



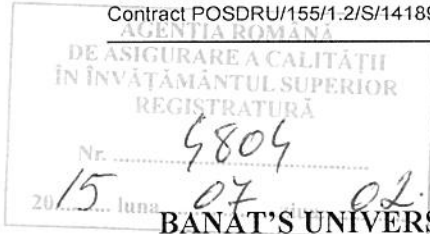
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**BANAT'S UNIVERSITY OF AGRICULTURAL SCIENCES AND VETERINARY  
MEDICINE OF THE "KING MICHAEL I OF ROMANIA" TIMISOARA**

**EXTERNAL INSTITUTIONAL EVALUATION REPORT 2015**

By

**Prof. Dr. Dušan Palić**

**Chair for Fish Diseases and Fisheries Biology**

**Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, Ludwig-Maximilians University Munich  
Germany**

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## Introduction

I have accepted the invitation to participate in the institutional evaluation process of the Banat's University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine "King Michael I of Romania" from Timisoara (in further text BUASVMT) as external evaluator for the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ARACIS). The evaluation process started with the review of the Self-Evaluation report, and the on-site visit took place from 04.06.2015 to 06.06.2015. During this evaluation, I was assigned the role of external (foreign) expert evaluator, and was responsible for establishing an overview of BUASVMT from the perspective of institutional view. My main task was to focus on the institutional processes and procedures that have already been set in place to assure continued improvement of quality of education, future development aspects, as well as outline current and future challenges that BUASVMT is or may be facing before next evaluation period. I have reviewed the Self-Evaluation report and used this document as a starting point for my inquiries during the 3-day on-site visit.

During my stay in Timisoara, I was given an opportunity to review all the documents regarding evaluation process. As part of the evaluation team, I participated in all meetings with University administration and also had a series of individual interactions with students, faculty and administrators from different University units. With the help of esteemed colleagues, and expert translator assistance, I have collected all necessary information about the operation of BUASVMT, and prepared the following report about external institutional evaluation.

## Background

In 2013, the former Banat's University of Agricultural Sciences has been renamed as Banat's University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine "King Michael I of Romania" from Timisoara. The BUASVMT was established initially in 1945 as Faculty of Agronomy, followed by Agronomic Institute of Timisoara (1948-1991), and Banat University of Agricultural Sciences (1991-2013).

Since its establishment as University (1989), the BUASVMT has continuously evolved in a diversified and modern institution of higher education to serve needs of the Banat region, with focus on agriculture and veterinary medicine. However, BUASVMT also has both national and international importance reflected in nation-wide as well as international student body of the





University, and recently added English-taught programs for international students. At present, the BUASVMT encompasses 6 faculties (Agriculture, Horticulture, Agriculture Management, Veterinary Medicine, Animal Science and Biotechnologies, Food Processing Technology), containing 22 bachelor study programs, 25 master's programs and a doctoral school in 5 domains (Agronomy, Horticulture, Food Processing, Veterinary Medicine, and Animal Science).

BUASVMT focuses on academic teaching, scientific research, university extension and consultancy. The Romanian rural and agro-alimentary space has been in a continuous process of restructuring and development since the beginning of the 21st century, and the BUASVMT has closely monitored and followed the progress and demands of the society for trained professionals in the area of agriculture and veterinary medicine.

The main focus of the BUASVMT is to offer training of the specialists at a high scientific and technological level who can rapidly integrate in the existing work market, and offer set of competitive skills to prospective employers. The university continuously seeks to diversify academic study programs to cover the largest possible array of agricultural domains. The education process is organised with a goal to confer superior qualifications and degrees in the domain of the following sciences: agricultural, horticultural, landscaping, forestry, agro-alimentary, animal science, veterinary medicine, biology, biotechnology, food processing technology, fish culture, genetic engineering, environmental engineering, plant protection, agricultural machines and installations, economic engineering, management, marketing, rural development and planning, and other connected specializations.

