order to improve transparency.</p> <p><i>Legislative framework:</i></p> <p>In the Order of the Ministry of Education and Research no. 3235/2005 regarding the organization of undergraduate study have been mentioned the main steps of the curriculum reform of the first cycle programs, including the clear definition of the graduates' knowledge and skills, different from those acquired through master and doctoral cycles.</p> <p>In addition, the Order of the Ministry of Education and Research no. 4868/2006, regarding the implementation of diploma certifying successful completion of a programme of education, creates provisions for a standard recognition of the knowledge and competences, introducing the compulsory delivering of the Diploma Supplement, starting with 2005-2006 academic year.</p>
B. A system encompassing basically two cycles	<p><i>Goal:</i> Creating a pragmatic structure of the academic programmes, i.e. the first three years cycle (bachelor) well linked with the labour market needs and the second cycle (master) research oriented.</p> <p><i>Legislative framework:</i></p> <p>In 2004 the specific higher education law no. 288 has been adopted regarding the three higher education cycles (bachelor, master, PhD). Starting with 2005-2006 academic year, the higher education studies have been organized according to the new framework. The conceptual and methodological frameworks have been also designed for the smooth implementation of the new academic structure.</p> <p><i>Achievements:</i></p> <p>In 2008, we had in Romania the first graduates and starting with 2008-2009, the master studies have begun, according to the Bologna Process.</p>
C. The European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS)	<p><i>Goal:</i> ECTS is a standard grading scale for comparing the study attainment and performance of students in the higher education. This approach facilitates the mobilities within the European Higher Education Area, the Erasmus Programme.</p> <p><i>Legislative framework:</i></p> <p>The Order of the Ministry of Education and Research no. 3617/16.03.2005 provides for a uniform system of transferable credits (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System – ECTS) implemented in the Romanian universities. ECTS has been introduced in Romania from 1998, but it has been used at the beginning for the students' mobility. This Order stipulates the general use of the ECTS, facilitating the students' transfer and mobility within the Romanian and European higher education areas.</p> <p><i>Achievements:</i></p> <p>In the majority of the countries, one credit represents between 25 and 30 studying hours. In four European countries (Croatia, Czech Republic, Norway and Romania) it has not been adopted a fix number of hours for a credit point.</p>
D. Students', teachers' and researchers' mobility	<p><i>Goal:</i> Removing barriers to free mobility and movement of the work force.</p> <p><i>Achievements:</i></p> <p>The main indicators within the academic mobilities schemes in Romania illustrates the success of the Erasmus Programme during the 5 implementation years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students' mobility for studying (SMS): 16029 persons - Students' mobility for placements (SMP): 4270 persons - Teaching staff's mobility – teaching missions (TMTM): 5561 persons - Teaching staff's mobility for training (TMT). 2213 persons <p>Total mobilities for 5 years: 28073 persons</p>

Objectives	Goal/ legislative framework and progress indicators for the Romanian higher education system
E. Cooperation for quality assurance	<p>The number of the Romanian universities involved in the Erasmus Programme has constantly increased during 2007-2012:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - In 2007 - 55 universities - In 2008 - 57 universities - In 2009 - 61 universities - In 2010 - 66 universities - In 2011 - 66 universities - In 2012 - 69 universities <p>The total number of the students' mobilities for studying (SMS) in 2011-2012 has been 3380, from which:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bachelor students – 2410 - Master students – 936 - PhD students – 34 <p><i>Goal:</i> Increasing quality of the educational processes in higher education.</p> <p><i>Legislative framework:</i></p> <p>The quality in education represents the main topic of the Law no. 87/2006 for the adoption of Government Emergency Ordinance no. 75/2005. This law provides a wide trans-sectorial approach, including all the Romanian education and VET providers. It represents also the official framework for the setup of the Romanian Agency for Quality in Higher Education (RAQHE), independent NGO with the public profile. This entity has a major role in the accreditation of the new academic programmes, evaluation of the educational higher education processes and quality assurance</p> <p><i>Achievements:</i></p> <p>RAQHE is part of the European Register for quality assurance in the higher education (EQAR)¹.</p> <p>The mission of RAQHE consists in external evaluations of the quality of the educational services provided by the Romanian higher education institutions.</p>
F. European dimension in higher education	<p><i>Goal:</i> Increasing the number of modules, disciplines and number of modules integrating the European dimension.</p>

C Prague Communiqué of May 19, 2001 - Towards the European Higher Education Area

On May 19, 2001, 33 European Ministers responsible for Higher Education have met in Prague in order to implement the approach formulated in Bologna, and have formulated new targets in this respect.