BUASVMT Strategic Institutional Plan, proposes four fundamental objectives for the period 2012-2016:

1. The orientation of the university towards competitiveness and high-performance in order to integrate into the international scientific value circuit and the attainment of a leadership position within agricultural higher education and scientific research from Romania and the DKMT Euroregion;

*The BUASVMT has several significant milestones achieved regarding this objective. The ERASMUS exchange programs have been utilized to increase exposure of teaching faculty and students to international perspectives and highly ranked European Universities. Increase in numbers of foreign students reflects a good trend toward achieving full integration in the international university community.*

2. The enhancement of the research potential by expanding the research-development infrastructure and attracting young highly qualified specialists.

*This is the second objective that has achieved an excellent success in the area of expanding research infrastructure. Several new buildings are added and many are renovated, and also multiple new research laboratories are equipped with state of the art technology. Nevertheless, the full potential of this new research infrastructure is underutilized at the moment, since many University positions are not filled due to national savings measures, and there is lack of open positions to be funded from research projects (postdoctoral or doctoral students).*

3. The development of the university's offer of services, knowledge and academic extension. Stimulating the technological transfer based on cooperation with regional agribusiness according to the needs highlighted in the Regional Innovation Strategy of the Western Region of Romania. At the same time, given the affiliation of the BUASVMT to the DKMT Euroregion, we set the target of becoming, at the side of agricultural universities from Novi Sad and Szeged, a Euro-regional pole of education - research – consultancy in the domain of agro-alimentary production and regional rural development.

*With the achieved significant improvement in infrastructure, the BUASVMT has good potential to fulfil this objective as well. However, this is contingent upon utilizing the full spectrum of the research infrastructure in attracting industry contracted research and establishing value of independent expert advice/extension of expertise to the region in close collaboration with other regional University centres.*

4. The development of agro-alimentary and veterinary medical education in languages of international importance.

*The BUASVMT has introduced education programs in English, and is currently attracting international students in veterinary medicine and other education programs.*

#### **Administration and Human Resources: Management structure and Teaching Staff**

BUSAVMT management structure is made up of tenured academic staff who are full-time employees of the university (professors and assistant professors, who are not in a position of reservation). Decision-making processes of the management staff are established through the University Charter. Attributions and relations between these structures are specified in regulations, which are approved by the Senate and are part of the University Charter. This



structure corresponds to other Universities and is adequate for an academic institution of higher education. The document review and meetings with University Administrators, as well as with faculty members and union representatives confirm that such management structure is fully operational and fulfils the needs of the academic units. The quality control of the processes (administrative, educational, research and extension) operates independently, but also in close collaboration with the university administrative structures. The complaint system for faculty members and students is in place and is managed through student organizations, as well as dedicated offices on Department, Faculty and University level.

The academic staff of BUASVMT consists of 321 teachers, of which: 70 professors, 66 associate professors (professors and associate professors 42.37%), 120 senior lecturers, 63 assistant lecturer and 2 junior teaching assistants. The teaching staff recruitment and promotion process occurs according to national legislation regarding the publication of notices and conducting competitions, as well as the University rules and regulations regarding teaching and research positions within the BUASVMT. The organization of the teaching activities is done according to the law, regulations and ARACIS performance indicators, so that tenured teaching staff does not exceed three teaching loads within or outside the university, regardless of the higher education institution in which they work. In this respect, the teachers annually submit to the Human Resources Department a statutory declaration.

Out of a total of 511 teaching positions at the university level, 62.81% (321) of them are covered and 37.18% (190) are free. The number of full-time teachers in the university is 62.81% of the total number of teaching positions legally created and 42.37% of these are professors and associate professors. Of the total number of full-time teachers in university (321) 96.57% have a PhD (310). The number of tenured teachers is very balanced in terms of gender, i.e. 154 men and 167 women, and the age balance is similar. Of the 321 teaching staff members, 60 persons are under 35 and only one teacher is over 65.

*BUASVMT has good managerial structure and satisfactory population of teaching staff connected to fulfilment of teaching and extension objectives. However, close to 40% of University positions are not yet occupied, and in light of significant infrastructure upgrades, it is advisable to consider an increase in research staff who will put this new facilities to use.*

#### **Infrastructure and material assets:**

BUASVMT possesses significant farmland and other land to be used in University activities. Total of 24.869.514 m<sup>2</sup> in surface, of which 173.729 m<sup>2</sup> are localized at the university



headquarters, where most of the activities are performed. The buildings have been built in last decades of 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, all buildings currently in use have underwent significant renovations in the last 5 years, so optimum study teaching and research conditions have been met. Education and research spaces on the campus account for 18.216 m<sup>2</sup> in built area and 26.476 m<sup>2</sup> building free area. BUASVMT ensures education and research facilities according to the current legislation and regulations.

Newly added infrastructure mainly takes place within the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine. Under the project “*Development of the infrastructure for research, education and services in veterinary medicine and innovative technologies for the Western Region*” successful modernization, renovation of existing facilities, and building new research facilities was conducted. Major rationale for this project was to enhance cooperation between BUASVMT and the entrepreneurial economic sector in veterinary medicine and innovative technologies. The infrastructure created through this project encompasses 7522 m<sup>2</sup> research facilities with eight restored laboratories, 25 new laboratories, and 6 experimental units, as well as additional supporting infrastructure. BUASVM has currently allotted funding from the budget to achieve projects such as: Faculty of Horticulture and Forestry, building with two wings, amphitheaters, practical course facilities, teachers cabinets, technical ,facilities, a wildlife museum on a surface of 4.205 m<sup>2</sup>; the Biology and Forestry Practice Center in Brebu Nou, Caras-Severin, a building with laboratories, service spaces, accommodation spaces for teachers, student accommodation spaces, teachers’ offices, on a surface of 3655 sqm.

BUASVMT also has number of facilities and infrastructure that position it in the national and regional leader in assets used for education, research and extension services. For example, the Didactic Station Timișoara (SDT) and the didactic base „Young naturalists” (STN) are used for educational and student practice training purposes. The university also has the following facilities for student practice training: technological warehouse for superintensive sturgeon raising in a recirculating system (31 basins and 6000 sturgeons), a wine preparation sector, an agritourism sector. For the purposes of teaching and student practice, the university has an adequate car park for the above mentioned activities.

**The Voiteg Agricultural School**, functioning as an academic extension and providing agricultural counselling, was built in 2007, at the initiative of BUASVMT, with the support of the training centre Deula/Kirchheim U. Teck. Baden-Württemberg from Germany and of the Democratic Forum of the Banat Germans ([www.scoalaagricola.eu](http://www.scoalaagricola.eu)).



The **University Veterinary Clinics** offer veterinary health services in the fields of: surgery, diagnostic imaging, medical parasitology, toxicology, infectious diseases, obstetrics and andrology, pathology / necropsy-diagnosis and laboratory diagnosis. The **Veterinary Hospital**, under optimal conditions, offers hospital care and stationary care possibility for large as well as small animals.

The BUASVMT supports student housing with five **student homes** making up 12.745 m<sup>2</sup>, offers accommodation in 467 rooms and 1.670 accommodation places for the use of students. The student headquarters have recently undergone renovations for energy efficiency, rooms have been refurbished with new furniture, floors and paving, and the sanitary facilities have been brought to high standards. Each room has free internet connection.

**The BUASVM Library** (<http://biblio.usab-tm.ro>) started its activity in 1946 as a department library without employees. In 1949, it started to function independently, having two employees and a documentary fund of 2.670 books. In 1950, the library received a significant donation of 300 treaties and textbooks. Over time, the documentary fund has developed as a result of the book purchase policy, as well as through internal and international exchange and valuable donations from agricultural universities.

**The computer network.** BUASVM has 1050 PCs, 4500 users, informatics laboratories within the faculties and an informatics laboratory within the Library to which all the students of the university have access. Facilities for teaching and research and IT program equipment meet the demands of the curricula. The equipment is interconnected within the university Intranet and connected to the Internet, and serves to distribute, in a controlled system, documents of interest for the academic community. BUASVM also has an **Information Technology Department**, within the Human Resources center, which employs the integrated information system of accountability, treasury, and the GISC software for student record in all faculties. The INTERNET and INTRANET network is operated through university servers ensuring optimal navigation on the academic network (ARNIEC).