¹ Eurydice, 2010

Table 2. Prague Communiqué of May 19, 2001 - Towards the European Higher Education Area

Objectives	Goal/ implementation and achievements in the Romanian higher education system
A. Lifelong Learning	<p><i>Goal:</i> Increasing economic competitiveness</p> <p>The Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP) has been launched by the European Commission (EC) in 2007 and the National Agency for European Programmes in Education and Training (NAEPET) is responsible for the implementation of this programme in Romania.</p> <p><i>Achievements:</i></p> <p>The number of organisations who have applied for the first time in 2012 in a sectorial or in the LLP are 1571, representing 44.73% from the total number of the applicants in 2012.</p> <p>LLP indicators in 2012 for the main programmes is illustrated below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Comenius – 97.86% - Erasmus – 97.21% - Leonardo da Vinci – 96.02% - Grundtvig – 98.3% - Study visits – 49.18%
B. Students' and higher education's institutions active involvement	<p><i>Goal:</i> Increasing the students' and higher education institutions' involvement for creating an efficient European Higher Education Space.</p> <p><i>Achievements:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Number of applications for various LLP projects and mobility activities in 2012: 6858, representing 505 more applications than in 2011 (increase with 7.7%). - Total number of projects, mobilities and activities for the four sectorial LLP programmes and study visits in 2012: 1703 - Number of projects/activities/mobilities finalized in 2012: 1526 - Number of persons who have participated in mobility programmes in 2012: 16981 - Balanced involvement of various geographical areas: entities/persons from all the Romanian counties have applied and have received funds for at least one project/activity.
C. Promoting the attractiveness of the European Higher Education Area	<p><i>Legislative framework:</i></p> <p>The Government Decision no. 1175/2006 has adopted a new structure of the first cycle (undergraduate) fields of study in accordance with the principles of the Bologna Process. Decision includes 15 general fields of study and specializations appropriate and applicable to all higher education institutions, from both public and private sectors. A reduced number of study fields allow a better coordination between study programmes offered by the Romanian higher education institutions and the other higher education systems within the EHEA.</p> <p>It is important to stress the youth's increased participation in higher education (in 2008/2009 the number of the students increased with 60.2% compared with 2003/2004).</p>

D Berlin Communiqué of September 19, 2003 - Realising the European Higher Education Area (EHEA)

Conference in Berlin on September 19, 2003, where the Ministers of Education from 33 European countries have considered necessary to introduce the third cycle - doctoral, in order to ensure a tight correlation between the European Higher Education Area and European Research Area in a Europe of Knowledge.

In the Conference of Berlin, other important countries have joined the Bologna Process, such as: Russia and ex-Yugoslav countries. Thus, EHEA consists in 40 countries which are participating in the Bologna Process.

Table 3. Berlin Communiqué of September 19, 2003 - Realising the European Higher Education Area (EHEA)

Objectives	Goal/ implementation and achievements in the Romanian higher education system
A. Integrating the doctoral studies and creating appropriate synergies	<i>Goal:</i> Integrating EHEA with the European Research Space (ERS) within the Bologna process. <i>Legislative framework:</i> The Government Decision no. 404/2006, regarding the master programmes organization and the Government Decision no. 567/2005, regarding the scope of the doctoral programmes represent the legislative framework for the higher education cycles two and three.
B. Importance of research, training in research area and promoting the inter-disciplinary research	<i>Goal:</i> Maintaining and improving the quality of the higher education and increasing its competitiveness.

E Bergen Communiqué from 19 to 20 May 2005 - The European Higher Education Area – achieving the main objectives

At the Bergen meeting, other countries have joined the EHEA, such as: Moldavia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Ukraine.