**The Extension Unit**, a partner of the BUASVM, was established with the goal to promote the mission of the university in the lives of graduates of our faculties as well as the larger public in search of work who are interested in investing their potential, energy, and creativity in entrepreneurial activities in domains related to agriculture and food production and safety. This comes as a reaction to direct demands, as a result of the field work of a young, enthusiastic team who understood that the main role of a specialist in agriculture, no matter the



field of competence, is to meet people's demands. **Academic extension** is, in most developed countries, one of the main activities of a university, irrespective of its specific profile. In fact, in consolidated societies, the goal of a public university is to create and disseminate new knowledge for the benefit of society and aiming at developing it. Thus, due to extension, research results obtained by the university get to be used and practically applied by the society. The extension of university research results originates in the practice of American extension cooperatives, being grounded in our belief that the extension should focus its mission on society's agrarian and social realities. The university extension unit is actively involved in disseminating and applying the results of research projects in agribusiness; the University also has partners in the West Region which apply modern technology and are willing to receive (our) research results or our working technologies, students, graduates and practitioners.

*Material base of the University is more than adequate for the activities in the field of teaching, research and extension. It positions the BUASVMT to be successful in attracting industry funding, and also possibly seek for industry support to finance master and doctoral studies in areas of special interest.*

### **Budget and Finances**

BUASVMT possesses substantial financial resources both from the university's income - tuition fees and other administrative fees related to educational activities, training program fees, income obtained from delivery of services (such as publishing house taxes and rents), income from research, income from micro-production (Didactic Station), as well as external income (projects funded by external grants, Structural Funds POSDRU, POSCCE) as well as core funding and special purpose funding from MECTS. The accounting activity is computerized, making use of the SICOB system recommended by MECTS. The application enables accounting data processing in accordance with accounting rules and principles and ensures their control. This software enables a much better financial management of the financial-accounting and administrative records that is used by the Experimental Didactic Station, dormitories and faculty administrators.

*The overall financial situation of the University appears good. However, the national research funding situation is not so clear, and that reflects with some extent to reduced utilization of research infrastructure that was recently added to the University material base. With notice that this is beyond the scope of the University evaluation program, it is noted that researchers feel frustrated regarding the delays in the most recent national call for proposals,*





*and it may be advisable that they focus their efforts in external / third party funding into industry applicable research programs that would serve both as source of funds for new research/PhD positions, and as increasing visibility and service to the region by technology transfer and extension work.*

### **Student body**

The number of students currently enrolled in BUASVMT study programs is 4.848 including students in study programs in the 6 faculties, in full-time learning, distance learning and part-time learning. Of these, there are 3.726 bachelor students, 969 students in master studies and 153 in PhD studies. The number of students funded by the budget is 3.322 and 1.526 are non-budgeted and pay fees. There are 130 foreign students.

The results obtained by students in all forms of assessment, are registered by examiners in the disciplines' registers of examination, which are hereafter recorded in a grade script at the faculty secretariats, and finally in the Register of grade transcripts. The results obtained by students during schooling are certified by the transcript of grades and diploma supplement. All activities of the secretariat since the first year of the student's admission, including records of examinations results and finally the preparation of documentation in view of issuing certificates and diplomas, are conducted according to current legislation and internal regulations of BUASVMT. Within BUASVMT, there is an Office for the registration and issuing of legal documents, subordinated to the Rector. Diplomas are always issued with a Diploma Supplement and graduates must sign upon reception in the register of study documents.