Table 4. Bergen Communiqué from 19 to 20 May 2005 - The European Higher Education Area – achieving the main objectives

Objectives	Goal/ implementation and achievements in the Romanian higher education system
A. Implementing the principles and references for the quality assurance	<i>Goal:</i> Improving quality in EHEA, objective of the European Association for Quality in Higher Education.
B. Introducing the National Qualifications Framework (NQF)	Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, Malta, Holland, Portugal, Romania and Great Britain have implemented the 10 steps for the adoption of the NQF2.
C. Recognition of the certificates and diplomas	<i>Goal:</i> Recognition of the students' achievements on the three educational levels (bachelor, master doctoral level). Furthermore, after Bergen meeting, a special attention has been paid to the post-doctoral programmes. These programmes involve advanced research activities carried out during two years. The new framework for the post-doctoral programmes has been introduced by the Order of the Ministry of Education and Research no. 3861/2005. These programmes have as main goal to develop fundamental research, to support mobility in the research and to improve the infrastructure of the research and management programmes.
D. Creating opportunities for designing flexible paths in higher education	<i>Goal:</i> Validation of the experience and knowledge acquired.

F London Communiqué May 18, 2007 - Towards the European Higher Education Area: meeting the challenges of a globalized world

At the Ministerial Conference in London, 2007, measures have been taken for the establishment of a Register of European Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education in order to increase the confidence in the European educational system. Simultaneously, a strategy on the global dimension of the European Higher Education Area has been adopted.

For the Ministerial Conference in London, Romania has drafted a progress report (third report related to the implementation of the Bologna Process), emphasizing the achievements between 2005 and 2007. Based on the national progress reports, the Group for Monitoring the Implementation of the Bologna Process (BMIBP) has

² 10th phase: NQF and compatibility with the EQF for EHEA

carried out an evaluation of the degree of achieving the criteria characterizing the 10 objectives Bologna. At this benchmarking exercise, Romania scored 52 points out of 60 total points, which places our country among the advanced countries concerning the implementation of the Bologna Process.

Table 5. London Communiqué May 18, 2007 - Towards the European Higher Education Area: meeting the challenges of a globalized world

Objectives	Goal/ implementation and achievements in the Romanian higher education system
A. Promoting students' and teaching staff's mobilities	<i>Goal:</i> To develop measures and indicators for assessing the students' and teaching staff's mobilities. <i>Achievements:</i> Romania has achieved constantly a 5% increase per year related to students' and teaching staff's mobilities within the Erasmus Programme. Spain, for instance, has set as target to have 50% more mobilities in 2015 compared with 2008.
B. Evaluating the effectiveness of the national strategies	<i>Goal:</i> Objective aimed at the social dimension of education.
C. Designing indicators and data gathering procedures	<i>Goal:</i> To measure progress in terms of mobility and the social dimension.
D. Identification of specific measures for improving the social insertion	<i>Goal:</i> Creating links between the education system based on three cycles and the lifelong learning system.
E. Promoting the EHEA	<i>Goal:</i> Recognition worldwide.
F. Continuation of evaluating the progress regarding the development of the EHEA	<i>Goal:</i> To develop a method of qualitative analysis in this regard.

G Communiqué Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve on 28-29 April 2009 - The Bologna Process 2020 - The European Higher Education Area in the new decade

In April 2009 in Leuven, ministers responsible for higher education from 46 countries signed the Bologna Process met in Leuven and Louvain-la-Neuve to establish priorities for the European Higher Education Area by 2020. They stressed in particular the importance of lifelong learning, increasing access to higher education and mobility. By 2020, at least 20% of the graduates of the European Higher Education Area will have to be studied or participated in a training program abroad.

Table 6. Communiqué Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve on 28-29 April 2009 - The Bologna Process 2020 - The European Higher Education Area in the new decade

Objectives	Goal/ implementation and achievements in the Romanian higher education system
A. Equal opportunities for access to quality education	<i>Goal:</i> To increase participation in higher education, particularly for young persons with low opportunities.
B. Increasing participation in lifelong learning	<i>Goal:</i> To ensure the availability, quality and transparency of information on lifelong learning. Related policies should be implemented in parallel with national qualifications frameworks and strong partnerships among all stakeholders should be created.
C. Promoting social and professional insertion	<i>Goal:</i> All stakeholders should cooperate to improve the people's qualification level and the quality of the counseling services for creating a skilled workforce and for increasing the employability. In addition, students' participation in placements and training on the job activities should be further encouraged. <i>Achievements:</i> Romania is among the countries with the largest gap between the share of recently graduated persons' unemployment and the share of graduates' unemployment (13.8% and 2.6%).
D. Designing appropriate learning results and improving the quality of the teaching methods based on the students' needs and profile	<i>Goal:</i> To design international benchmarks and improve teaching methods for various topics and study programmes.

Objectives	Goal/ implementation and achievements in the Romanian higher education system
E. Synergy between higher education and research and innovation field	<i>Goal:</i> To improve the acquisition of research skills and to create the synergy between the doctoral programmes and the research field. In addition, attractive professional paths for researchers at the beginning of their careers should be promoted within the European space.
F. Increasing the worldwide cooperation of the higher education institutions	<i>Goal:</i> European education institutions should internationalise their activities and increase their worldwide cooperation
G. Increasing the quality of the mobilities activities and the wide access to them	<i>Goal:</i> To support the mobility within the EHEA. <i>Achievements:</i> The number of those who study or receive training period abroad must be at least 20% of the total number of graduates within the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).
H. Improving the data collection in order to monitor and evaluate the processes	<i>Goal:</i> To develop precise procedures for monitoring and evaluating the progress in achieving the objectives of the Bologna process.
I. Design of multidimensional tools for a better transparency	<i>Goal:</i> To design appropriate means and tools for gathering and processing the information regarding the higher education institutions and their programs in a transparent manner. These tools should be based on comparable data and indicators and integrate quality assurance and recognition principles, according to the Bologna process.
J. Guarantee for funding the implementation of the Bologna Process	<i>Goal:</i> To identify new and diverse funding solutions to complement public funding.

H Budapest-Vienna Declaration of 12 March 2010 - the European Higher Education Area

The meeting in Vienna launched the European Higher Education Area by relevant ministers of the countries participating in the Bologna Process. At the conference, the ministers have realized that some objectives of the Bologna process have not been well implemented and decided to work closely with all the stakeholders for improving mobility and employability and increasing their efforts to develop the social dimension of the process for increasing the accessibility to a quality higher education.

Table 7. Budapest-Vienna Declaration of 12 March 2010 - the European Higher Education Area

Objectives	Goal/ implementation and achievements in the Romanian higher education system
A. Academic freedom, autonomy and responsibilities of the higher education institutions	<i>Achievements:</i> In Romania, universities have developed proposals for new Master's Degree programmes, have created institutions organizing doctoral studies and have submitted the programmes to the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education for review and approval. Also, the process of adopting NQF in higher education area has been started and concrete outcomes have been obtained.
B. Key-role of the academic community – managers, teaching staff, researchers and students	<i>Goal:</i> The European Higher Education Area should become a reality and its functionality should be proved.
C. Higher education system and its public responsibility	<i>Goal:</i> Taking into consideration the higher education mission, the higher education institutions should have the necessary resources in a clearly defined and supervised framework.
D. Increasing efforts for improving the social dimension	<i>Goal:</i> To ensure equal opportunities for accessing the higher education services, with particular focus on disadvantaged groups.

Ongoing reforms will have an impact on how the European Higher Education Area will interact with the worldwide higher education systems. Consequently, having in view the global dimension of the European higher education system, the ministries from the member states have adopted a strategy for the EHEA in the globalisation context.

The Bologna Process, encompassing 11 specific actions/steps on the way to achieve a broader goal - the creation of the European Higher Education Area, becomes internally linked with the Strategy 2020 and contributes to the achievement of the ambitious economic and social goals.

Conclusions

In conclusion, education entities, as institutional bodies, cannot be considered only as organisations with an internal structure and with specific functions for achieving their specific mission, but also as important social actors, which are operating independently and in cooperation with other stakeholders, in order to achieve the educational objectives at a national, European and global scale.

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