*In general, the students appear satisfied with quality of education they receive. There have been some minor remarks according to the degree of practical training they are receiving, however, this is also related to the availability of opportunities (which are abundant) and the motivation of the students to actually use available practical training options. Of more concern is the competitiveness in the job market. While industry employers appear satisfied in general with the quality of new graduates, there are some concerns that practical training falls behind the current state of the art of the various industries. Again, the topic of upgraded research facilities comes to focus, since training of graduate students on state of the art equipment will significantly increase their skill set and also boost their competitiveness on the job market.*

### **Research activities and international relations**

From 2010 to 2014, the university was involved in over 100 national and international competitive research projects (CNCSIS, Romanian Academy, PNCDI, CEEX, POSCCE, POS



MEDIU, UEFISCDI, HURO CROSS BORDER COOPERATION, EERA NET PLUS, CESAR (with the World Bank) and over 60 projects / research / consultancy contracts and technical and technological services including national or international agreements directly with companies at home and abroad, worth over 32 million EUR. There is significant positive trend in the value of contracts awarded nationally followed also by the faculty member orientation towards external financing, leading to increasingly large number of international contracts and their value.

There are collaborations with universities, research institutes and other structures from Hungary (within the HURO CBC program) and Serbia (the IPA pre-accession instrument) in addressing themes of common interest and conducting cross-border research projects between Romania - Serbia, Romania - Hungary. It is also noteworthy that collaboration between the university and the economic environment has enhanced through research contracts and technology transfer agreements on themes ordered or requested by economic agents in the country and abroad.

The results of scientific research carried out by teachers, researchers, doctoral and postgraduate university students are presented in scientific papers and articles communicated in scientific conferences in Romania and abroad and they are published in prestigious journals, volumes in recognized national and international publishing houses, patents, and doctoral theses. The results of extensive scientific research conducted from 2010 to 2014 at the university level were presented in over 3800 articles and scientific papers including: 464 ISI papers, 2800 (BDI) papers in journals indexed in international databases, 630 papers in proceedings of international conferences and papers in the proceedings of national conferences. Also, over 200 books were published in prestigious publishing houses in Romania and abroad. Some research results were capitalized through various patented products, with 24 patents and applications being registered. Research activities resulted in 354 PhD theses, and some researchers' results were presented as products in various exhibitions in Romania and abroad, where they received over 80 diplomas, awards, or medals. Scientific research was also rewarded by a series of Romanian Academy awards, granted by the UEFISCDI, diplomas and medals on a national and international level for participation in national and international Salons of research, innovation and inventions, certificates of excellence, etc.

*This upward trend regarding the quality of scientific publications is noteworthy, as publishing activity has improved significantly in recent years, which is reflected in an increasing number of ISI papers and a large number of papers published in journals indexed in international databases. This is a commendable activity, since it was noted that many external*



*reviews of research projects emphasize the importance of ISI indexed publications and citations, especially for young researchers. This continuing trend is supporting the expansion of research facilities and it is likely that increase in research personnel will further grow research funding and success of the BUASVMT.*

## Conclusion

This report is based on the careful review of self-evaluation report, other available documents, the 3-day site visit and direct contact with the University administrators, faculty members and students. I have been impressed with progress that BUASVMT has achieved in the interim evaluation period, and I hope that following comments will help the University to continue to improve its teaching, research and extension services to society at regional, national, and international level.

Overall impression is that BUASVMT achieved majority of the evaluation marks and I have high level of confidence that it will continue to improve in the next period.

It will be very important for the BUASVMT to continue with the positive momentum and take advantage of the significant investment in research infrastructure. The University needs to continue institutional support to young researchers and fully exploit the position of regional leader in education and research to attract third party grants and contracts in order to increase number of research positions. Existing University strategy appears to follow this pattern and is commendable that observed increase in research output includes high number of patents and industry relationships.

I would like to give my best regards to the Rector, the University staff and students, as well as colleagues from the Evaluation team and ARACIS support staff for very professional and pleasant experience.

In Munich, on 20.06.2015.

Univ. Prof. Dr. Dušan Palić, DVM, MVSc, PhD, Dipl. ECAAH  
Chair of Fish Diseases and Fisheries Biology  
Faculty of Veterinary Medicine  
Ludwig-Maximilians-University Munich  
Germany

